



REFORMULATING THE FACTUAL VERIFICATION MECHANISM FOR THE EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTS OF REGIONAL HEAD CANDIDATES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ELECTORAL INTEGRITY IN MALANG CITY

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Abstract

In the process of nominating regional heads, every candidate is required to meet administrative criteria, including educational requirements evidenced by a diploma. To this end, the General Elections Commission (KPU) conducts an administrative review of the documents submitted by candidates. In certain instances, the KPU also performs a factual verification directly with educational institutions to confirm the authenticity of a candidate's educational documents. Such a practice occurs, for example, when the KPU verifies the diploma details of a university alumnus running for regional office by visiting the university to confirm the accuracy of the individual's academic records. This phenomenon demonstrates that the verification of educational documents is not merely an administrative task but can also involve factual verification in the field. This study aims to analyze the factual verification mechanism for educational documents—specifically university diplomas—carried out by the Malang City KPU during the regional head nomination process. The research focuses on several aspects: the reasons behind the KPU's factual verification of candidates' diplomas, the timing or stages of verification within the nomination process, and the verification methods employed by the KPU. The study also examines whether factual verification is applied to all candidates, performed only when irregularities are detected, or conducted on a sampling basis as part of the administrative oversight mechanism. An empirical legal research method with a qualitative approach is employed, utilizing interviews with election officials, a review of relevant laws and regulations, and an analysis of the KPU's practices regarding educational document verification. The findings are expected to provide an overview of the factual verification practices for university diplomas during the regional head nomination process and to explain the mechanisms used by the KPU to ensure the authenticity of candidates' educational documents. The targeted output of this research is the publication of a scientific article in a national journal accredited as SINTA 4. Furthermore, this research is expected to contribute to the development of electoral law studies and support the enhancement of research and scientific publication quality at Universitas Wisnuwardhana Malang.

Keywords: Diploma Verification; Regional Head Candidate; Election Administration; Election Integrity; Malang City General Election Commission

INTRODUCTION

Regional head elections are part of the local democratic mechanism aimed at directly electing regional leaders through the will of the people. Within Indonesia's constitutional system, these elections are understood not merely as a political procedure but also as a legal mechanism that must be conducted in accordance with the principles of democracy and the rule of law. Therefore, every stage of the election—including the nomination process—must be carried out transparently, accountably, and in compliance with regulations. Regional head elections are a component of the local democratic mechanism designed to allow the people to directly elect their regional leaders. Within Indonesia's constitutional framework, these elections are viewed not merely as political procedures but also as legal mechanisms that must be conducted in accordance with the principles of democracy and the rule of law. Consequently, every stage of the election—including the candidacy process—must be carried out transparently, accountably, and in compliance with applicable legal provisions. The regulatory framework for regional head

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elections is established by Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 1 of 2015 regarding the Enactment of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors. These regulations mandate that every candidate for regional head must meet various administrative requirements, including educational qualifications evidenced by a diploma. Such requirements constitute a crucial part of the administrative review conducted by election organizers to ensure candidates meet the qualifications prescribed by legislation. In the actual conduct of elections, the verification of educational documents does not always stop at a mere administrative check.

In certain instances, election organizers may conduct factual verification by visiting the educational institution that issued the diploma to confirm the document's authenticity. This occurs, for example, when representatives from the General Elections Commission (KPU) verify the diploma details of a university alumnus running for regional office by visiting the relevant university to confirm the accuracy of the candidate's academic records. Such practices demonstrate that the verification of educational documents during the candidacy process is not limited to administrative review but can also involve factual verification in the field. Technically, the mechanism for clarifying candidate requirement documents is governed by General Elections Commission Regulation Number 8 of 2024 concerning the Nomination of Governors and Deputy Governors, Regents and Deputy Regents, and Mayors and Deputy Mayors. Article 113 stipulates that if doubts arise regarding the veracity of a candidate's administrative requirements—as referred to in Article 112 paragraph (2)—the Provincial or Regency/City General Election Commission (KPU) may seek clarification from the nominating political party, the candidate in question, and/or the relevant competent authority. This provision establishes a legal basis for election administrators to verify or clarify candidate documents, including educational documents such as diplomas. However, the use of the phrase "doubts regarding the veracity of administrative requirements" raises issues from the perspectives of both administrative law and electoral integrity. The concept of "doubt" is inherently subjective, as it relies heavily on the judgment of the verifying party. This situation creates the potential for unequal treatment of regional head candidates and opens the door to conflicts of interest during the document verification process. Regarding electoral integrity, verification standards contingent upon subjective doubt can lead to uncertainty concerning how election administrators conduct document verification. Therefore, a more objective approach to the verification mechanism for candidates' educational documents is required—for instance, by mandating the factual verification of specific educational documents as a systematic administrative obligation, rather than performing it only when doubts arise regarding the documents submitted by a candidate. Previous research indicates that the administrative verification of candidates is a crucial instrument for ensuring compliance with candidacy requirements and preventing document manipulation during the election process. Nevertheless, studies specifically examining the practical application of factual verification mechanisms for regional head candidates' educational documents at the local level remain relatively limited. The novelty of this research lies in its effort to shift the focus of factual verification for candidates' educational documents from mere administrative compliance toward a substantive, system-based instrument for strengthening electoral integrity. To date, verification practices by the General Election Commission—conducted within the framework of Law Number 10 of 2016 and its implementing regulations—have tended to prioritize the formal validity of documents (such as the legalization of diplomas and the consistency of administrative data). Furthermore, discussions tend to focus on normative aspects, result disputes, or administrative violations without deeply linking them to the dimension of electoral integrity. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of factual verification with the concept of electoral integrity, such that the verification this ensures not only the validity of documents but also prevents manipulation, forgery, and candidate moral hazard from the initial stages of candidacy. It employs a reformulative approach grounded in good governance, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and public participation in the verification process. The study strengthens institutional mechanisms at the local level (Malang City) to produce a model that is context-specific yet holds potential for national replication. It involves developing a multi-layer verification model—for instance, through the digitization of educational data, inter-agency collaboration (involving schools, universities, and relevant bodies), and integrity audits. Based on the foregoing, the research questions are formulated as follows: 1) What is the mechanism for the factual verification of educational documents (specifically higher education diplomas) of regional head candidates conducted by the Malang City General Election Commission during the candidacy stage of the regional election?; 2) What are the implications of the phrase "doubt regarding the veracity of administrative requirements"—as found in General Election Commission Regulation (PKPU) Number 8 of 2024—for the objectivity, legal certainty, and integrity of the candidate document verification process? This research aims to analyze the factual verification mechanism for educational documents (higher education diplomas) conducted by the Malang City General Election Commission during the regional head candidacy stage, utilizing an empirical legal research approach; it also seeks to determine

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the implications of the aforementioned phrase in PKPU Number 8 of 2024 regarding the objectivity, legal certainty, and integrity of the verification process. The targeted output of this research is the publication of a scientific article in a national journal accredited at the SINTA 4 level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Election Integrity in the Regional Head Nomination Stage

Election integrity is a concept that emphasizes that all stages of the election must be carried out honestly, transparently, and accountably to produce a legitimate democratic process. This concept relates not only to the voting stage but also encompasses the entire election process, from the nomination stage to the determination of election results.⁴ Therefore, each stage of the election must be carried out with adhering to principles of integrity to ensure the quality of democracy and boost public trust in the electoral process. In the context of regional head elections, the candidacy stage is a crucial phase that determines who may participate in the political contest. At this stage, election administrators conduct an administrative review of documents submitted by regional head candidates to ensure compliance with all requirements stipulated in Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 1 of 2015 regarding the Enactment of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors. One such requirement is the educational qualification, evidenced by a diploma. Verifying educational documents plays a vital role in upholding electoral integrity. If documents submitted by candidates are not adequately verified, there is a risk of document manipulation, which could undermine the credibility of the candidacy process. Consequently, under certain circumstances, election administrators may conduct a factual verification of educational documents by directly seeking clarification from the issuing educational institution. From the perspective of electoral integrity theory, this factual verification constitutes part of the administrative oversight mechanism designed to ensure that every regional head candidate meets the legally established requirements.

2. State Administrative Law Perspective on Document Verification

From the perspective of state administrative law, the actions taken by election administrators to examine the documents of regional head candidates constitute administrative acts performed by a state agency in exercising authority granted by legislation. State administrative law essentially governs how government agencies exercise public authority to provide services to the public and ensure legal certainty in every administrative act.⁵ The verification of regional head candidates' documents can be understood as a form of administrative action taken by election administrators during the administrative decision-making process—specifically, the decision regarding the official designation of candidate pairs who meet the eligibility criteria to participate in the election. In this process, election administrators have the authority to conduct an administrative review of documents submitted by candidates, including seeking clarification on documents deemed to require further verification. Factual verification of a regional head candidate's educational documents is part of the process of examining administrative facts to ensure that administrative decisions made by election administrators are based on accurate data. This is crucial for guaranteeing legal certainty and preventing administrative errors during the regional head candidacy process. Thus, the factual verification of a candidate's educational documents can be understood as an exercise of administrative authority by election administrators to ensure compliance with legal requirements throughout the candidacy process.

3. Previous Research

Several prior studies have addressed various aspects of election administration, particularly concerning election management and the integrity of the candidate nomination process. Research on election administration indicates that the administrative verification of candidate documents serves as a crucial instrument for upholding election integrity and preventing violations during the nomination phase.⁶ Furthermore, other studies have highlighted the importance of administrative oversight mechanisms in election management to ensure that every stage of the election is conducted in accordance with applicable legal provisions.⁷ Nevertheless, the majority of existing research focuses on the normative aspects of election regulations or on election disputes. Research specifically addressing the practice of factual verification regarding the educational documents of regional head candidates by local election administrators remains relatively limited. Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution by filling the gap in scholarship regarding the administrative practices of election organizers in verifying the educational documents of regional head candidates.

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METHOD

This study employs an empirical legal research method with a descriptive-qualitative approach. Empirical legal research is utilized to examine how legal provisions regarding the administrative verification of regional head candidates are implemented in practice by election administrators. The descriptive-qualitative approach aims to provide a systematic and in-depth description of the factual verification mechanism for candidates' educational documents, including the rationale for verification, the implementation stages, and the verification patterns adopted by election administrators.

1. Research Type and Approach

This study is a form of empirical legal research utilizing a descriptive-qualitative approach. This approach is employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices surrounding the verification of educational documents during the regional head candidacy process. The descriptive approach is used to factually outline the factual verification mechanisms carried out by election administrators—specifically the Malang City General Election Commission (KPU)—during the candidacy phase.

Through this approach, the study goes beyond analyzing normative provisions within legislation to examine how these provisions are actually implemented in the practice of election administration.

2. Research Location

This research was conducted at the office of the Malang City General Election Commission (KPU), located at Jl. Bantaran No. 6, RW. 02, Purwantoro, Blimbing District, Malang City, East Java 65126, in its capacity as the local-level election administration body. Additionally, research was also conducted at higher education institutions serving as the subjects for the verification of educational documents belonging to regional head candidates, where necessary.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was conducted using the following techniques:

1. Interviews

Interviews were conducted directly with parties involved in the verification process for regional head candidates' documents, specifically election administrators at the Malang City General Election Commission (KPU). These interviews aimed to gather information regarding the mechanism for verifying educational documents during the regional head candidacy stage. Documentation is provided below.



2. Document Study

The document study was conducted by examining various laws and regulations, General Election Commission (KPU) regulations, and administrative documents related to the regional head candidacy process.

3. Observation

Observation was carried out to gain insight into the practices of educational document verification performed by election administrators during the regional head candidacy stage.

4. Data Analysis Technique

Data obtained in this study were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. The analysis was conducted through several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Through this analysis, the

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researcher sought to systematically describe the mechanism for the factual verification of regional head candidates' educational documents and the factors influencing the implementation of such verification.

5. Research Stages

This research was conducted through the following stages of activity:

1.Preparation Stage

Includes the drafting of the research proposal, literature collection, and the development of research instruments.

2.Data Collection Stage

Includes interviews with election administrators and the collection of documents related to the verification process for regional head candidates' documents.

3.Data Analysis Stage

The obtained data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach to explain the mechanism for the factual verification of regional head candidates' educational documents.

4.Research Report Preparation Stage

This stage includes the drafting of the research report and the preparation of a scientific article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Mechanism for the Factual Verification of Regional Head Candidates' Educational Documents in Malang City

The factual verification of educational documents is a crucial stage in the regional head candidacy process, as it relates to the fulfillment of candidates' administrative requirements. Educational documents specifically higher education diplomas are viewed not merely as administrative formalities but as evidence that a candidate meets the requirements stipulated by law. Consequently, the Malang City General Election Commission (KPU) bears the responsibility of ensuring that the educational documents submitted by prospective candidates accurately reflect the actual facts. Factual verification serves as a mechanism to validate the information contained in these documents by cross-referencing or confirming details with the institutions authorized to issue them. Research findings indicate that the factual verification mechanism for candidates' educational documents essentially involves examining the submitted documents and subsequently verifying their authenticity with the issuing educational institutions. This process demonstrates that verification goes beyond a mere physical inspection of documents or a check for administrative completeness; rather, it aims to ensure consistency between the submitted documents and the data held by the educational institutions. In the case of higher education diplomas, confirmation with the issuing institution is vital, as these institutions hold the authority and maintain the databases regarding educational status, graduate identity, study programs, and the academic documents they have issued. In carrying out its duties, the Malang City General Elections Commission (KPU) applies a principle of due diligence when verifying the educational documents of regional head candidates. This approach is reflected in the practice of not simply accepting documents submitted by prospective candidates as proof of meeting requirements; instead, the commission actively confirms details with the authorities responsible for issuing and maintaining academic records. Such measures are crucial for minimizing the risk of administrative errors, data discrepancies, and the use of educational documents whose authenticity cannot be verified. Factual verification of candidates' educational documents is fundamentally conducted to ensure that every candidate genuinely meets the candidacy requirements. Educational qualifications are an integral part of the candidacy process; therefore, it is insufficient for the KPU to simply accept documents based on a candidate's statement or submission. The authenticity of these documents must be substantiated through a verifiable and accountable process. Thus, factual verification serves a preventive function by guarding against the use of invalid documents, data that does not reflect reality, or information that casts doubt on a candidate's eligibility. From the perspective of election administration, verification also represents an exercise of due diligence by the organizers. As the body authorized to determine whether candidates meet the necessary requirements, the KPU (General Elections Commission) must possess a solid basis before declaring a candidate eligible. Consequently, the verification of educational documents is not intended merely to uncover errors or shortcomings on the part of the candidate, but rather to ensure that all participants are subject to the same examination standards. Consistency in this process is vital for maintaining public trust in the regional head candidacy process. Furthermore, the need for factual verification is particularly relevant given the legal implications associated with educational documents during the candidacy process. Should a document prove to be inaccurate, the issue extends beyond mere administrative concerns and may impact the validity of the candidacy itself. Therefore, factual verification must be viewed as a mechanism to ensure that the election organizers' decisions regarding candidate eligibility are grounded in accurate, verifiable, and accountable information and documentation. Despite its critical role, the implementation of factual verification

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faces various challenges. One significant issue is the reliance on external parties specifically, the higher education institutions that issue the diplomas. The KPU lacks the authority to issue or determine the validity of higher education diplomas; it can only examine the documents and obtain confirmation from the institutions authorized to issue them. As a result, the effectiveness of factual verification is heavily dependent on the speed, data availability, and responsiveness of the relevant educational institutions. Another challenge arises from the disparities in administrative and data management systems across different higher education institutions. Educational documents issued during different periods may possess distinct characteristics and record-keeping systems. This situation can potentially create difficulties when verifying such documents which were issued quite some time ago. Consequently, the verification mechanism requires procedures capable of accommodating diverse administrative systems without compromising the evidentiary standards regarding document authenticity. Time constraints during the candidacy stage also present a challenge that warrants attention. Regional head election stages operate on a fixed schedule, necessitating that the verification process be completed within a specific timeframe. Simultaneously, obtaining confirmation from higher education institutions can be time-consuming, as it requires routing requests through authorized units or officials. This situation could lead to complications if the verification mechanism lacks standardized timelines and uniform response procedures. Therefore, any reformulation of the verification mechanism must balance the need for speed with the requirement for thoroughness and accuracy in the examination.

B. Factual Verification from the Perspective of Electoral Integrity

Electoral integrity extends beyond the voting and vote-counting processes; it encompasses every stage of the election administration including the candidacy phase. A candidacy process grounded in accurate and verifiable documentation is a prerequisite for an election characterized by integrity. Thus, the verification of a candidate's educational credentials must be conducted objectively, transparently, and accountably, in accordance with applicable legal provisions. In this context, factual verification serves as a control mechanism to ensure that the information used by the General Elections Commission (KPU) to determine a candidate's eligibility rests on a factual basis. The integrity of the process is strengthened when all candidates receive equal treatment, are subject to the same examination standards, and are afforded the same opportunity to provide clarifications regarding any issues with their submitted documents. This principle of equality is crucial, as factual verification must not become an instrument applied selectively or differently to specific candidates. Instead, the mechanism must be implemented based on objective and measurable procedures. Factual verification is also intrinsically linked to the accountability of election administrators. Ideally, every action taken by the General Elections Commission (KPU) to examine candidate documents should be traceable through clear evidence and documentation. Documenting the examination process including the parties conducting confirmations, the timing, the results, and the rationale for decisions ensures accountability should objections or disputes arise later. Thus, integrity is gauged not only by the final verification outcome but also by the manner in which the verification process is conducted. In principle, the City KPU upholds and applies the principle of due diligence. Research findings indicate that the factual verification mechanism must be evaluated not merely based on its normative existence but also on the effectiveness of its implementation. The mere existence of verification procedures does not automatically guarantee that every educational document has undergone optimal scrutiny. The mechanism's effectiveness relies heavily on procedural clarity, evidentiary standards, coordination between the KPU and educational institutions, data availability, and the documentation of examination results. Without standardized criteria for these aspects, inconsistencies in verification practices may occur. Another weakness lies in the potential lack of optimal data integration between election management bodies and educational institutions. Amidst the rise of digital government administration, data integration offers a means to enhance verification accuracy and efficiency. However, the use of digital systems must still address data security, access authorization, personal data protection, and the validity of data sources. Consequently, digitalization should not be viewed merely as shifting manual processes to electronic systems; rather, it must aim to create a verification mechanism that is faster, more accurate, well-documented, and auditable. Given these issues, any reformulation of the factual verification mechanism for regional head candidates' educational documents should focus on establishing a process that is more systematic, measurable, and accountable. Reformulation can be achieved by establishing a verification process comprising administrative document checks, substantive document reviews, confirmation with the issuing higher education institution, data validation, the recording of verification results, and the provision of an opportunity for clarification should discrepancies arise. Each stage requires clear standard operating procedures to ensure that the review process does not rely solely on the individual interpretations or customary practices of the respective administrators. This model also needs to be supported by standardization of communication between the KPU and higher education institutions. Requests to confirm the authenticity of academic credentials should ideally

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be conducted through official channels, using a standardized format that includes all information necessary for verification. Higher education institutions would then provide responses based on their own academic records. These confirmation results must be documented as part of the candidacy administration records so that, should any objections or disputes arise later, the KPU possesses evidence of the verification process undertaken. Reformulation efforts could also focus on developing a data-driven verification system that enables the KPU to cross-reference educational information with official data sources. Such a system must maintain the issuing institution as the authoritative source regarding the authenticity of educational documents; thus, technology serves as a supporting tool for verification rather than a replacement for the issuing institution's authority. Developing such a system requires accompanying regulations regarding access, security, personal data protection, and audit mechanisms to ensure data accountability. Ultimately, reformulating the factual verification mechanism for educational documents should aim to strike a balance between legal certainty, administrative precision, procedural efficiency, and the protection of candidates' rights. An overly simplistic mechanism might fail to guarantee document authenticity, whereas an overly complex one could hinder the candidacy process. Therefore, the ideal mechanism is one that applies uniform verification standards to all candidates, utilizes authoritative data sources, and employs clear, documented, and legally accountable clarification procedures. From the perspective of electoral integrity, this reformulation is expected to bolster confidence in the candidacy process while ensuring that the confirmed regional head candidates genuinely meet the requirements based on authentic and verifiable documentation.

CONCLUSION

Based on research regarding the reformulation of the factual verification mechanism for the educational documents of regional head candidates viewed through the lens of electoral integrity in Malang City—it can be concluded that the factual verification of educational documents is a crucial component of the candidacy process. It ensures that candidate requirements are met accurately and accountably. The verification mechanism cannot rely solely on an administrative review of documents submitted by candidates; it requires confirmation from the institutions authorized to issue such documents, particularly the higher education institutions that issued the diplomas. In carrying out its duties, the Malang City General Elections Commission (KPU) applies a principle of due diligence when verifying the educational documents of regional head candidates. This approach is reflected in the practice of not simply accepting documents submitted by prospective candidates as proof of meeting requirements; instead, the commission actively confirms details with the authorities responsible for issuing and maintaining academic records. Such measures are crucial for minimizing the risk of administrative errors, data discrepancies, and the use of educational documents whose authenticity cannot be verified. Thus, factual verification serves to ensure consistency between the documents submitted by candidates and the data held by the issuing institutions. From the perspective of electoral integrity, the factual verification of educational documents is linked to principles such as legal certainty, transparency, accountability, objectivity, equal treatment of candidates, and the conduct of honest and fair elections. The integrity of the candidacy process is determined not only by the final outcome of candidate confirmation but also by the review process conducted by election administrators. Therefore, every verification action must be traceable, based on valid data sources, applied using uniform standards for all candidates, and adequately documented to ensure accountability in the event of objections or disputes. Reformulating the factual verification mechanism should aim to establish a system that is standardized, measurable, transparent, accountable, and grounded in authoritative data sources. This reformulation can be achieved by strengthening administrative and factual review stages, standardizing confirmation requests sent to higher education institutions, utilizing official educational data, establishing clarification mechanisms for addressing discrepancies, and improving the documentation of verification results. With such a mechanism in place, factual verification functions not merely as a document review procedure but also as an instrument to strengthen the integrity of the regional head candidacy process and enhance public trust in the conduct of elections. Recommendations: The KPU needs to strengthen its standard operating procedures for the factual verification of regional head candidates' educational documents by establishing clear and uniform stages, evidentiary standards, confirmation mechanisms, timeframes, and documentation protocols. Such standardization is crucial to ensure equitable treatment for all candidates and to guarantee that any decision regarding the fulfillment of educational requirements rests on a legally defensible basis of examination. The KPU, in collaboration with educational institutions particularly the higher education institutions that issued the diplomas needs to establish more structured mechanisms for coordination and data validation. Coordination can be enhanced through the use of standardized confirmation formats and the utilization of official educational data sources, while respecting the authority of issuing institutions and adhering to data protection regulations. These mechanisms are expected to reduce reliance on informal confirmation processes and expedite verification without compromising the thoroughness of the

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examination. Regulators should also consider strengthening the legal framework governing the factual verification of candidates' educational documents. More detailed regulations are required to provide certainty regarding the KPU's authority, the role of higher education institutions in the confirmation process, standards for proving document authenticity, mechanisms for addressing identified discrepancies, and procedures for candidate clarification. Such regulatory clarity is essential to prevent divergent interpretations and practices during the verification process.

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