Emotional Experiences of Preschool Teachers During Learning Evaluation: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This study explores the emotional experiences of preschool teachers during the implementation of learning evaluations. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research captures the lived experiences of 18 preschool teachers in Banten, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations from April to December 2023, employing snowball sampling to ensure relevant expertise. Thematic analysis revealed that teachers predominantly experienced positive emotions, such as pride, joy, and gratitude, during the planning and preparation of evaluation instruments. However, negative emotions, including anxiety and discomfort, emerged during the implementation and follow-up stages. These negative emotions were often linked to concerns about meeting educational targets and managing classroom dynamics effectively. The study identifies that positive emotions were associated with the perceived importance of evaluation planning and successful execution, while negative emotions were connected to fears of underperformance and external pressures. These findings highlight preschool teachers' complex emotional landscape, emphasizing the need for professional development programs focusing on emotional regulation and stress management. The study's implications suggest that fostering a supportive school environment can enhance teachers' well-being and effectiveness, ultimately benefiting student outcomes. Limitations include the small, geographically limited sample and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Future research should expand the sample size, incorporate diverse geographical locations, and utilize mixed-methods approaches to comprehensively understand teachers' emotional experiences. Such research would enable the development of more effective support strategies for educators, contributing to improved educational practices and teacher satisfaction.

Introduction

Early childhood education plays a pivotal role in shaping children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, making the quality of teaching and evaluation practices crucial. Practical learning evaluation by teachers is essential for understanding children's progress and tailoring educational interventions accordingly (Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2022; Mabry et al., 1986). These evaluations not only guide the educational trajectory of children but also provide critical feedback to teachers and parents, ensuring that each child's unique needs are addressed (Siron et al., 2022). Moreover, regular and well-implemented evaluations can significantly enhance learning outcomes and early identification of developmental issues, vital for timely intervention (Puinean et al., 2022). Consequently, the effective implementation of learning evaluations can lead to improved educational practices and outcomes, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all children (Junanto & Kusna, 2018). Given the fundamental role of early childhood education in shaping future generations, the importance of accurate and comprehensive learning evaluations cannot be overstated.
The evaluation process is integral to teachers' pedagogical competence in early childhood education. It involves a comprehensive understanding of various evaluation techniques and procedures, ensuring that the assessment outcomes are utilized to improve the teaching-learning process (Junanto & Kusna, 2018; Riadi, 2018). The significance of evaluation extends beyond academic metrics; it encompasses the holistic development of children, including their social and emotional growth (Yenina, 2016). Therefore, the ability of teachers to conduct thorough and accurate evaluations is a marker of professional excellence and a critical component of effective educational practice (Slavin, 2018). Furthermore, well-conducted evaluations can aid in identifying areas where students may require additional support, thereby enabling targeted interventions that promote equitable learning opportunities (Siron et al., 2022). As such, proficiency in implementing learning evaluations is not just a desirable skill but an essential one for teachers in early childhood education.

The evaluation process in early childhood education is not devoid of emotional experiences for teachers. The emotional labor involved in these evaluations can significantly impact teachers' well-being and their perception of their professional competence (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007). Positive emotions such as hope and pride can enhance teaching effectiveness, while negative emotions like anxiety and frustration hinder it (Fredrickson, 2001). Understanding these emotional experiences is crucial, as they influence the quality of the evaluations, the overall classroom environment, and the developmental outcomes for children (Pekrun et al., 2011). During the evaluation process, teachers' emotions can affect their interactions with students and their ability to make objective and beneficial educational decisions (Benesch, 2018). Therefore, addressing the emotional aspects of evaluation is vital for creating a supportive educational environment that fosters both teacher and student well-being.

Previous studies have explored the multifaceted nature of teachers' emotional experiences in the classroom. For instance, research has highlighted how negative emotional expressions from teachers can adversely affect classroom dynamics and children's emotional development (Garner et al., 2019). Furthermore, the emotional labor of preschool teachers often involves significant emotional regulation strategies, which institutional expectations and personal beliefs can influence (Zhang et al., 2020). The impact of these emotional experiences on teaching practices and teacher-student interactions underscores the importance of addressing emotional well-being in educational settings (Denham et al., 2020). Moreover, studies have shown that teachers' negative emotions can increase stress and burnout, affecting their teaching efficacy and job satisfaction (Jeong et al., 2019). Thus, understanding and managing teachers' emotional experiences is essential for fostering a healthy and productive educational environment.

Studies have also demonstrated that teachers' emotional competence and ability to engage in emotional talk significantly influence children's social and emotional learning (Silkenbeumer et al., 2018). Effective emotion regulation by teachers can promote better emotional and behavioral outcomes in children, particularly in early childhood settings where emotional interactions are frequent and intense (Alamos & Williford, 2020). Additionally, mindfulness-based programs have been shown to reduce emotional distress and enhance work engagement among preschool teachers, highlighting the benefits of supporting teachers' emotional health (Keleynikov et al., 2022). The relationship between teachers' emotional well-being and their professional responsibilities is thus well-established, indicating the need for comprehensive support systems to address preschool teachers' emotional and professional needs (Zinsser et al., 2019). Furthermore, fostering positive emotional experiences in teachers can lead to improved teacher-student relationships, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience for children (Song et al., 2021).

The relationship between teachers' emotional states and professional responsibilities has been extensively documented. High levels of personal stress and job-related emotional exhaustion among teachers are associated with adverse perceptions of children's behavior and
social competence (Jeong et al., 2019). Furthermore, the presence of mental health consultation services can mitigate adverse outcomes such as increased child expulsion requests, indicating the importance of mental health support for teachers (Silver & Zinsser, 2020). These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive support systems to address preschool teachers' emotional and professional needs (Zinsser et al., 2019). Additionally, implementing social-emotional learning supports in community-based preschool classrooms has decreased teacher stress and improved classroom dynamics, further underscoring the importance of emotional support for teachers (Zinsser et al., 2019). These studies highlight the critical role of teachers' emotional well-being in fostering a positive and effective educational environment for young children.

Despite the significant insights provided by previous research, there remains a paucity of studies explicitly focusing on the emotional experiences of preschool teachers during the implementation of learning evaluations. Most existing research has concentrated on the general emotional labor of teachers or the impacts of their emotional states on classroom dynamics and student outcomes (Burić & Frenzel, 2023). However, the specific emotions that arise during the critical learning evaluation process and how these emotions affect teachers' perceptions and practices are not well-documented. This gap in the literature highlights the need for targeted research to better understand and support teachers in this aspect of their professional role (Anhusadar, 2020; Fadlilah, 2021; Nurtiani & Fajriah, 2022). Addressing this gap is crucial for developing effective strategies and interventions to enhance teachers' emotional well-being and capacity to conduct meaningful evaluations.

This study aims to explore and interpret the emotional experiences of preschool teachers in implementing learning evaluations. By employing a phenomenological approach, this research seeks to capture the nuanced emotions teachers feel and understand how these emotions influence their evaluation practices and professional competence. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing deeper insights into the emotional dynamics of early childhood education evaluations. Moreover, this research has the potential to inform the development of support mechanisms and professional development programs tailored to enhance teachers' emotional well-being and effectiveness in conducting learning evaluations, ultimately benefiting both teachers and their students. Understanding these emotional experiences will help create supportive educational environments where teachers can perform their roles effectively, fostering better educational outcomes for young children.

**Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing a phenomenological design, which is particularly suited for capturing individuals' lived experiences and consciousness regarding a specific phenomenon (Hanurawan, 2019). The research aims to describe the emotional experiences of preschool teachers during the implementation of learning evaluations. This design allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' subjective experiences and the meanings they ascribe to these experiences.

The research was conducted in Banten, Indonesia, from April to December 2023, involving 18 preschool teachers from 14 different institutions (Table 1).

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Participants were selected using a snowball sampling technique, which involves initial participants recommending additional participants with relevant experiences. This method is effective in qualitative studies requiring specific expertise or experience (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Data collection involved in-depth interviews and observations. The interviews were structured using the 5W+1H formula, focusing on various stages of the evaluation process: planning, preparing, implementing, managing, and follow-up.

Questions were designed to elicit detailed responses about teachers' emotional experiences during these stages. Contains an interview guide on the emotions experienced by teachers during the evaluation process using the 5W+1H formula. The first question, "What," asks teachers to understand their emotions during planning, preparing, implementing, managing, and evaluating. Teachers are asked to share the emotions they experience during these stages to identify what works well and what needs improvement, leading to better outcomes in the future. The second question, "Who," inquires if anyone in the classroom or school caused them to feel emotional during the evaluation process. Their honest response will help identify areas of concern and ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. The third question, "When," asks teachers to clarify when they experience emotions during the evaluation process. The fourth question, "Where," asks teachers to clarify where they experience emotions during the evaluation process. The final question, "How," asks teachers to describe how they feel emotionally during the evaluation process.

Data collection tools included structured interview guides and observation protocols, utilizing Google Forms for initial written responses, verified through direct interactions and recorded Google Meet sessions. This dual-method approach ensured comprehensive and accurate reflection of participants' experiences, complemented by observations providing contextual insights into teachers' evaluation practices and associated emotions. Detailed interview responses and observational notes were thematically analyzed, with themes identified, categorized, and coded for systematic analysis. A validation process involving feedback from participants on preliminary conclusions enhanced the credibility of the findings. Reliability and validity were ensured through snowball sampling, triangulation via multiple data collection methods, and participant confirmation of preliminary findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). This methodology provides a robust framework for understanding preschool teachers' emotional experiences while evaluating learning outcomes, aiming to offer comprehensive and credible insights through careful design, systematic data collection, and rigorous validation.

**Result**

The results of this research describe participant data and emotional experiences in implementing evaluations, which range from planning to instrument preparation, implementation, analysis and interpretation, and follow-up.
3.1. Learning Evaluation Planning

Based on the interview results, positive emotions such as pride, joy, gratitude, optimism, and enjoyment of the planning process arise when planning. Excerpts of the interview answers are presented below.

“I feel optimistic and enjoy planning because I imagine the process that will occur in the classroom during learning and evaluation” (RK/PAUD T)

RSN expressed the same thing

“I am happy when I plan the evaluation because it looks like it will be fun” (RSN/TK Y)

Meanwhile, the subjective reason for the participants’ gratitude was that school institutions still implemented planning in the evaluation.

“I am grateful because the institution is still carrying out evaluations to the best of its ability, but we are trying to continue to get better” (SWN/PAUD Az)

All participants felt positive emotions and did not express negative emotions during evaluation planning. Positive emotions are felt because the teacher believes that in planning, the instruments must be careful, happy, and optimistic so that the planning and learning outcomes are successful. Teachers answered that they were grateful in their perception that the school where they taught was still conducting a mediocre evaluation. At the same time, they wanted to continue improving the evaluation’s quality. The sense of pride is due to having the opportunity to plan learning evaluations that are important for the success of the learning process and are needed by teachers, students, and parents.

The positive emotions associated with planning, such as pride, gratitude, happiness, and optimism, result from participants understanding the importance of evaluation planning.

“Yes, planning is important in evaluation so that we can map learning objectives and make it easier to carry out evaluations” (CN/PAUD S)

During an interview about planning and the significance of evaluation for students, CN expressed views similar to those of other participants. This suggests a consensus on the importance of evaluation in student planning. All participants recognized the significance of evaluation planning to track learning progress and facilitate reporting for teachers. The planning of evaluation is also a result of teachers acknowledging the importance of learning activities to be conducted. For instance, in the case of activities related to land vehicles, the teacher has designed tasks and activities for students.

3.2. Preparation of evaluation instrument

Based on the interview results, the emotions used when preparing evaluation instruments are positive and negative. Positive emotions felt are grateful, optimistic, and enjoy preparing evaluation instruments. Participants feel grateful because, in their perception, not all of them necessarily implement and compile evaluation instruments. This is interpreted from the word participant as

“I am grateful because I can carry out evaluations that not everyone can carry out evaluations” (CN/PAUD S)

“My feeling when compiling an evaluation instrument is to enjoy it because it is part of the process that we must understand” (NM/TKIT S)

“I enjoy compiling evaluation instruments because when compiling evaluation instruments, I usually imagine the child’s behavior” (SNK/RA A)

Although I am optimistic about making an evaluation instrument, I hope that something will be formulated into a better reference.

“In making an evaluation instrument, of course, there is hope that something we formulate will become a better reference. Therefore, one has a sense of optimism when making an evaluation instrument.” (YK/TK L)

“……..I hope what I did was successful when composing the instrument” (HE/TK S)

All participants expressed positive emotions when preparing the instrument except for one participant, RSN, who expressed negative emotions. The negative emotions that arise are
feelings of anxiety due to worry that it is not by the learning objectives at school. The following is RSN’s answer regarding the reasons for the negative feelings.

“…….Afraid of being corrected a lot by other fellow teachers regarding the theme of the day” (RSN/TK Y)

It seems that after conducting a more in-depth interview with RSN, it was revealed that their feelings of anxiety were caused by external factors, specifically their interactions with other fellow teachers. As a new teacher who is still under the guidance of another teacher, RSN may have felt pressure to live up to expectations and meet the learning objectives outlined by their superiors. Even though all participants eventually expressed positive emotions about the instrument preparation process, it is clear that there was also a lingering sense of anxiety about achieving the desired outcomes.

“I am anxious, afraid of not succeeding and achieving the learning objectives when it is implemented later” (AA/PAUD BB)

The results of interviews and observations about the causes of teachers' emotions are due to constraints and implementation in preparing teacher evaluation instruments using existing assessment tools. Usually, teachers assign tasks to students. For example, the teacher writes letters in the student's notebook to thicken the letters. Teachers also do not have time to compile instruments, such as instruments using scales. So, there is a sense of anxiety that the learning objectives have not been achieved. This interpretation is based on the participants' answers.

“I know that instrument preparation uses a rating scale but rarely uses it due to difficulty managing time” (SNK/RA A)

3.3. Implementation, Analysis and Interpretation

The emotions experienced during the implementation, analysis, and interpretation evaluation were positive, including pride, joy, gratitude, and optimism. These emotions were identified based on the interview results as follows:

“Enjoy the enthusiasm because when planning and preparing the instruments, it is also optimized so that implementation is also easier” (NK/TK P)

“My feeling when carrying out, analyzing the evaluation is enjoying and being happy because it is part of the process that we must understand” (NM/TKIT S)

“Because evaluation is a bridge repair, there is a feeling of joy when carrying it out” (YK/TK Ls)

“I am proud because I have successfully managed the evaluation results” (HE/TKIT S)

Based on the comprehensive interview, it has been determined that positive emotions that emerge during evaluations are primarily a result of internal factors, such as having self-confidence. Therefore, the evaluation process must be enjoyable and accompanied by self-assurance. Conversely, negative emotions such as discomfort, fear, and anxiety are triggered by the apprehension of not achieving the desired targets and failing to manage students effectively during evaluations. These findings are the outcome of the interview results.

“…….anxious, afraid it will not go well” (NK/TK P)

“I felt uncomfortable because I was dizzy because I was too complicated” (RSN/TK Y)

“There is no feeling of boredom, just a feeling of tiredness because there is a lot to assess” (AA/PAUD BB)

“I am worried about the achievements that children will be able to achieve during the evaluation” (AA/PAUD BB)

“…….I am afraid of not being able to master the class” (AP, MAT/TK P)

“I am worried because this evaluation will affect the child’s development. This is also related to the demands of parents” (Si/TK I)
Upon conducting research, it was discovered that many teachers experience negative emotions when implementing evaluations, feeling overwhelmed and uncertain when planning or preparing evaluation instruments. Furthermore, they face challenges when trying to condition their students in the classroom, often relying on observation alone to assess their abilities. These difficulties can lead to exhaustion and leave teachers feeling uneasy and stressed. During evaluations, the academic atmosphere in kindergartens can also be quite chaotic, with students frequently running around, falling, shouting, fighting, needing to use the bathroom, and being distracted by other stimuli. These factors can make it incredibly difficult for teachers to educate and monitor their students effectively, leading to exhaustion and frustration. Additionally, evaluations can be influenced by external factors such as parents’ opinions and assessments from senior teachers. This can add further complexity to the evaluation process, making it all the more challenging for teachers to ensure that they are accurately assessing their students’ abilities and progress.

3.4. Follow-Up Of Evaluation Results

The emotions accompanying the follow-up process were pride, gratitude, optimism, and dissatisfaction. Feelings of pride arose for participants because they felt they could evaluate the learning process to be even better in the future. Feelings of optimism due to better learning outcomes after the evaluation process. The implementation of successful follow-up creates a feeling of pride, optimism, and a sense of gratitude.

“I am proud because I was allowed to be able to spread the learning process so that it becomes even better in the future” (SW/PAUD A2)

“I am grateful for my ability to understand the strengths and weaknesses of students in their learning process. This allows me to communicate the learning system using various media and methods effectively” (AP/TK P)

“I am feeling happy because the results I obtained are exactly as expected” (NK/TK P)

Meanwhile, there is a feeling of anxiety because of the fear that the chosen follow-up action will not be successful, as stated in the interview results below.

“When I saw the grades of small children, maybe it was because the method I used did not like children, so I felt dissatisfied” (RSN/TK Y)

“I feel dissatisfied because of the mismatch between targets and reality” (CN/PAUD S)

The feelings felt by early childhood education teachers when following up on evaluation results are almost the same; some feel negative emotions when the assessment results are unsatisfactory, and some feel positive emotions when the results are planned. This emphasizes the importance of reflective practice and continuous improvement in the educational environment. Educators can increase their teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and achievement by cultivating a culture of introspection and adaptation, ultimately contributing to holistic learner development. Education stakeholders must prioritize ongoing professional development and support mechanisms that empower educators to meet challenges, leverage their strengths, and foster enriching learning experiences for all students.

Discussion

This study’s objective was to explore preschool teachers’ emotional experiences in the context of implementing learning evaluations. Emotional experiences in educational settings are crucial as they impact teaching efficacy, job satisfaction, and student outcomes. Previous research has demonstrated that emotions significantly influence teachers’ instructional practices and student interactions (Garner et al., 2019; Zhang & Jiang, 2023). For example, positive emotional expressions from teachers have been linked to enhanced classroom environments, whereas negative emotions can detract from learning (Alamos & Williford, 2020). Additionally, teachers’ emotional self-efficacy and communication with families are pivotal in shaping their emotional experiences and effectiveness in the classroom (Arace et al., 2021). This study builds upon

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existing literature by providing a phenomenological insight into the specific emotional responses elicited during various phases of the evaluation process.

The main findings of this study indicate that preschool teachers predominantly experience positive emotions such as pride, joy, gratitude, and optimism during the planning, preparation, implementation, and follow-up of learning evaluations. These positive emotions were often linked to a sense of achievement and the perceived importance of evaluations in enhancing the learning process. However, anxiety and dissatisfaction were also reported, particularly during the preparation and implementation phases. These negative emotions were associated with concerns about achieving learning objectives and effectively managing classroom dynamics. The study also revealed that while positive emotions were more frequently reported, anxiety highlights the complexity of the evaluation process and the high stakes involved in accurately assessing student progress (Burić & Moè, 2020; Puinean et al., 2022).

The findings align with prior research emphasizing the critical role of emotions in teaching and learning contexts (Arace et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Teachers’ positive emotions, such as joy and pride, were consistent with those reported in contexts where teachers felt confident and supported by their institutions and peers (Silkenbeumer et al., 2018). These positive emotions promote a more engaging and effective teaching environment, promoting better student outcomes. Conversely, the anxiety and dissatisfaction observed in this study resonate with the findings by Jeon et al. (2019), who highlighted the impact of job-related emotional exhaustion on teachers' perceptions and effectiveness. This suggests that while positive emotions are prevalent, the pressures and challenges associated with evaluation tasks can lead to significant emotional strain.

This study’s findings that teachers feel grateful and optimistic during evaluation planning and implementation echo the results of Song et al. (2021), who found that positive emotions mediated job satisfaction among preschool teachers. The optimism and pride reported by teachers in this study reflect their intrinsic motivation and dedication to student success, which is critical for sustaining high-quality teaching practices (Fredrickson, 2001). However, the anxiety and fear of not meeting learning objectives in this study contrast with the predominantly positive outlook reported in some studies, suggesting that external pressures and the high stakes associated with evaluations may exacerbate negative emotional experiences (Denham et al., 2020). Furthermore, research by Zhang and Jiang (2023) underscores how emotional labor and the need to manage a ‘smiling service’ can lead to emotional exhaustion, aligning with the findings of this study regarding negative emotions.

The positive emotions observed can be attributed to teachers’ intrinsic motivation and commitment to student success, which enhance their self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2001; Morris et al., 2017). The sense of pride and joy during evaluation planning and follow-up indicates that teachers recognize the importance of these activities in achieving educational goals. Positive emotional experiences stimulate creative thinking and innovation in teaching practices, further enhancing student learning outcomes (Fredrickson, 2001). However, anxiety and dissatisfaction highlight teachers’ challenges in managing classroom dynamics and meeting external expectations, suggesting additional support and training (Puinean et al., 2022; Sutton, 2007). It is essential to consider that while positive emotions facilitate effective teaching, the negative emotions experienced by teachers can hinder their performance and well-being.

While the study highlights significant emotional experiences, it is crucial to interpret these findings cautiously. The phenomenological approach provides deep insights but may not capture the full spectrum of emotional experiences across diverse educational contexts. Additionally, factors such as individual differences in emotional regulation, personal stress levels, and the specific school environment may influence the generalizability of these results (Zhang & Jiang, 2023; Silkenbeumer et al., 2018). For instance, Jeon et al. (2019) reported that stress and emotional exhaustion may vary widely based on school resources and administrative support. Furthermore, external factors such as parental expectations and peer assessments, as highlighted by Silver and Zinsser (2020), can also contribute to the emotional landscape of
teachers, affecting their overall experiences. Therefore, further research involving more diverse samples is necessary to validate these findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of preschool teachers’ emotional experiences.

Understanding the emotional experiences of preschool teachers during learning evaluations has important implications for educational practice and policy. These insights can inform the development of targeted professional development programs focusing on emotional regulation, stress management, and effective evaluation practices. Stress management programs or mindfulness-based interventions can significantly reduce emotional distress and enhance work engagement among teachers, promoting their mental well-being and professional involvement. Additionally, fostering a supportive school environment that acknowledges and addresses the emotional needs of teachers can enhance their well-being and effectiveness, ultimately benefiting student outcomes. By prioritizing ongoing professional development and support mechanisms, education stakeholders can help teachers manage challenges, leverage their strengths, and create enriching learning experiences for all students. Furthermore, policies aimed at reducing teacher stress and providing emotional support can mitigate the negative impacts of emotional exhaustion and improve overall classroom dynamics.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the emotional experiences of preschool teachers during the implementation of learning evaluations. Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that preschool teachers felt positive feelings such as gratitude, pride, hope, and optimism due to the evaluation process and the result. There are no negative emotions when teachers do planning for evaluation. The more negative emotions preschool teachers feel when doing the implementation evaluation in the classroom and the evaluation results or follow-up. The negative emotions are anxiety, discomfort, and fear. These feelings are present because they are worried about not achieving the target. This anxiety can be interpreted as positive anxiety to motivate teachers to improve the evaluation process. These insights suggest significant implications for educational practice, emphasizing the need for professional development programs focused on emotional regulation and stress management and the importance of fostering supportive school environments that address teachers’ emotional needs, enhancing their well-being and effectiveness and benefiting student outcomes. However, the study’s limitations include a small, geographically limited sample size and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Future research should expand the sample size, incorporate diverse geographical locations, and use mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers’ emotional experiences, enabling the development of more effective support strategies for educators.

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