

ISSN: 200-674-61



JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY (JOEAP)

**A Publication of the Department of Counselling Psychology,
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, P.M.B. 11, Lapai,
Niger State, Nigeria.**

VOL. 9, NO. 2, 2023.

ISSN: 200-674-61



JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY (JOEAP)

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2, DECEMBER, 2023

An Official Publication of the Department of Counselling Psychology,
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, P. M. B. 11, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria.
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EDITORIAL NOTE

This is to welcome us to the Journal of Education and Applied Psychology after a brief break. The Journal of Education and Applied Psychology is a reputable and standard multi-disciplinary journal with high quality that accepts from researchers original theoretical and empirical articles that are inclined to advancement of knowledge, contemporary issues, findings, innovations, inventions and discoveries.

The current articles in this edition, volume 9, number 1, December, 2023 have satisfied the quality and spread in scholarship. A combination of education and psychology comes with a unique lace of intellectual challenge that the Department has brought to the academia. Hence, readers and invited researchers should find whatever issues that deserve intellectual discourse.

It must be clear that adequate editorial assessment was carried out on the articles for publication. There is no doubt that the articles have been thoroughly researched and documented along stipulated guidelines for high academic and professional standards. However, opinions, observations and citations are credited to the author(s) and the Editorial Board carries no responsibility.

The Editorial Board wishes to congratulate all the authors for finding time to share their worth of research and academic experiences in this publication. The Board remains indebted to its assessors and editorial members for a good job toward successful publication of the journal. We do hope that the readership will experience rewarding intellectual journey.

Consequently, further invitations are hereby extended to our esteem research and academic fellows for the next edition of the journal.

Professor Frank C. CAREW, Ph.D (Iowa), Icon
Editor-in-Chief

CALL FOR PAPERS

VOL. 10, NO.1, 2024

The Editorial Board invites interested scholars and researchers to submit original research papers or manuscripts for publication in the 2024 series. The Journal of Education and Applied Psychology is a reputable and standard multi-disciplinary journal with high quality that accepts original theoretical and empirical articles that are inclined to advancement of knowledge, contemporary issues, findings, innovations, inventions and discoveries from counsellors, psychologists, educationists, educators, researchers, students, and individuals all over the country and abroad, for publication. The journal publishes twice in a year (June/July & November/December). Articles are accepted all year round. The articles could cover the following areas of interest:

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the article should show Introduction, Statement of the Problem, Objectives, Questions/Hypotheses, Results, Discussions, Recommendations and Conclusion.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Impact Assessment of Nigeria Police Force on the Security Maintenance in Nigeria. <i>By Oyewole Lambe Emmanuel</i>	1
2.	Quick-Richness Syndrome And The Prevalence Of Ritualistic Practices Among South West Nigerian Youth: A Sociological Examination Of Contributing Factors. <i>By Adamolekun Iseoluwa Damilola & Adenegan Taiwo Samuel</i>	11
3.	Educational Policy Implementation, Teacher Quality, Access and Equity towards Students' Engagement in Tertiary Education in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. <i>By Ogba Francisca N. & Alexander Okezie Onwu</i>	24
4.	Some Challenges of Teaching Practice Exercises and Quality Education Delivery: A Case Study of University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. <i>By Famous-Izedonmi Bosede (PhD) & Julian E. Oban (PhD)</i>	40
5.	Motivation as a Tool for Effective Teaching and Learning in Nigerian Schools. <i>By Suleiman Suleiman Chado (PhD)</i>	48
6.	Teachers' Attitudes toward Learners with Special Needs in Public Primary Schools in Minna Metropolis. <i>By Baha Williams Maigida</i>	56
7.	Adopting Community Based Counselling in Managing Unruly Behaviours Among Nigerian Youths: Implementation for Security Counselling. <i>By Muhammad Machima Hadiza (PhD)</i>	65
8.	Motivation in Learning: A Sine Qua Non For Retention among Social Studies Education Students. <i>By Stephen Alfred Olotu, Shuaibu Godabe & Shamsudeen Abdulkadir</i>	72
9.	Significance of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Library. <i>By Philip Daze Longdas, Bwai Patience Michael, Darap Habila Tanko & Andreas Shindai Alkali</i>	82
10.	Creating Awareness, Providing Accessibility and Ensuring the Use of ICT Facilities in Academic Libraries in Nigeria. <i>By Adamu Mahmud (CLN), Yakubu Buhari (CLN), Akawu Lami (CLN), Ahmed Yabagi (CLN)</i>	95
11.	An Investigation on Synthetic Jolly Phonics and the Development of Literacy Skills among Pre-Schoolers in Ilorin -West LGA, Kwara State, Nigeria. <i>By Lawan Hadiza Mohammed & Abdulwahab Rafiu (PhD)</i>	103
12.	Usage of Information and Communication Technologies for Effective Teaching of History in Senior Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria <i>By Ayodele Emmanuel Oluwakorede</i>	111

13. Teachers' Perception of Factors Responsible for Ineffective Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools in Kontogora Niger State **By Jimoh Yunusa Abejide (PhD), Niyi Olorunsola O. (PhD), Ebohon Godfrey Oghuan & Eigbochie Dorcas Oduwale**121
14. Influence of Autism Spectrum Disorders on Learning Abilities of Secondary School Students in Minna Educational Zone, Niger State, Nigeria. **By Garba Aminu & Abdullahi Ahmed Barkuta**.....131
15. Effect of Study Habits Counselling on Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in Mathematics in Nasarawa South, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. **By Ola Ugama David**.....141
16. Re-Engineering Curricular Reforms for the Enhancement of Students Academic Performance and Attainment of Sustainable Development in Nigeria **By Usman Idris G. (PhD)**.....152
17. Perception of Students and Parents on the Impact of Girl-Child Education in Bwari and Kwali Area Councils in Abuja: Counselling Implication **By Aliyu Ahmed**.....159
18. The Changing Faces of the Hero in Nigerian Literature. **By Adeniji Abiodun**168
19. Social Media and Drug Abuse among Undergraduate Students of Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria. **By Joshua Joseph, Umar Ismaila & Michael Happy Linda**.....178

AN INVESTIGATION ON SYNTHETIC JOLLY PHONICS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY SKILLS AMONG PRE-SCHOOLERS IN ILORIN -WEST LGA, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the synthetic jolly phonics and the development of literacy skills among pre-schoolers in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design where one research question was raised and three hypotheses were formulated. The population of the study consisted of 100 teachers randomly selected across the schools. A researcher self-constructed questionnaire titled teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development (TPISJP) was used for data collection. The validity of the instrument was conducted by two experts in Childhood Education and Psychology, University of Ilorin respectively, while Cronbach Alpha reliability method used yielded an index of 0.67. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions raised, while t-test and ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that pre-school teachers have positive perception towards synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West, Kwara State. Also, it was revealed that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on gender and qualification but there was significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on experience. It was recommended that preschool teachers should be enlightened on the significance of synthetic jolly phonics on literacy skills development on the children, school management should ensure that teachers' usage of synthetic jolly phonics in literacy skills development in the child is not gender, qualification or experience based.

Keywords: Investigation, Synthetic, Jolly Phonics, Development of Literacy Skills and Pre-Schoolers

Introduction

Learning to read and write is among the most important skills required for a child's academic success at school as well as in his/her future education. Learning literacy skills will influence one's performances in other disciplines. Literacy can have substantial impacts on developing livelihood. As claimed in a report by The World Bank (2002), people who had fulfilled literacy courses were shown to be more enthusiastic to improve their livelihoods. In addition

to that, Eldred (2008) mentioned that literacy is associated with specific job skills as well as developments in critical thinking and problem solving. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), phonics is a method of teaching children to read, in which children are taught to recognize the relationship between letters and sounds. They are taught the sounds which the letters of alphabet represent, and then try to build up the sound of a new or unfamiliar word by saying it one sound at a time. Eshiet (2012) opined that "The synthetic phonics method adopts the direct, systematic and rapid teaching of letter sounds to pupils. This is immediately followed by teaching them how to blend the letter sounds to form words. In English, pupils are taught the first group of letter sounds which make up a large number of 3-letter words; s, a, t, i, p, n. These sounds can be used to make several 3-letter words e.g. pin, sat, sit, tip, tin, pit, pat. The whole programme is sometimes taught within a few months— usually 9 to 16 weeks with a great deal of emphasis on word reading. Sight words are taught at key points and carefully selected decodable readers are used alongside the programme".

The term literacy has become a very crucial terms in education during the last few decades. Extensive research in the field of literacy, particularly research on literacy development of young children has been conducted and becoming a basis for everyday practice. This is because having a strong foundation in literacy; specifically English literacy is very beneficial for the continuity of children's life, as today English is used as lingua franca and international language of communications. The fact that having strong literacy foundation is fundamental for children is supported by Alberta Education, who claims that literacy has always been a basis of learning (Alberta, 2010). Moreover, Morrow also states that children's futures are partly determined by how well the children are guided to literacy. Regarding to the urgency of literacy, the children therefore should be guided to literacy right from the very early age. The earlier they get into literacy, the more experiences they will gain to survive both in educational and social lives. However, finding an appropriate yet innovative strategy to develop and enhance children's English literacy is not an easy thing to be done. Most pupils in preschool come without a slight reading readiness, and they have no idea of how to sound out the letters in English. Consequently, Mullins points out that many children struggle to decode words (Mullins, 2013). In this case, one of the most effective strategies that could be used to enhance children's early reading and literacy skill is Jolly Phonics. Jolly Phonics is a fun- systematic program designed for young or beginner learners to develop there reading and literacy skill. According to Lloyd, Jolly Phonics teaches the 5 main skills, where the children are firstly taught the 42 sounds in English, and then continued into blending and reading skill, at the same time they are taught to write by identifying the sounds in words.

In addition, Farokhbakht and Nejadansari (2015) also state that Jolly Phonics incorporates multisensory approach, where the information is delivered through sight, sound and kinesthetic means, which is really suitable for young children's characteristics. Dixon et al, as well as Farokhbakht and Nejadansari (2015) have conducted a study to see the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics in improving the children's early English literacy. The findings of both studies show that children who are taught by using Jolly Phonics has better performance on reading, spelling and literacy compared to those who are conventionally taught. Another study conducted by Ruhaena have also proved that Jolly phonics implementation affects not only the children's English literacy ability, but also their Indonesian literacy. As a result, Jolly Phonics instructional strategy is a very effective panacea to reading difficulty faced by children. Despite the popularity and its effectiveness, there are still factors to the absence of the strategy. In this case, Mullins has listed few factors to the absence of Jolly Phonics at school, such as lack of materials and lack of teacher knowledge (Mullins, 2013). Jolly Phonics is a fun and child-centred approach to teaching literacy through synthetic phonics. With actions for each of the 42 letter sounds, the multi-

sensory method is very motivating for children and teachers, who can see that their students achieve (Farokhbakht, 2015).

Over the years, there has been a tremendous body of research conducted on the factors that affect literacy learning and development (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). However, while researchers have come to an agreement about the different linguistic, socioeconomic, sociocultural and developmental elements in various contexts such as home, school and classroom which directly or indirectly influence the language and literacy achievements, a considerable debate about the best ways of teaching literacy to children continues to exist in the English-speaking countries (Harrison, 2004). In the past, as Chall (2013) put it, at the centre of this great debate was the disagreement among those researchers, educators and policy makers who emphasized the bottom-up approaches (i.e., phonics) to literacy which focused on breaking the code and those who placed emphasis on whole-language (i.e. top-down) approaches in which meaning emphasis was the centre of attention. Although there are already some studies regarding this methodology, this research tries to benefit the entire school community and allow them to know how the teaching of English phonetics carries through the Jolly Phonics method, specifically in the first level of schooling, because pronunciation is an important aspect to promote linguistic immersion from the elementary level. Therefore, introducing the student to a foreign language at an early age will help them prevent basic pronunciation errors from continuing to occur (Rodríguez, et al., 2014). It is also appropriate to apply the Jolly phonics method to children who are beginning their learning because this methodology is playful and uses songs from the program to teach each sound of English phonetics so, in this way, the learners learn each of them in a significant way from concrete actions to familiarise the student with the pronunciation of this foreign language and at the same time promote the teaching of basic vocabulary through simple phrases that contain the songs of the Jolly phonics method (Alcedo, et al., 2011).

Another aspect is the management of the linguistic skills of the teacher, and this research at once will help improve the student's communication skills through the pronunciation of sounds in the English language. Consequently, according to the five phases of this method, the learner will understand the English language gradually by associating the sound with the grapheme of each letter, the formation of phonemes, the combination of phonemes, the building of sentences, and finally with a progressive learning of reading and writing (Jolly Learning Ltd. 2021). This research aims to analyse the effectiveness of the application of the Jolly Phonics method to development of literacy skills among preschoolers. Hence, this study investigates synthetic jolly phonics and the development of literacy skills among preschoolers in Ilorin west LGA, Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated synthetic jolly phonics and the development of literacy skills among pre-schoolers in Ilorin west LGA, Kwara state. Specifically, the study is focused on:

1. Examining the perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development;
2. Finding out if gender influences the perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development;
3. Ascertaining whether there is a significant difference in the perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on years of experience; and

4. Ascertaining whether there is a significant difference in the perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on qualification.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses would be tested in this study:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on gender.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on years of experience.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on qualification.

Methodology

The focus of this study is mainly on investigating synthetic jolly phonics and the development of literacy skills among pre-schoolers in Ilorin West LGA, Kwara State. It employed a descriptive survey where the opinions of the participants were sought for the research. The population of the study consists of all registered pre-schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area, while the target population would be all the pre-school teachers in the LGA which are 1,266. A sample of 100 teachers was drawn for this study from the target population using simple random sampling technique, and this would give a total number of 100 pre-school teachers as the respondents for the study. In order to elicit valid information from the respondents, a researcher self-constructed questionnaire titled teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development (TPISJP) was used with clear information for the respondents. The instrument adopted for this research work is a researcher self-constructed questionnaire titled 'teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development' (TPISJP). The questionnaire was in section A and B: section A were employed to gather data on the personal information of the teachers which include gender, qualification and experience, while the section B was used to elicit information on the influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development. The items in the section B were structured in four-likert format of Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed, and Strongly Disagreed.

In order to ensure the validity of the instruments, face and content validity were adjudged making sure that all the items on the questionnaire corresponds with the stated research purposes. An expert judgment was sought in the validation of the research instruments. To measure the reliability of the tool, the researcher assigned copies of the instrument to some respondents. In this case, twenty-two copies of the instrument were administered on the representative and the scores tested against the instrument to ensure its reliability using Cronbach Alpha. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) to answer the research questions raised, while inferential statistics (t-test and ANOVA) were used to test the hypotheses formulated.

The results of the findings are shown below:

Testing of the Hypotheses

Three research hypotheses were formulated, and were tested with the use of t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at a significant level of 0.05.

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on gender.

Table 1: Summary of t-test showing the significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on gender.

Gender	N	X	Sd	df	Cal. value	Sig.	Decision
Male	41	20.25	3.24	98	0.39	0.52	Not Significant
Female	59	21.38	3.65				

From table 1 above, result shows cal. value = 0.39, degree of freedom (98). The null hypothesis is accepted since the significant value of 0.52 is greater than 0.05 of Alpha level. This means that, gender does not influence the perception of teacher towards the influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development. That which was perceived by the male teachers is not different from their female counterparts. Therefore, the null hypothesis above which stated that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on gender is accepted.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on qualification.

Table 2: Summary of t-test showing the significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on qualifications.

Qualifications	N	X	Sd	df	Cal. value	Sig.	Decision
Below first degree	63	38.98	2.42	98	0.13	0.15	Not Significant
First degree and above	37	39.06	2.56				

From Table 2 above, result shows cal. value = 0.13, degree of freedom (98). The null hypothesis is accepted since the significant value of 0.15 is greater than 0.05 of Alpha level. This means that, teachers' qualification does not influence their perception towards the influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development. Therefore, the null hypothesis above which stated that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on qualification is accepted.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on experience.

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Variance showing the significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on experience.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	f	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	86.79	3	21.18	1.23	0.03	Significant
Within Groups	1884.12	96	17.77			
Total	1970.91	99				

From Table 3 above, result showed f value = 1.23, degree of freedom (99). The null hypothesis is rejected since the significant value of 0.03 is less than 0.05 of Alpha level. This means that, teachers' years of experience has influence on their perception towards the influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development. That is, the experience gathered by the teachers fosters their perception. Therefore, the null hypothesis above which stated that there is no significant difference in the teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy development based on years of experience is retained.

Summary of Findings

Findings from this study revealed that:

1. There is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on qualification.
3. There is significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on years of experience.

Discussion of the Findings

It was revealed from the findings that pre-school teachers have positive perception toward synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West, Kwara State. This was seen from the teachers' responses to all the items on the list where it was clearly revealed that their perception towards synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development is positive. This was as a result of their knowledge on the importance of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development. This simply shows that, when synthetic jolly phonics is being used properly by the teachers to teach pre-schoolers language acquisition, it speedily improves their literacy skill development. This corroborates the submission of Eshiet (2012) who submitted that teaching reading using the synthetic phonics approach has been shown to increase students' reading achievement; the current study examined its impact on students' enthusiasm in reading. He further asserted that it enhances beginner readers' knowledge of the alphabet and word reading ability, as they can freely form, spell, and pronounce new words, thanks to it. It was buttressed that, it enhances word reading abilities leads to effective reading outcomes, which is predicted to increase students' engagement in the reading process. Synthetic phonics increases/improves students' reading achievement.

In addition, it was also revealed from the findings above that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West Local Government Area based on gender. This was revealed by the significant value of 0.52 obtained from the response which is greater than the alpha value of 0.05. This shows that teachers' gender does not determine their perception towards the influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development. This affirmed that, what was perceived by the male teachers is not different from their female counterparts. It can therefore be deduced that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West Local Government Area based on gender.

More so, the result from the findings revealed that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West Local Government Area based on qualification. This was revealed by the significant value of 0.15 obtained from the response which is greater than the alpha value of 0.05. This shows that teachers' qualification has nothing to do with their perception towards the influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development. That is what was perceived by teachers with qualification below first degree is the same with their counterparts with first degree and above. It can therefore be affirmed that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West Local Government Area based on qualification.

Additionally, the result from the findings revealed that there is significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West Local Government Area based on years of experience. This was revealed by the significant value of 0.03 obtained from the response which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. This means that teachers' years of experience do not influence their perception towards synthetic jolly phonics. Meaning that there is significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West Local Government Area based on years of experience.

Conclusions

From the findings above, it was concluded that there is positive perception of pre-school teachers towards the influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development in Ilorin West, Kwara State. Also, it was concluded from the findings that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on gender and the qualification, whereas, there is significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of synthetic jolly phonics on pre-schoolers' literacy skills development based on years of experience in Ilorin West Local Government Area based on years of experience.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are hereby proffered on the benefits of synthetic jolly phonics towards pre-schoolers' literacy skills development;

1. Pre-school teachers should be enlightened on the significance of synthetic jolly phonics on literacy skills development in the children.
2. The school management should ensure that teachers' usage of synthetic jolly phonics is not gender based.
3. School management should make sure that the use of synthetic jolly phonics in developing literacy skills in the children should not be qualification based.

4. Irrespective of teachers' years of experience, the use of synthetic jolly phonics in teaching pre-schoolers' should be mandatory for all teachers.

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