

Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Motivation in Learning and Academic Achievement Across School Levels

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Abstract: ***Background:** Student motivation is closely connected with classroom engagement, persistence, participation and academic functioning. Teachers play a central role in creating motivational conditions through emotional support, feedback, structure, autonomy support and instructional practices. **Objective:** This study examined teachers' perceptions of the role of motivation in learning and academic achievement across school levels, the motivational strategies teachers use, perceived challenges, and differences in motivational needs. **Methods:** A quantitative, descriptive-comparative, cross-sectional design was used. Fifty-five teachers completed a structured 35-item questionnaire administered through Google Forms. Likert-scale responses were summarised using means and standard deviations, while categorical responses were described using frequencies and percentages. **Results:** Teachers strongly agreed that motivation influences academic achievement ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.96$) and that classroom environment is important for student motivation ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.63$). Teacher encouragement ($M = 4.38$) and parental support ($M = 4.35$) were also highly endorsed. Activity-based learning was the most highly reported strategy ($M = 4.33$), followed by goal setting and constructive feedback ($M = 4.25$ each). Forty-eight of 55 teachers (87.27%) perceived at least some differences in motivational needs across school levels. Major challenges included student disinterest, digital distractions, academic pressure, inadequate parental support, low confidence, fear of failure and classroom or institutional constraints. **Conclusion:** Teachers perceive motivation as an important, multidimensional and context-dependent component of learning. Student-centred, developmentally appropriate and flexible strategies, supported by parents and school management, may strengthen motivational conditions. As this study measured perceptions rather than actual student achievement or motivation, the findings should not be interpreted causally.*

Keywords: student motivation; academic achievement; teacher perceptions; classroom environment; motivational strategies; school levels

1. Introduction

Motivation is a fundamental element of the learning process because it influences the extent to which students initiate academic tasks, sustain attention, participate in classroom activities, persist when difficulties arise and invest effort in achieving educational goals. In school settings, motivation is not simply a stable characteristic that a learner either possesses or lacks. It develops through interaction between the learner, the task, prior academic experiences and the broader social and instructional environment. Consequently, understanding student motivation requires attention to internal beliefs and interests as well as the classroom, teacher and family conditions in which learning occurs.

The relationship between motivation and academic achievement is particularly important for educational research. Longitudinal evidence indicates that motivation and achievement can influence one another over time rather than operating in a simple one-directional manner [1]. Vu et al. reported that previous academic achievement had a stronger pooled effect on subsequent motivation than motivation had on later academic achievement. This finding suggests that academic success may strengthen later motivational beliefs, while motivation can also contribute to future academic outcomes. Such reciprocity is important for teachers because students who experience repeated difficulty may gradually show reduced confidence and engagement, while successful experiences may reinforce persistence and willingness to participate.

Within the broader domain of motivation, self-beliefs are especially relevant. Academic self-efficacy concerns an individual's belief in the ability to organise and perform actions required to attain desired levels of academic

performance [3]. Students with stronger efficacy beliefs may be more willing to attempt challenging tasks, persist during setbacks and use effective strategies. From a classroom perspective, teachers frequently observe manifestations of such beliefs in the form of confidence, hesitation, willingness to answer questions, persistence after mistakes and readiness to attempt unfamiliar tasks. These observable behaviours make teacher perceptions an important practical source of information about student motivation, even though they are not a substitute for direct student assessment.

Teacher behaviour and classroom climate are also closely linked with motivational processes. Ruzek et al. found that greater teacher emotional support was associated with increases in mastery motivation and behavioural engagement, with autonomy and peer relatedness contributing to these associations [2]. The finding indicates that students may become more engaged when they experience a classroom as supportive, respectful and responsive. Teacher encouragement, positive feedback and emotionally supportive interactions may therefore influence how safe students feel to participate, take academic risks and recover from errors.

Autonomy support and structure represent additional dimensions of teacher behaviour. Dörmekçi et al. demonstrated that teachers may provide different levels of autonomy support and structure to individual students within the same classroom [5]. Student-specific autonomy support was positively related to autonomous motivation and negatively related to controlled motivation. These findings emphasise that students do not necessarily require identical motivational approaches. Some may benefit from greater choice and independence, while others may require more explicit structure, guidance or reassurance. This is

particularly relevant when motivation is examined across different developmental and school levels.

Research on amotivation further illustrates the importance of teacher support. Banerjee and Halder found that teacher autonomy support, structure and relatedness support were associated with lower levels of amotivation, with structure demonstrating a particularly strong influence [6]. Amotivation may appear in school as low effort, repeated disengagement, limited interest, weak persistence or a sense that academic work has little value. Teachers are often the first adults in the school context to notice such patterns and attempt responses through individual support, modified instruction, counselling, parent communication or positive reinforcement.

Motivation also differs according to the reasons students engage in learning. Autonomous motivation refers to engagement that is personally meaningful, interesting or valued, whereas controlled motivation involves pressure, demands or external contingencies. A meta-analysis by Bureau et al. highlighted the importance of psychological needs and supportive social environments in the development of autonomous and controlled motivation [7]. The distinction is educationally meaningful because two students may demonstrate similar outward behaviour while being motivated by very different reasons, such as genuine interest, personal goals, marks, rewards, fear of failure or parental expectations.

The present study was designed to examine motivation from the teacher's perspective across primary, middle, secondary and higher-secondary settings. Rather than measuring one narrow psychological construct, the questionnaire covered teachers' perceptions of motivation and academic achievement, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, classroom environment, teacher encouragement, parental support, technology, goal setting, autonomy, feedback, motivational strategies, challenges, and school-level differences. This applied approach reflects the complexity of motivation as experienced in everyday educational practice.

Although existing literature has established relationships between motivation and academic achievement [1], academic self-efficacy [3], teacher emotional support [2], autonomy and structure [5], amotivation [6], and autonomous and controlled motivation [7], these areas have often been examined in separate studies. There is comparatively limited direct research bringing together teachers' perceptions, reported strategies, perceived barriers and school-level differences within one common questionnaire framework. The present study addresses this practical research gap by describing how teachers understand and respond to student motivation in their routine educational work.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To assess teachers' perceptions of the role of motivation in student learning.
- To examine teachers' perceptions of the relationship between motivation and academic achievement.

- To identify motivational strategies used by teachers to enhance student motivation.
- To identify major challenges perceived by teachers in motivating students.
- To compare teachers' perceptions of motivation across different school levels.
- To examine teachers' perceptions of differences in students' motivational needs across school levels.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative, descriptive-comparative and cross-sectional research design was adopted. The descriptive component was used to summarise teachers' perceptions, reported practices and perceived challenges. The comparative orientation reflected the inclusion of teachers from four school levels, although the unequal group sizes—especially the very small higher-secondary subgroup—mean that school-level comparisons should be interpreted cautiously. The design was cross-sectional because data were collected at one point in time, without an intervention or manipulation of variables.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The study included 55 school teachers who voluntarily completed the questionnaire. Convenience sampling was used because participants were recruited based on accessibility and eligibility within the available research setting. Teachers were included if they were currently working in schools, had direct classroom teaching responsibilities, taught at one of the school levels represented in the study, agreed voluntarily to participate and completed the questionnaire sufficiently for analysis. The use of convenience sampling enabled data collection across different levels but limits generalisability to the wider teacher population.

3.3 Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire created for the study. The instrument consisted of 35 items organised into five sections: demographic information (5 items), teachers' perceptions of motivation (15 items), motivational strategies used by teachers (5 items), perceived challenges in student motivation (5 items), and the role of motivation in learning (10 items). The content was informed by literature on motivation and academic achievement, teacher emotional support, academic self-efficacy, teacher autonomy and structure, teacher support and amotivation, and autonomous and controlled motivation [1–3,5–7].

Sections B and C used a five-point Likert scale coded from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Section B examined perceptions concerning motivation and academic achievement, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards, classroom environment, lack of motivation, teacher encouragement, classroom participation, intelligence, parental support, technology, school-level differences, examination-related motivation, goal setting, autonomy and

teacher feedback. Section C examined the reported use of praise, activity-based learning, goal setting, constructive feedback and adaptation of teaching according to motivational needs. Sections D and E used fixed-response categorical questions covering motivational challenges, perceived influence on achievement, effective strategies, differences across levels, improvements, changes observed in motivated students, approaches to low interest and support required from schools.

3.4 Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that responses would be used for academic research purposes. Individual respondents were not identified in the reported findings. Completed responses were exported and organised for analysis. The dataset contained 55 usable responses. The study focused on teachers' perceptions and reported practices; it did not collect students' marks, directly measure student motivation through a student-administered scale or experimentally test motivational interventions.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data. Frequencies and percentages were used for demographic and categorical variables, whereas means and standard deviations were calculated for individual Likert-scale items. The analysis distinguished between ordinal Likert responses and nominal categorical questions. Numerical codes

assigned to categorical options were used only for organisation and were not interpreted as quantitative rankings. Because the results presented in the study are primarily descriptive, findings are described as patterns of teacher perceptions rather than statistically significant group differences unless supported by appropriate inferential testing.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile

The sample was predominantly female: 51 of the 55 respondents (92.73%) were women and 4 (7.27%) were men. The largest age group was 31–40 years (45.45%), followed by 41–50 years (40.00%); thus, 85.45% of respondents were between 31 and 50 years of age. Postgraduates formed the largest qualification group, with 28 teachers (50.91%), followed by B.Ed. holders (21.82%) and graduates (20.00%). Teaching experience was varied: 23.64% had 1–5 years, 32.73% had 6–10 years, 21.82% had 11–15 years and 21.82% had more than 15 years of experience. In terms of school level, 35 teachers (63.64%) taught primary classes, 10 (18.18%) taught middle school, 8 (14.55%) taught secondary school and 2 (3.64%) taught higher secondary. The sample was therefore strongly weighted toward the primary level.

4.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Motivation

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Motivation significantly influences students' academic achievement.	4.53	0.96
2	Students with high intrinsic motivation perform better academically.	4.25	0.70
3	Extrinsic rewards improve student performance.	4.15	0.80
4	Classroom environment plays an important role in student motivation.	4.53	0.63
5	Lack of motivation leads to poor academic performance.	4.00	0.96
6	Teacher encouragement increases students' learning engagement.	4.38	0.78
7	Motivated students show better classroom participation.	4.33	0.77
8	Motivation is more important than intelligence in academic success.	3.42	0.94
9	Parental support enhances student motivation.	4.35	0.70
10	Technology and digital tools can increase student motivation.	3.60	0.95
11	Primary students require more external motivation than higher levels.	3.93	0.86
12	Secondary students are motivated mainly by examination performance.	3.40	0.87
13	Goal-setting strategies improve students' academic outcomes.	4.04	0.61
14	Student autonomy improves intrinsic motivation.	3.82	0.58
15	Feedback from teachers enhances students' academic performance.	4.24	0.61

The overall pattern shows a positive perception of motivation. The highest mean scores were observed for the statements that motivation significantly influences academic achievement ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.96$) and that classroom environment plays an important role in student motivation ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.63$). The relatively smaller standard deviation for classroom environment indicates greater consistency in teachers' responses to that statement. Teacher encouragement also received a high mean ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.78$), suggesting that respondents strongly valued the teacher's role in promoting engagement.

Parental support received a mean of 4.35 ($SD = 0.70$), while the view that motivated students demonstrate better classroom participation obtained $M = 4.33$ ($SD = 0.77$).

Teachers also expressed favourable views regarding intrinsic motivation ($M = 4.25$), feedback ($M = 4.24$), extrinsic rewards ($M = 4.15$) and goal setting ($M = 4.04$). These findings indicate that participants did not attribute motivation to a single source. Instead, they recognised interacting influences involving students' internal motivation, teacher behaviour, family support and classroom context.

The lowest means were obtained for the statement that secondary students are motivated mainly by examination performance ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.87$) and the statement that motivation is more important than intelligence in academic success ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.94$). These values do not indicate a rejection of motivation. Rather, they suggest that teachers

were less willing to reduce academic success to a simple comparison between motivation and intelligence or to treat examination performance as the dominant motivational factor for all secondary students. Technology and digital tools received a moderate mean of 3.60 (SD = 0.95), indicating greater variation in teachers' views about technology as a motivational resource.

4.3 Motivational Strategies Used by Teachers

Strategy	Mean	SD
Praise and positive reinforcement	4.15	0.76
Activity-based learning	4.33	0.88
Academic goal setting	4.25	0.82
Constructive feedback	4.25	0.75
Adaptation of teaching methods	4.24	0.79

Teachers reported frequent use of all five motivational practices. Activity-based learning received the highest mean ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.88$). Goal setting and constructive feedback both obtained a mean of 4.25, while adapting teaching methods according to motivational needs obtained $M = 4.24$. Praise and positive reinforcement also received a high mean of 4.15. The narrow range of these means suggests that teachers generally rely on a multimethod approach rather than viewing one technique as sufficient for all learners.

4.4 Perceived Challenges in Student Motivation

Teachers identified a wide range of challenges, including lack of parental involvement, academic pressure and examination stress, digital distractions, lack of interest, low self-confidence, fear of failure, lack of autonomy, repetitive teaching methods, time constraints, large class size, lack of clear academic goals, limited teaching resources and negative feedback. Recurring concerns included student disinterest or low attention, digital distractions, academic pressure and inadequate parental support. These responses indicate that teachers viewed motivation as a multidimensional issue shaped by student, family, classroom, academic, technological and institutional conditions.

4.5 Differences in Motivational Needs Across School Levels

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, they differ significantly	36	65.45%
Yes, they differ slightly	12	21.82%
No, they are mostly similar	4	7.27%
Not sure	3	5.45%
Total	55	100%

Thirty-six teachers (65.45%) believed that motivational needs differ significantly across school levels, and 12 (21.82%) believed that they differ slightly. Combined, 48 of 55 teachers (87.27%) perceived at least some difference. Only four teachers (7.27%) considered motivational needs mostly similar, and three (5.45%) were unsure. This result is central to the study because it indicates a strong descriptive consensus that motivational practices should be responsive to developmental and educational level rather than applied uniformly.

4.6 Changes Observed in Highly Motivated Students and Responses to Low Motivation

Teachers associated high motivation with increased classroom participation and engagement, improved academic performance, better discipline and behaviour, greater confidence, and stronger interest in learning. When students showed low interest, teachers reported using individual attention and support, rewards and positive reinforcement, interactive or activity-based learning, counselling and personal guidance. For persistently unmotivated students, teachers also reported additional academic support, parental communication and modification of teaching strategies. These findings suggest that teachers recognise persistent motivation problems as requiring a broader response than simple rewards or reprimands.

Teachers reported adapting instruction through differentiated teaching, interactive and activity-based methods, individual attention and technology-based teaching. They also identified professional training, reduced workload and greater time flexibility, better infrastructure and teaching resources, and administrative support as factors that could strengthen their ability to motivate students. This suggests that motivational practice is perceived not only as an individual teacher responsibility but also as dependent on the wider institutional environment.

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that teachers hold a strongly positive perception of motivation as an important component of student learning and academic functioning. The high mean for the statement linking motivation with academic achievement corresponds with longitudinal evidence that motivation and academic achievement are reciprocally associated [1]. However, the present data must be interpreted carefully. The study measured teachers' perceptions rather than students' actual achievement scores or motivational states. Therefore, the strong agreement found among teachers is evidence of their professional beliefs and observations, not direct statistical proof that increasing motivation will necessarily produce higher marks.

The equally high rating for classroom environment is particularly meaningful because it places motivation within the context of teaching and learning rather than solely within the student. Research on teacher emotional support indicates that supportive interactions are associated with mastery motivation and behavioural engagement [2]. In the present study, teacher encouragement also received a high mean, and teachers reported using feedback, reinforcement and adaptation of teaching. These results suggest that respondents perceive their own interpersonal and instructional behaviour as central to creating motivational conditions.

The importance attached to intrinsic motivation and student autonomy is also consistent with contemporary motivational perspectives. Academic self-efficacy highlights the role of learners' beliefs about their competence [3], while self-determination-oriented research emphasises autonomy, competence and relatedness [7]. Teachers' identification of

low confidence, fear of failure and lack of autonomy as barriers further demonstrates that motivation is not simply about encouraging students to work harder. Students may disengage when they doubt their competence, experience excessive pressure or perceive little control over learning.

At the same time, teachers also rated extrinsic rewards positively and reported using praise and positive reinforcement. This is understandable in school settings, particularly with younger students or when immediate encouragement is required. The findings therefore do not support a rigid separation between intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. Instead, they suggest that teachers use a combination of internal and external supports. The educational challenge is to ensure that external reinforcement supports engagement without replacing opportunities for autonomy, meaningful learning and the development of self-directed motivation.

Activity-based learning emerged as the most strongly reported motivational strategy. This may reflect teachers' belief that active participation, concrete tasks and experiential learning make lessons more engaging. Goal setting, feedback and adaptive teaching were also rated highly. These strategies can be understood as complementary: activity-based learning creates involvement, goal setting provides direction, feedback provides information about progress, and adaptive teaching increases the likelihood that instruction matches learner needs. Together, they form a more responsive motivational environment than a single strategy used in isolation.

The finding that 87.27% of teachers perceived motivational needs to differ across school levels is one of the study's most important contributions. It suggests that teachers recognise developmental variation in the reasons students participate, the types of support they require and the challenges that affect them. Younger students may respond strongly to encouragement, structured activities and immediate reinforcement, whereas older students may be more affected by autonomy, future goals, examination pressure, identity and perceived relevance. Although the present study did not directly test the specific motivational profile of each level, the teachers' responses provide a clear rationale for avoiding a one-size-fits-all motivational approach.

The pattern of perceived challenges reinforces this conclusion. Digital distraction, student disinterest, academic pressure and parental support extend beyond the immediate instructional act. A teacher may use effective classroom methods but still encounter motivational barriers related to family expectations, examination stress, competing digital stimulation or students' prior experiences of failure. This supports the view that motivation is context dependent and that intervention may need to occur at multiple levels, involving teachers, parents, counsellors and school management.

The strategies reported for persistently unmotivated students are also noteworthy. Teachers described using individual support, counselling, parental communication, modified instruction and additional academic help. These responses

are consistent with research suggesting that autonomy support, structure and relatedness can be associated with lower amotivation [6]. They also reflect an understanding that persistent disengagement may require attention to underlying causes rather than simple repetition of rewards or instructions.

Institutional support emerged as another important dimension. Teachers identified professional training, better resources, manageable workloads and administrative encouragement as useful for improving motivational practice. This finding is practically significant because teachers cannot consistently provide individualised attention, differentiated instruction and engaging activities when time, workload or resources are severely constrained. A school-wide approach to motivation should therefore include not only expectations for teachers but also conditions that enable those expectations to be met.

6. Practical Implications

6.1 Implications for Teachers

Teachers may benefit from combining activity-based learning, positive reinforcement, goal setting, constructive feedback and differentiated instruction rather than relying on a single motivational technique. Because teachers perceive needs to differ across school levels, strategies should be adjusted according to developmental stage, student confidence, prior achievement and classroom context. Students with low interest may require more individual attention, smaller achievable goals and meaningful opportunities for success before broader motivational strategies become effective.

6.2 Implications for Schools and School Management

Schools can support student motivation by creating conditions in which teachers have sufficient time, resources and professional development to implement engaging instruction. Training may focus on classroom motivation, differentiated instruction, student autonomy, feedback, management of digital distraction and responses to persistent disengagement. Administrative encouragement and realistic workload planning may also help teachers sustain student-centred practices. Since classroom environment received one of the highest ratings in the study, school-level policies that promote supportive and psychologically safe learning environments may be especially valuable.

6.3 Implications for Parents

Parental support was strongly endorsed as a contributor to student motivation, and lack of parental involvement was identified as a challenge. Schools may therefore strengthen communication with parents regarding realistic expectations, constructive encouragement, study routines and responses to academic setbacks. Parents can support motivation not only by monitoring performance but also by recognising effort, encouraging persistence and helping students connect academic work with meaningful goals.

6.4 Implications for Students

Students may benefit when they are given opportunities to participate actively, set goals, reflect on progress and exercise appropriate autonomy. Teachers' responses indicate that confidence, interest and engagement are closely connected in everyday classroom observations. Learning experiences that provide achievable challenge, constructive feedback and a sense of competence may therefore help students develop more sustained motivation.

7. Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample consisted of 55 teachers and was obtained through convenience sampling. The sample was also unevenly distributed across school levels, with 63.64% of respondents from the primary level and only two teachers from higher secondary. The overall findings therefore reflect the experiences of this particular sample and should not be generalised to all teachers or schools.

Second, the study relied on self-reported teacher perceptions and practices. Responses may be influenced by professional beliefs, personal experiences or socially desirable responding. What teachers report using may not always correspond exactly with classroom behaviour. Direct classroom observation could provide a useful complement in future studies.

Third, students were not participants and their motivation was not directly measured using a validated student-administered scale. Similarly, actual academic achievement data such as marks, grades or examination scores were not collected. Consequently, the study cannot establish a direct statistical or causal relationship between student motivation and achievement. Statements concerning academic achievement must therefore remain framed as teachers' perceptions.

Fourth, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time. Motivation can change across terms, academic years, developmental stages and examination periods. Longitudinal research could better examine how motivational perceptions and practices change over time. Finally, the present article focuses mainly on descriptive analysis. Inferential comparisons across school levels would require careful attention to assumptions and adequate subgroup sizes, particularly because the higher-secondary group is extremely small.

8. Recommendations and Future Research

- Teachers should be encouraged to use more activity-based and student-centred approaches, together with constructive feedback and positive reinforcement.
- Schools should provide regular professional development on motivation, differentiated instruction, autonomy support and engagement strategies.
- Students should be involved in appropriate goal setting, self-assessment and meaningful classroom decision-making to strengthen ownership of learning.

- Parent-teacher communication should be strengthened so that academic and emotional support for students is coordinated across home and school.
- Schools should address excessive academic pressure, examination stress and digital distractions through balanced policies and supportive guidance.
- Adequate teaching resources, infrastructure, administrative support and manageable workloads should be considered part of the motivational environment.
- Future studies should include larger and more balanced samples across primary, middle, secondary and higher-secondary levels.
- Future research should include students' perspectives and direct measures of motivation, self-efficacy and actual academic achievement.
- Qualitative interviews or focus groups may be used to explore why particular strategies are effective for specific age groups or motivational difficulties.
- Longitudinal and intervention studies may examine whether specific motivational practices produce measurable changes in engagement and academic outcomes over time.

9. Conclusion

The present study provides a practical account of how 55 school teachers perceive the role of motivation in learning and academic achievement. Teachers showed strong agreement that motivation is important for academic achievement and that classroom environment plays a major role in supporting motivation. Teacher encouragement, parental support, classroom participation, intrinsic motivation and feedback were also strongly endorsed. The findings therefore portray motivation as a broad educational process shaped by interactions among the learner, teacher, family and classroom context.

Teachers reported using multiple strategies, particularly activity-based learning, goal setting, constructive feedback, positive reinforcement and adaptation of teaching methods. At the same time, they identified several barriers, including student disinterest, digital distractions, academic pressure, limited parental support, low confidence, fear of failure and institutional constraints. These patterns suggest that effective motivation requires more than isolated classroom techniques; it requires a responsive and supportive educational environment.

The finding that 87.27% of respondents perceived at least some differences in motivational needs across school levels is especially important. It supports the use of developmentally appropriate and flexible practices rather than uniform strategies across all age groups. Nevertheless, the study is descriptive and perception based. It does not directly measure students' motivation or achievement and cannot establish causality. Within these boundaries, the findings offer useful guidance for teachers and schools seeking to create learning environments that encourage engagement, confidence, persistence and meaningful participation.

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