
PARENTAL ROLES ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN (6-11 YEARS) IN TIMES OF INSECURITY IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper investigated parental roles on the academic achievement of children (6 – 11years) in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design for the study carried out in South-East Nigeria. The population for the study was 861,935 made up of 813,966 parents and 47,969 teachers in 5,567 primary school in South-East, Nigeria. The sample of the study was 800 made up of 550 parents and 250 teachers from Imo and Enugu States, Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used to select participants for this study. First stage utilized simple random sampling technique to pick two states (Enugu and Imo states). Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select five local governments (two from Enugu and three from Imo) at the second stage while simple random sampling was used to pick five primary schools from each local government area studied (10 from Enugu and 15 from Imo). In each selected school, 22 parents and 10 teachers were randomly selected (110 parents and 50 teachers) from each of the participated local government. The instrument for data collection was 34 item structured questionnaire named “Parental Roles in Academic Achievement of Children in Times of Insecurity Questionnaire” (PRAASCTIQ), developed from the literature reviewed for the study. The instrument was face validated by three experts. Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of items and an average coefficient of 0.91 was obtained. Data was collected by researcher and assistants. Data was analyzed using mean to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics. The study found out that both parents and teachers are involved in performing their social and physical roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in South-East, Nigeria. The findings also show that there is significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers with respect to their social and physical roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in South-East, Nigeria. The study concluded that parents and teachers have significant social roles to play in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity; and parent/teacher – child relationship is very necessary for pupils to perform well at school, among others. Based on the findings, the paper recommends among others that parents should actively monitor their children's learning activities at home to improve academic performance and emotional stability; and schools should organize regular parent-teacher meetings to strengthen communication and collaboration, ensuring consistent academic support for children.

Key words: Parental roles, academic, achievement, children, and times of insecurity

Introduction

Many families in the world are blessed with gift of children. Children are young human beings of less than 18 years regardless of gender, race, religion or status (Right of Child 2014). Children are unborn human beings, newborns, infants and any other stage of human growth of less than 18 years. old (The Human Rights Watch, 2019). According to Nwachukwu et al (2020), Children are generally defined as individuals who have not yet reached adulthood, typically categorized as

those under the age of 18. Contextually, children are young human beings below the age of 18 years who are in primary school between the ages of 6-11 years. Every child in primary school passes through the process of conception, birth, infancy and childhood. Individuals, especially children require consistent safety until they are matured. Safety of the primary school child is thus the responsibility of the parent or foster parents.

A parent is a person who brings up and cares for a child or children while a foster parent is a person temporarily serving as a parent for a child who has lost the parents, or one removed from a parent's care. According to Obijiofor et al (2020), Parents are individuals who have a biological, legal, or social relationship with a child and are responsible for the child's upbringing, care, and overall development. In a biological sense, parents are the biological mother and father of a child. However, in a broader social and legal context, parents include adoptive parents, foster parents, step-parents, and legal guardians who take on the role of providing care, protection, and guidance to a child (Obijiofor, 2020). The Human Rights Watch (2019) assert that surrogacy or assisted reproduction is another form of parenting, where a child is conceived with the help of a surrogate mother or donated gametes (sperm or eggs), the legal definition of a parent can be more complex. Contextually, a parent is considered as an individual who has legal and/or biological responsibility for the care, upbringing, and development of a child.

The concept of a parent can vary across cultures and legal systems, but there are some common elements that define parenthood. This means that parents have legal guardianship rights and responsibilities towards children under their care. Legal guardianship rights require parents to provide shelter, food, clothes, medical care and education to children until they are old enough to take care of themselves (Obijiofor, 2020). Parents in addition, provide emotional and social nurturing of their children so that these children can grow up to be responsible and empathetic individuals in the society (Sneha, 2023). These parents are expected to perform social and physical roles to ensure the safety of their children.

Socially, children are not born communal but must learn ways to accommodate others through opportunities or experiences provided within their environments by their parents, siblings, peers or other adults. Through opportunities, children learn to connect with other people or make social relations based on their level of exposure. (Zellman& Jill, 2018). The social role of the parents in the context of this study simply refers to the character parents exhibit in guiding their children on how to relate to society and the various organizations in the society. Parents are expected to introduce their children to a system of values, norms, and social status among other societal beliefs. Parents play the social roles of; teaching social norms and ethics, like politeness, greetings, responsibilities in society, giving warnings in areas of mistakes, and instilling religious values, and attitudes, (Whiz, 2023), Parents contribute to the planning, care for and interact with their own children, observe other adults care for and interact with their own children, and watch their children interact with peers or other members of the society. Parenting children properly on effective socialization is very important in shaping the personality, habits, and ways children socialize with other people. The family is, therefore, considered the most important agent of socialization because it is the centre of parental share of responsibilities in addition to physical role.

The physical role of parents to children includes all the activities parents engage in to raise happy, healthy children who become capable individuals. Unlike teachers, whose influence on a child is relatively limited, parents maintain a life-long commitment to their children. Activities that support this type of involvement provide information to parents about their child's development, health, safety, or home conditions that can support learning (Epstein, 2009 cited in Maša & Mila 2017). This study considers the physical roles of parents as those roles played by parents which includes learning about being healthy, exercising regularly, being a team player, having the right diet and growing in a conducive environment. Such guidance from parents can inculcate in children good regimen of exercise and diet to achieve ideal physical development.

Knowing that children learn from parental examples, caregivers are to make sure children are healthy and equipped with the skills and resources to succeed as adults specifically to reduce their psychological decadence. According to Nwakile et al (2020), the physical and social role of parents could affect the achievement of children.

Achievement means measurable result that shows the extent to which learners have achieved laid down instructional goals and objectives (Okoro, 2020). Achievement could also refer to what learners have acquired, which could be measured using standardized tests, performance assessments and/or portfolio assessment (Herald, 2022). It is also a measure of a learner's present level of knowledge or skills upon going through appropriate instructional exercises which enable them to learn or gain the ability to perform specific tasks, skills or behaviours in an anticipated academic achievement. Academic achievement is concerned with how learners accomplish different tasks given by their teachers during oral, practical or written exercises. Academic achievement refers to performance outcomes on the extent to which a learner accomplished specific objectives of activities in instruction (Ricarda, Anja, Anne & Linda (2015). Academic achievement is the accomplishment or attainment of educational goals and objectives (Njoku, 2015), The level of academic achievement is derived from the objectives of planned instructional exercises which are usually elicited during evaluation (Bukunola & Idowu, 2017), For a child in school to achieve academically, he/she must possess the ability to study the materials presented and also be able to remember facts and communicate acquired/retrieved knowledge and skills verbally or written on paper (Umezuruike, 2015). An evaluation of a given instructional exercise helps to provide feedback on the level of achievement of learners, which enables the instructor to pass an objective judgement concerning the level of success to given materials presented to learners/children in primary school. Academic achievement of a child could be high or low and every parent is interested in ensuring high academic achievement while ensuring their safety.

Despite extensive research on the relationship between parental roles and academic achievement, there is limited empirical evidence on how parental roles influence the academic achievement of primary school children, particularly in times of insecurity in South-East Nigeria. Existing studies have explored the general impact of parental involvement on children's educational outcomes (Umezuruike, 2015; Bukunola & Idowu, 2017). However, few studies have examined how parents' social and physical roles are affected by the prevailing insecurity in South-East Nigeria, such as kidnappings, communal conflicts, and political unrest, and how this insecurity influences children's academic performance. Moreover, while studies such as Obijiofor et al. (2020) and Ricarda et al. (2015) have highlighted the significance of parental guidance, physical care, and emotional support in shaping academic outcomes, they have not adequately addressed how these roles are adjusted or compromised during periods of insecurity. For example, insecurity can restrict parents' ability to provide a stable learning environment, affect school attendance, and limit parental involvement in school activities due to safety concerns (Okoro, 2020). Furthermore, most studies have focused on urban or relatively stable environments, overlooking the unique challenges faced by parents and children in conflict-prone areas, such as the South-East region of Nigeria.

Additionally, the existing literature does not provide sufficient insight into how parents modify their parenting strategies to support their children's learning and emotional well-being in insecure environments. For instance, Sneha (2023) emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in improving academic performance, but there is inadequate evidence on how insecurity impacts parents' ability to fulfill these roles. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap by examining how parental social and physical roles influence the academic achievement of primary school children (6–11 years) in the context of insecurity in South-East Nigeria. This study provides critical insights into the adaptive parenting strategies and support systems required to enhance children's educational outcomes in unstable environments.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to investigate parental roles in the academic achievement of children (6-11 years) in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

1. ascertained the social roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeastern State, Nigeria.
2. found out the physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeastern State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the social roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria?
2. What are the physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers on the social roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria.
- Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers on the physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It was conducted in South-East Nigeria, which comprises five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, with a total of 85 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and over 10 major cities. The region has witnessed increasing insecurity due to the activities of non-state actors, the Monday sit-at-home order, kidnapping, and cultism. The study population comprised 861,935 parents and teachers from all public primary schools in South-East Nigeria. This included 813,966 parents and 47,969 teachers across 5,567 schools, as recorded by the State Universal Education Boards. Parents and teachers were selected for the study because they play critical roles in shaping the academic and emotional development of children, particularly in times of insecurity. A sample of 800 respondents, consisting of 550 parents and 250 teachers from 25 schools, was drawn using a multistage sampling technique.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Parental Roles in Academic Achievement of Children in Times of Insecurity Questionnaire" (PRAACTIQ). The instrument was validated by three experts, including one from the Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, one from Department of Childhood Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and one from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. The instrument's reliability was established using Cronbach alpha which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.91. Data was collected by the researcher with the help of research assistants. Data analysis involved computing the mean for each research question and testing the hypotheses using t-test statistics at a 0.05 significance level. Responses were weighted as 4, 3, 2, and 1 for Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, respectively. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used to determine agreement or disagreement. Mean values above 2.50 were considered as agreement, while those below 2.50 were considered as disagreement. The decision rule for the hypotheses

was based on the significance level; the null hypothesis was rejected if the significance value was less than 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: What are social roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation values of the responses of the respondents on parental social roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity

S/N	Item Statement	Parents		Teachers		Overall		Decision
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
1	Rewarding them for success in their academic performance.	3.35	0.79	2.67	0.85	3.14	0.87	Agree
2	Taking children to educational trips.	3.20	0.81	2.69	0.74	3.04	0.83	Agree
3	Maintaining parent/teacher relationship.	3.30	0.65	2.81	0.71	3.15	0.71	Agree
4	Being a role model for their children.	3.15	0.83	2.49	0.93	2.94	0.91	Agree
5	Devising fun ways to learn for children.	3.28	0.74	2.84	0.65	3.14	0.74	Agree
6	Providing encouragement and support for activities that enable the child to master key developmental tasks.	3.15	0.80	2.57	0.84	2.97	0.86	Agree
7	Providing avenue for social adjustment skill and behaviors.	3.24	0.78	2.53	0.79	3.02	0.85	Agree
8	Providing social autonomous attitude in the child development process.	3.19	0.80	2.50	0.83	2.97	0.87	Agree
9	Promote social relationship among peers.	3.22	0.77	2.53	0.76	3.01	0.83	Agree
10	Provide guidance services on social life, or norms for children.	3.23	0.68	2.68	0.83	3.06	0.77	Agree
11	Provide love for their children.	3.20	0.74	2.68	0.72	3.04	0.77	Agree
12	Provide shelter for their children.	2.91	0.83	2.40	0.77	2.76	0.85	Agree
13	Knowing friends that children keep.	2.90	0.87	2.28	0.74	2.71	0.88	Agree
14	Regulating the children's time.	3.07	0.84	2.42	0.78	2.87	0.88	Agree
15	Regulating the play time of children.	3.07	0.81	2.69	0.73	2.95	0.81	Agree
16	Regulating the children's choice of television programs.	3.01	0.83	2.42	0.85	2.83	0.88	Agree
17	Regulating the time children spend in viewing television programs.	3.31	0.70	2.95	0.52	3.19	0.67	Agree
18	Regulating the use of cell phone by children.	3.14	0.79	2.59	0.82	2.97	0.84	Agree
	Overall mean	3.16	0.30	2.60	0.29	2.99	0.39	Agree

The results showed that the overall mean for the social roles of parents is 2.99, with a deviation of 0.39. Parents have an overall mean of 3.16, and standard deviation of 0.30, while teachers have a mean of 2.60 and a standard deviation of 0.29. When compared with the mean criterion of 2.5, it was therefore appropriate to state that parents and teachers agree to the social roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in secondary schools. Although, on items 4 and 16, the mean responses of teachers did not really meet the acceptable criterion, but the overall means of 2.94 and 2.83 respectively showed that in general terms, "being a role model for their children", and "regulating the children's choice of television programs" are also accepted as social roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Primary schools.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers with respect to Parental social roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the responses of Respondents on the social roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	T	Sig	Decision
Parents	550	3.16	0.30	798	25.31	0.00	Rejected
Teachers	250	2.60	0.29				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2 shows t-value of respondents on social roles of parents and teachers. The observed cluster mean rating of parents when compared with that of teachers showed a t-value of 25.31 and a significance of 0.00. This is less than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers with respect to their social roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria was rejected. Therefore, there was significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers on their social roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation values of the responses of the respondents on parental physical roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity

S/N	Item Statement	Parents		Teachers		Overall		Decision
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
1	Monitoring their learning programs.	3.18	0.79	2.75	0.74	3.05	0.80	Agree
2	Reading together with children.	3.24	0.78	2.75	0.75	3.09	0.80	Agree
3	Overseeing their academic activities.	3.24	0.77	2.80	0.70	3.10	0.77	Agree
4	Scheduling their schoolwork appropriately.	3.23	0.78	2.87	0.63	3.12	0.75	Agree
5	Helping in homework of children.	3.23	0.74	2.76	0.73	3.09	0.77	Agree
6	Providing conducive home conditions that can support children activities.	3.16	0.80	2.67	0.78	3.01	0.83	Agree
7	Provision of safe and healthy environment for the child.	3.31	0.71	2.70	0.74	3.12	0.77	Agree
8	Providing tutoring using online and offline resources.	3.09	0.86	2.16	0.90	2.80	0.97	Agree
9	Accepting communication and feedback from the school.	3.08	0.80	2.66	0.89	2.95	0.85	Agree
10	Being available for their children.	3.30	0.76	2.93	0.67	3.18	0.75	Agree
11	Helping to print children's assignments, when necessary.	3.06	0.80	2.68	0.74	2.94	0.80	Agree
12	Helping the children with diagrams.	3.22	0.76	2.65	0.81	3.04	0.82	Agree
13	Helping to solve mathematics problems for children.	2.86	0.86	2.43	0.74	2.73	0.85	Agree
14	Giving listening ear to children while doing homework.	2.91	0.85	2.53	0.80	2.79	0.85	Agree
15	Helping to arrange children's school bags.	3.06	0.87	2.74	0.8	2.96	0.86	Agree
16	Helping children to operate computer in their learning.	3.30	0.78	2.90	0.69	3.17	0.78	Agree
	Overall mean	3.15	0.31	2.69	0.35	3.01	0.39	Agree

Data in Table 3 showed the mean and standard deviation of values of respondents on the physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity. The results showed that the overall mean for the physical roles of parents is 3.01, with a standard deviation of 0.39. Parents had an overall mean of 3.15, and standard deviation of 0.31, while teachers had a mean of 2.69 and a standard deviation of 0.35. When compared with the mean criterion of 2.5, the

values indicated that parents and teachers agree to the identified physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in secondary schools. Although, on items 8 and 13, the mean responses of teachers did not really meet the acceptable criterion, but the overall means of 2.80 and 2.73 respectively show that generally, “providing tutoring using online and offline resources”, and “helping to solve mathematics problems for children” are also accepted as physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Primary schools.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Respondents with respect to Parental physical roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria.

Table 4: t test Analysis of the responses of Respondents on the Physical roles of Parents on the Academic Achievement of Children in times of Insecurity.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	T	Sig	Decision
Parents	550	3.15	0.31	798	19.01	0.00	Rejected
Teachers	250	2.69	0.35				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 4 shows t-value for the significance of physical roles of parents and teachers. The observed cluster mean rating of parents when compared with that of teachers showed a t value of 19.01 and a significance of 0.00. This is less than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers on their physical roles in academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria was rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference in the mean responses of parents and teachers with respect to their physical roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The results are discussed based on the specific purpose of the study as follows.

A. Social roles of parents and teachers in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity.

The study revealed that parents have social roles to play in the academic achievement of their children. Such social roles include rewarding children for success in their academic performance, maintaining parent/teacher relationships, being role models for their children and providing encouragement and support for activities that enable the child to master key developmental tasks. Other social roles include providing avenues for social adjustment skills and behaviours, providing a socially autonomous attitude in the child development process, promoting social relationships among peers, providing guidance services on social life or norms for children, providing love and shelter and regulating play time for their children. These findings were appropriate because, during times of insecurity, children need to be guided in their social activities.

This finding of this study on social roles of parents were in conformity with the findings of Zellman and Jill (2018) in a study where it was found out that parents introduce children to the social world where they develop an understanding of themselves and the environment and value in society. It therefore means that a child’s social development is strongly influenced by the process of treatment or guidance of parents in recognizing various aspects of social life or norms of community life and encouraging and giving examples to children on how to apply these norms in everyday life. The finding of the study were also in agreement with the findings of Ambron

(2017) who explained that socialization is a learning process that guides children toward social personality development, to help children become responsible members of the society.

B. Physical roles of parents and teachers in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity.

The study found out that parents play physical roles in the academic achievement of children in times of insecurity. These roles include monitoring their learning programs, reading together with children, overseeing their academic activities, scheduling their schoolwork appropriately and helping with homework of children. Other physical roles are providing conducive home conditions that can support children's activities, providing of safe and healthy environment for the child, providing tutoring using online and offline resources, accepting communication and feedback from the school, being available for their children, helping to solve mathematics problems for children and giving listening ear to them while doing homework.

The findings of the study in this direction were in consonance with the findings of Epstein in Maša & Mila (2017) who studied parental involvement as important factor for successful education, where the authors found out that physical roles of parents in academic performance of the children includes all of the activities that parents engage in to raise happy and healthy children who become capable students. Unlike teachers whose influence on a child's is relatively limited, parents maintain a life-long commitment to their children. Activities that support this type of involvement provide information to parents and teachers about their child's development, health, safety, or home conditions that can support child's learning. Musa and Milla (2017) maintained that parental social involvement in the education of their children begins at home with the parents providing a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support, and a positive attitude about school. Research shows that parental physical involvement is more important to children's academic success than their family's socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, or educational background. The findings of the study on physical roles of parents were in line with the findings of Amatea & West (2017) that parental physical involvement and roles encourage children's achievement in many ways, one of which is to contribute positively to their children's education and assist them with their academic work at home. Parents who read to their children, assist them with their homework, and provide tutoring using resources provided by teachers tend to have their children do better in school than children whose parents do not assist (Adulahi, 2014).

The findings of the study agree with the findings of Wase (2015) who found out that children whose parents are actively involved in their schooling benefit better than children whose parents are passively involved. Specifically, if parents attend teacher conferences, accept phone calls from the school, and read and sign messages from school, their children benefit academically more than those whose parents do not. Hence, children excel even more when their parents assist them at home with their homework, attend school-sponsored events, and volunteer at their children's schools.

Conclusion

The study examined the social and physical roles of parents in the academic achievement of children aged 6–11 years in times of insecurity in South-East Nigeria. The findings revealed that parents play significant social roles such as providing encouragement and support, maintaining parent-teacher relationships, regulating children's time, and promoting social relationships among peers, all of which contribute positively to children's academic success despite the prevailing insecurity. Similarly, parents' physical roles, including monitoring academic activities, helping with homework, providing a safe and healthy environment, and facilitating online and offline tutoring, were found to be crucial in supporting children's learning and overall development. The study concludes that parental involvement in both social and physical dimensions significantly

enhances the academic achievement of primary school children even under challenging circumstances of insecurity. Strengthening these parental roles could further improve children's educational outcomes and emotional stability despite the challenges posed by insecurity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Parents should actively monitor their children's learning activities at home to improve academic performance and emotional stability.
2. Schools should organize regular parent-teacher meetings to strengthen communication and collaboration, ensuring consistent academic support for children.
3. Government agencies should provide psychological support and security measures in schools to create a safer learning environment and reduce the adverse effects of insecurity on children.
4. Parents should encourage positive social interactions among children by organizing supervised peer activities to improve children's social adjustment and emotional health.
5. Teachers should provide regular feedback to parents on children's academic progress to enable timely parental intervention and improved performance.
6. School administrators should create safe spaces within schools where children can engage in extracurricular and academic activities without fear of violence or disruptions.
7. Community leaders should collaborate with schools and parents to establish neighbourhood watch programs that enhance the security of children within school premises and during transit.

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