

Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

**MACHIAVELLIANISM AS THE ANTECEDENT OF NEPOTISM:
AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

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ABSTRACT

People or organizations initiate to obtain or multiply resources. One of the personal initiatives is to increase resources by establishing marriage or kinship or using social networks. It is possible to evaluate nepotism as an effort of social networks to increase resources. Nepotism is often handled through a human resource management and cultural perspective. This research differs from the previous research studies due to the combination of nepotism and behavioral traits of personality. In this research, it is aimed to examine the effect of Machiavellianism, which has become famous for its fundraising strategy on nepotism. The research focuses on combining the concepts of non-clinical Machiavellian personality traits influencing the recruitment process and promotion from human resource management functions. The universe of the research consists of companies serving in the energy sector in Adana. The questionnaire technique has been used as a data collection method in the research. 243 participants have been reached through the convenience sampling technique. It has been seen that there is a positive and significant relation between Machiavellianism, nepotism in promotion, and nepotism in recruitment. This research does not examine the outputs of employees who do not have social networks in organizations but deals with the Machiavellian tendencies to take advantage of nepotism only in terms of personality psychology.

Keywords: Conservation of Resources, Nepotism, Machiavellianism.

**ADAM KAYIRMANIN ÖNCÜLÜ OLARAK MAKYAVELİZM:
AMPİRİK BİR ARAŞTIRMA**

ÖZET

İnsanlar veya örgütler, kaynakların elde edilmesi veya çoğaltmasına yönelik girişimlerde bulunurlar. Kişisel girişimlerden biri de evlilik veya akrabalık bağı kurma ya da sosyal bağları kullanarak kaynak artırmaktır. Sosyal bağların kaynakları artırmaya dönük çabası olarak nepotizmi değerlendirmek mümkündür. Nepotizm, genellikle insan kaynakları yönetimi ve kültürel perspektiften ele alınmaktadır. Nepotizm ve kişiliğin davranışsal özellikleriyle meydana gelen kombinasyonla bu araştırma, kendinden öncekilerden farklılaşmaktadır. Bu araştırmada, kaynak yaratma stratejisiyle ünlenen Makyavelizmin nepotizme etkisini incelemek amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırmada, klinik olmayan Makyavelist kişilik özelliklerinin insan kaynakları yönetimi işlevlerinden terfi ve işe alma sürecini etkileyişine yönelik kavramları birleştirmeye odaklanılmıştır. Araştırmmanın evrenini, Adana'daki enerji sektöründe faaliyet gösteren şirketler oluşturmaktadır. Veri toplama yöntemi olarak araştırmada anket teknigi kullanılmıştır. Kolayda örnekleme tekniğiyle 243 katılımcıya ulaşılmıştır. Makyavelizm ile terfide kayırmacılık ve işe alında kayırmacılık arasında pozitif ve anlamlı bir ilişki bulunduğu görülmüştür. Bu araştırma, örgütlerde sosyal bağları olmayan çalışanlara ilişkin çıktıları ele almamaktadır ve sadece kişilik psikolojisi bağlamında Makyavelistlerin, nepotizmden faydalama eğilimlerine odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kaynakları Koruma, Nepotizm, Makyavelizm.

1. Introduction

Experience and learning assume important roles in identifying survival needs. People motivate themselves to meet their needs. Anything used to meet identified needs has value, and anything valuable is cited as a resource (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). A resource is a phenomenon that is available, must be obtained, or that the existing must be preserved. Hobfoll (1989) explained the resources and the access to resources, which are the determinants of quality of life, through resource conservation theory. According to this theory, it is possible to figure out how to access resources (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). For instance, creating resources through the contribution of her or his own knowledge by convincing the capitalists is related to the learning process. Having a good education provides a good status and the obtained status provides material power is potential resource gain. In addition, personal or psychological traits are considered as a resource (Hobfoll, 2001). Furthermore, establishing kinship ties through marriage, using social networks in order to increase-gains or to achieve non-existent are considered social network resources (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). Efforts to multiply resources are not about whether the behavior towards-access to resource is ethical or not. Therefore, moral licensing ensures that unethical behaviors are perceived rationally (Greene & Low, 2014). And thus, it is not permitted to cause a situation that may undermine the prestige of the person (Simbrunner & Schlegelmilch, 2017).

It is possible to consider nepotism as an effort to conserve resources. Even, it can be said that moral licensing may be normalized with nepotism. In fact, nepotism is not moral behavior. However, the tendency to pursue unethical behavior can be protected by moral licensing in order to conserve resources. Although it is stated that this effort is supported by culture (Abdalla et al., 1998; Aldraehim et al., 2012; Kragh, 2012), it is appropriate to state that personality psychology and nepotism are not discussed much (Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2018). Nepotism provides opportunities for gain-enhancing to the person who seeks nepotism. Obtaining status is one of these benefits (Hobfoll, 2001). Prestige is an element valued by the dark triad in terms of personality psychology (Hansen & Baker, 2017). It must be said that the strongest side of the dark triad (Machiavellianism-Narcissism-Psychopathy) is mastering manipulation to protect their own gains (Hansen & Baker, 2017; Jones & Paulhus, 2010). Therefore, they will do everything to achieve the resources they want to obtain. The choices, such as marriage as a fundraising strategy, and gaining status by kinship (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007), point to resource conservation theory.

This research aims to examine the effect of Machiavellianism as a fundraising strategy on nepotism, by referring to the evolution of personal characteristics, which Jonason & Webster (2012) suggested through the resource conservation theory. Nepotism, which has been generally handled from a human resource management and cultural perspective, makes this research different from the previous research studies, due to its combination with the behavioral characteristics of the dark personality. This research focuses on integrating the concepts of non-clinical Machiavellian personality traits influencing the recruitment process and promotion from human resource functions.

2. Reviewing Literature and Developing Hypothesis

Although nepotism, considered the transfer of a cultural characteristic (Ignatowski et al., 2019), appears to be a more common phenomenon in developing countries (Kragh, 2012), it enables the privileges, resulting from the kinship, to be transformed into gains (Abdalla et al., 1998; Jones, 2012; Vveinhardt & Petrauskaitė, 2013; Wated & Sanchez, 2015). Nepotism is derived from “*Nepot*”, meaning “relative”. The origin of nepotism goes back to the 1670s. It involves a practice that refers to popes choosing their successors in Italy. Nepotism defines the special support given to grandchildren and family members by the elders of the church (Rodén, 1996). That is, it represents the prioritization of kinship (Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2018). Nepotism is more common in the public sector in Italy, especially in universities, and it is considered corruption, therefore it is a phenomenon that causes Italians to enact laws to prevent nepotism (Abramo et al., 2014).

To have the same lineage (Abdalla et al., 1998; Aldrahim et al., 2012) and to be connected to a certain class or using these ties to reach certain positions without the need for merit (Ponzo & Scoppa, 2010) are expressions that define nepotism thereby being preferred by social network (Jones, 2012), even if there is no blood relation. It is a phenomenon that brings a return to the bestowed person, whether it is through blood ties or social relations (Boutilier, 2009; Im & Chen, 2019). Ignatowski et al. (2019) on the other hand, took the concept from a broader perspective and interpreted it as the unfair distribution of resources with the effectiveness of a strong social capital.

Nepotism is a practice that is maintained through human resource management in organizations (Basterretxea et al., 2019). Ignatowski et al. (2019) state that nepotism has a positive impact on the loyalty, satisfaction, and work motivation of the employee favored by the manager who encourages her or him. However, nepotism does pay attention to knowledge, skills, and merit (Boutilier, 2009). Therefore, it is determined that nepotism in organizations causes a decrease in organizational commitment, motivation, and work satisfaction (Abdalla et al., 1998), reluctance to work (Ignatowski et al., 2019), intention to leave, absenteeism, and an increase in stress levels for those who do not have the privilege (Arasli & Tumer, 2008; Hayajneh et al., 1994). Also, it triggers a sense of lack of organizational justice (Gomez & Sanchez, 2005), while it creates insecurity (Keles et al., 2011) and causes conflicts between those who benefit from nepotism and those who do not (Abdalla et al., 1998). Rather, it is prominently seen in the recruitment and promotion process, and it reduces the organizational output of other employees who cannot benefit from the privileges of nepotism to a negative level (Sroka & Vveinhardt, 2017). There are many research studies discussing the consequences of nepotism on employees as it is seen.

According to Gomez & Sanchez (2005), nepotism involves actions that strengthen the reputation of others towards the individual and the self-confidence of the person. Can it be possible to deal with nepotism, which supports motivation to increase resources, through personality psychology? To manipulate and over-use social resources as a way of multiplying gains, to use the same resources to satisfy the need for acceptance, to maintain prestige without limit in getting resources (Jonason & Webster, 2012; Jones & Paulhus, 2010), to expect special nepotism from their social networks by thinking that they have a right is dark are the intersection points of these three representing personality (Hansen & Baker, 2017). These points are used to develop resources by leveraging moral licensing and to create opportunities (Kong et al., 2020).

Apart from the common features they have, the dark triad differ from each other due to the level of inclination to display these features. In brief, each dark personality has its own dominant characteristics. Machiavellianism describes people who are prone to exploit others, motivated by personal gain, narcissism figures the individuals who tend to be selfish and put themselves at the center of life because of their self-admiration, and psychopathy describes people prone to act impulsively without considering the consequences of their behavior (Book et al., 2015; Jones & Paulhus, 2014). It is thought that each of the dark triad can use moral licensing to attribute social conformity to behavior that is difficult to interpret ethically and to have their own privileged rights (Jordan et al., 2011; Greene & Low, 2014). To demonstrate publicly unethical behavior may affect this prestige-lover dark tiro. Therefore, they are extremely successful in using moral licensing without damaging their prestige, that is, in manipulating other people (Lievens et al., 2008). Simbrunner & Schlegelmilch (2017) suggested moral licensing allows someone to think that she or he is privileged by social networks and that those around her or him support this view. And thus, the basis for nepotism focused on resource creation is prepared.

Nepotism, which ignores the merit without the need for knowledge and learning process due to social networks, and even which has a motivation that does not waste the time to be spent on these processes (Boutilier, 2009), provides the opportunity to produce more resources by spending less. Nepotism, which is examined through the samples of the human resources management-centered (Abdalla et al., 1998), family businesses (Jones, 2012), with the distinction between the public and private sectors (Ignatowski et al., 2019), intercultural comparison (Wat- ed & Sanchez, 2015) and socio-psychological level (Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2018), has the capacity to conserve resources.

Protecting resources also means avoiding risks that will reduce resources (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). According to Iyayi & Kadiri (2019), employees create strategies for reducing environmental risks in order to maximize the opportunities (gains) offered by career management. They concluded that these strategies are associated with emotional, cognitive, and Machiavellian intelligence. They even testified that Machiavellian intelligence is more suitable to be used to create manipulation in non-institutionalized, underdeveloped organizations. According to Smith (2021), opportunism is the cornerstone of Machiavellianism. Mohamed & Samman (2022) point out that Machiavellian leadership encourages employees to behave opportunistically, thus increasing the tendency of employees to engage in unethical behavior.

Opportunism focuses on increasing resources, and the personality with the strongest motivation for this behavior is Machiavellianism (Smith, 2021). In addition, it has been found that Machiavellianism is the most important personality style influencing cognitive choices in ethical decision-making in working life (Sharma & Bhal, 2003). It is seen that nepotism is perceived as unethical behavior (Aldraehim et al., 2012; Kragh, 2012) and it is a mechanism that helps to protect resources (Gomez & Sanchez, 2005; Simbrunner & Schlegelmilch, 2017). The philosophy of Machiavellianism, which is stated to be opportunistic (Smith, 2021), will not hesitate to use nepotism in career-related recruitment and promotion processes (Iyayi & Kadiri, 2019). Moreover, examining nepotism through personality psychology (Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2018) helps to illuminate the recognition of individual personality and how it displays tendencies (Sharma & Bhal, 2003). For this reason, Machiavellianism, without hesitation to use social

networks, will expect nepotism as a way of increasing profit for itself through human resource management processes. The hypotheses created in line with the opinions are formed as below:

H_1 : Machiavellianism affects nepotism in human resource management processes, and Machiavellianism has a positive and significant relation with nepotism in the promotion.

H_2 : Machiavellianism has an impact on nepotism in human resource management processes, and Machiavellianism has a positive and significant relation with nepotism in recruitment.

This research evaluates the tendency of Machiavellianism, which adopts all means as a tool to reach resources and to increase personal gain through human resources practices by using nepotism. Any research on nepotism as a human resources practice is discussed together with Machiavellianism have been found.

3. Research Method

It is aimed to examine whether Machiavellianism, the product of personality psychology, has an effect on nepotism. The relations to be revealed were shaped with the assumption of causality in line with this purpose, and the research method was created quantitatively. The questionnaire was preferred as the technique of accessing the data, due to the quantitative design of the research. Information on the universe, samples, and measurement tools is given under this title.

3.1. Universe and Sample of Research

The universe of this research consists of employees in the energy sector in Adana. 296 participants were reached by convenience sampling technique between March and April 2022. The answers of 243 participants, who were considered appropriate, were evaluated by subtracting the wrong answers given to the validation questions. It can be said that the number of samples is sufficient in line with the rule of ten times the number of items (Bryman & Cramer, 2001). The "Ethics Committee Approval" of the study was obtained from Kocaeli University, Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee.

It is seen that 60.5% of the participants are male and 39.5% are female when the descriptive characteristics of the employees participating in the research are taken into consideration. Also, it is seen that 59.3% are 18-25 years old, 14.8% are 26-33 years old, 10.3% are 34-41 years old, and 15.6% are 42 years old and over, as the age groups of the participant are examined. It can be said that 33.7% are high school graduates, 27.2% are associate degree graduates, and 39% are undergraduate graduates. In addition, 32.1% of the participants are married, whereas 67.9% of them are single. It has been found that 59.7% of the participants have a working period of 1-5 years.

3.2. Measurement Tools

The questionnaire technique was used in the research as a data collection method. There are also questions on demographic information in the questionnaire as well as the scales. All of the scales used are rated according to a five-point Likert scale.

Machiavellianism: The dark triad scale, which was developed by Jonason & Webster (2010), was adapted to Turkish by Özsoy et al. (2017). The scale consists of three factors and twelve items, whose four-item Machiavellianism dimension was used for this research.

Nepotism: The original version of the scale was developed by Abdalla et al. (1998), and was adapted into Turkish by Asunakutlu & Avcı (2010). The scale consists of three factors and fourteen items.

4. Findings

There are Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and correlation values of the scales in this part.

4.1. Validity and Reliability Results

EFA and CFA were carried out to determine the construct bias of the scales, and the EFA results in which the scale structure was explained are shown in Table 1 while the CFA results in which the scale structure was confirmed are given in Table 2.

Table 1: EFA Results of the Scales

EFA	Item	Factor Value	Eigenvalues	%	KMO	Bartlett Test	p
Machiavellianism	M1	.89					
	M2	.85					
	M3	.82	3.04	68.606	.82	593.451	.000
	M4	.72					
Nepotism (Nepotism in promotion)	NP1	.45					
	NP2	.61					
	NP3	.71					
	NP4	.78					
	NP5	.74	5.93	37.425			
	NP6	.68				.91	1516.033 .000
	NP7	.71					
	NP8	.70					
Nepotism (Nepotism in recruitment)	NR9	.75					
	NR10	.71	1.18	19.391			
	NR11	.62					

Note: ***p<.001; KMO=Kaizer-Meyer-Olkin; %Explained Variance

The KMO value for the Machiavellianism scale was calculated as .82 (>.60) while the KMO value for the nepotism scale was calculated as .91 (>.60). That Bartlett sphericity tests were significant for both scales ($p<.001$) indicates that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2009). Principal Axis Factoring analysis and Varimax rotation (except Machiavellianism) method were used to examine the factor structure of the scales. As a result of the analysis, the single-factor structure in the Machiavellian scale has been determined, however, the nepotism scale exhibited a different structure from the original and the 6th, 7th, and 8th items, which were under the “transactional nepotism” factor, and it gathered under the “nepotism in promotion” factor. In addition, the 9th, 10th, and 11th items under the “transactional favoritism” factor were removed from the scale since the distance of the loads on the factors in which the items are collected should be at least 10%, in terms of factor loads. The lowest factor load in the Machiavellianism scale was .72, and the lowest factor value in the nepotism scale was .45. In conclusion, the single-factor structure with an eigenvalue of 3.04 in the Machiavellianism scale indicates 68.60% of the variance while the two-factor structure with an eigenvalue of 7.11 in the nepotism scale explains 56.81% of the variance.

The fit values, reliability coefficients, and convergent validity results as consequences of CFA are given in Table 2.

Table 2: CFA Results of Scales

CFA	Item	Factor Value	t-value	p-value	α	CR	AVE
Machiavellianism	M1	.71	Stable	Stable	.89	.89	.68
	M2	.81	12.081	.000***			
	M3	.90	13.31	.000***			
	M4	.87	12.923	.000***			
Nepotism (Nepotism in promotion)	NP1	.41	Stable	Stable	.89	.90	.54
	NP2	.65	5.996	.000***			
	NP3	.80	6.402	.000***			
	NP4	.87	6.531	.000***			
	NP5	.73	6.217	.000***			
	NP6	.74	5.996	.000***			
	NP7	.79	6.402	.000***			
	NP8	.77	6.531	.000***			
Nepotism (Nepotism in recruitment)	NR9	.83	Stable	Stable	.80	.80	.58
	NR10	.87	14.504	.000***			
	NR11	.53	8.416	.000***			

Fit Indexes $\chi^2/df=2.18$; RMSEA=.07; SRMR=.05; GFI=.90; CFI=.95

Note: α =Cronbach's Alpha; CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted

The measurement model was detected as fit with the data, and it was observed that it met the specified index values (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). Those α coefficients and CR values are $\geq .70$ show that the scales have internal consistency while factor loads and CR coefficients are $\geq .70$ and AVE values are $\geq .50$ indicating convergent validity (Hair et al., 2006). The items, whose factor load was below .70, were excluded from the measurement model since the calculated CR and AVE values were above the threshold values (Hair et al., 2017).

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Results

The mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and correlation values of the research variables are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Relations between Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
1. Machiavellianism	2.17	1.06	.842	.033	1		
2. Nepotism in promotion	3.11	0.87	-.124	-.122	.32**	1	
3. Nepotism in recruitment	3.35	0.89	-.208	-.164	.23**	.59**	1

Note: n=243; ** p<.01; SD=Standard Deviation

The mean values of the Machiavellianism scale, nepotism in promotion, and nepotism in recruitment are 2.17, 3.11, and 3.35, respectively. According to the skewness and kurtosis values, the distribution of the data set is normal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). There is a positive and significant relationship between Machiavellianism, nepotism in promotion, and nepotism in recruitment ($r=.32$, $p<.01$; $r=.23$, $p<.01$, respectively).

4.3. Testing Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the research were tested through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis Results

Hypotheses	β	SE	t value	p	R ²
Machiavellianism \rightarrow Nepotism in promotion	.37	0.04	4.00	.000***	.14
Machiavellianism \rightarrow Nepotism in recruitment	.31	0.08	4.15	.000***	.09

Note: p<.001; β =Standardized Beta Coefficients; SE=Standard Error

It is seen that Machiavellianism has a positive and significant effect on nepotism in promotion and nepotism in recruitment ($\beta=.37$, $p<.001$; $\beta=.31$, $p<.001$, respectively) when Table 4 is considered. According to the results, it is observed that Machiavellianism explains 14% ($R^2=.14$) of the change in nepotism in promotion while it explains .09% ($R^2=.09$) of the change in nepotism in recruitment. Findings support the H_1 and H_2 hypotheses of the research.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Unlike the studies that associate it with social culture, nepotism has been examined by separating it from the culture in this research, and its relation with Machiavellianism, which is famous as a utilitarian personality style, has been revealed. The view that Jonason & Webster (2010) construct strategic behaviors (resource increase) according to the goals of the dark triad has been examined from the perspective of Machiavellianism through this research, and behavioral strategies have been found to be implemented with nepotism, and the difference of the research has been revealed. It has been determined that recruitment, promotion, and resource allocation processes from human resources practices are based on nepotism (Basterretxea et al., 2019), and it has also been proven that Machiavellianism, in the context of personality psychology, as the antecedent of nepotism, expects privileges in the recruitment and promotion processes.

Jonason & Webster (2012) stated that the dark triad chose their exploitative actions as a way of facilitating their lifestyle. Book et al. (2015) expressed that the dark triad, which is considered social exploiter, especially psychopathy, tends to continue this process through marriage. According to the researchers, marriage has been considered a life strategy for gene transfer in maintaining biological processes. Through this research, it is seen that marriage is preferred as a way of gaining power and resources rather than gene transfer, unlike Book et al. (2015), Jones & Paulhus (2010) called this preference a fast-living strategy. It has also been proven that the intentions of Machiavellianism to increase resources through marriage or closeness are behaviorally implemented in the consequence of this research.

Making an honest impression when they cheat so as not to harm their prestige (Griffiths, 2003; Jonason & Webster, 2012) provides an important reference for Machiavellianists to conserve resources by making use of moral licensing (Kong et al., 2020). To want something which she or he has no right through the networks of closeness and not to think that she or he exposes others to injustice when it is obtained proves that she or he is a social resource exploiter. Lillienfeld et al. (2012) emphasized that psychopathy would be more successful in business and politics. It is seen that Machiavellianists prefer to turn to actions that facilitate access to power, that is resources, as a result of this research. The costs of accessing resources of Machiavellianism, which prefers nepotism, will be lower than those of other workers who expect merit. This feature comes from their ability to create and exploit opportunities. Also, the use of personal networks in promotion and recruitment, which can be expressed as resource allocation in human resources management processes, can be used in a way that threatens the sustainability of enterprises.

Krupp et al. (2013) stated that psychopaths are afraid of harming their relatives, but those who are not relatives of them have a high risk of being harmed. That an employee who can use both Machiavellian and social networks, instead of a successful employee, is promoted through nepotism, and an increase in gains such as status and wages due to promotion can have an impact on the successful employee and other employees in the business environment. That the balance of organizational justice and equality of others are affected and cause to face undesirable results, such as negative psychological effects, withdrawal, absence from work, and performance reduction. Human resources management works in favor of the Machiavellianists, and it succeeds in creating the resources expected from the organization (Wated & Sanchez,

2015). However, these demands are far from organizational rationality, according to Budwar & Baruch (2003). Therefore, Machiavellianism leaves traces while it carries out the actions that facilitate access to and increase resources, due to its characteristics.

5.1. Limitations and Suggestions

This research focuses on the nepotistic demands of Machiavellianism, which prioritizes personal rationality. It has been carried out on employees in energy enterprises. It evaluates the employees' perceptions of themselves as Machiavellian and nepotist. It is not about whether the Machiavellianists increase their qualifications or whether they have sufficient equipment such as knowledge and education. This research does not deal with the outputs of employees who do not have social networks in organizations, but only focuses on the tendency of Machiavellianists with dark personality traits to benefit from nepotism. It is recommended to determine the effect of the dark triad's use of nepotism on other employees for future research. Are the Machiavellian ruthless pragmatics or can the social networks affirm that the Machiavellian commit to the organization? As an outcome of the current research, the relationship between nepotism and organizational commitment can also be examined. Furthermore, the variables of moral dissolution, Machiavellianism, and nepotism, which will be subject to moral licensing, can be taken into consideration.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Equal contributions.

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