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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STAFF COMPETENCY AND IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN THE DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to analyse the relationship between staff competency and implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya.

Methodology: The study used descriptive design. The population targeted was 47 devolved governments in Kenya. The study adopted census because of the small size of the population. A structured questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The study also undertook a pilot test on the instrument's reliability and validity in the 3 counties; Nyamira, Kisii, Homa-Bay Counties where nine (9) respondents were engaged in the pilot study. Cronbach's co-efficient Alpha and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used to measure the reliability and validity respectively. The data was cleaned and coded then entered into SPSS 25 to be analyzed. The use of descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis was considered. Study engaged the key informers from the 44 county Governments who positively responded hence achieving 100% response rate. The statistical tests were also done in the study. Presentation of data was in form of charts and tables as deemed appropriate. The study also used ANOVA to analyze the degree of relationship between the variables in the study.

Results: The findings of the study indicate that there was a positive significant relationship between Procurement Staff Competency and implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya. The findings were found to be significant as the p-value of 0.00000 which was less than 0.05. This means that Procurement Staff Competency significantly affects positively Implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya. The findings therefore, implied that procurement staff competency was an important factor in determining the level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The study recommended the adoption of procurement staff competency as a way of improving the implementation level of public procurement regulatory. The study therefore, recommended that the county government to heavily invest on procurement staff capacity building as an important factor in improving the level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya. Since some staff members lacked technical skills beyond secondary education, the study recommended that the county governments need to identify, support and organize in-service training for the procurement staff officers to improve on their knowledge and skills capacity. The study found out that Competency theory model was applicable in the study and can provide more knowledge to future researchers and scholars.

Key words: *Staff Competency, Public Procurement, Regulatory Framework Devolved Governments*

INTRODUCTION

Staff competence can be described as related characteristics of different set of behaviors. Competency can be several abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills that enables a person or organization to be efficient and effective in a job or situation. Competence is a human characteristic, which allows him to perform work duties or better manage the situation. The characteristics are a set of attributes consisting of knowledge, skills, traits, social roles and motives (Shermon, 2004). Hui *et al.*, (2011) pointed out that procurement officers should and must undergo training and be conversant with all procurement regulatory frame work in order to be efficient and effective. Appiah (2010) also observed that, the system of education never give any specific knowledge & skills required for a specific and professional job positions in an institution. Due to of this knowledge gap, the demand in the labour force has limited professional staff with the required skills, knowledge and competencies needed in the job market.

Okello (2015) did a study on the training of staff on Compliance to PP system in Kenyan's parastatals. In the findings he concluded that procurement staff workforce was not adequately conversant with procurement Regulatory framework system and due to this inadequacy which may invite serious penalties. Due to this process, procurement staff were not having qualified skills in matters of procurement practices. He further recommended that staff should be well acquainted with procurement regulatory framework. The researcher revealed that continuous training of staff, the higher the level of procurement implementation and effective performance.

Sultan (2012) viewed that to experience economic growth and effective performance, optimizing the staff's achievement of organization is important. He pointed out that the development of technology and PEs adjustments have slowly contributed to some firms to realize that productivity of staff skills and knowledge is about investing in training and development. Ndumbi and Okello (2014) conducted a study to assess the effect of employee training on Compliance to PP system in Kengen Company in Kenya to understand on the situation in the energy. The study revealed most procurement staffs are not properly conversant with the PP rules. In addition, the staff competencies level not only affected performance of procurement department but also the whole ministry. The study revealed also that in as much as skilled staff being competent in their work in giving solutions, the challenge is the incompetent staffs that are not productive in the ministry. Study discovered that stable procurement process may be realized through skilled and knowledgeable staff who could procure items and services.

Barsemoi, Mwangangi and Asienyo (2014) conducted study to assess the factors influencing procurement performance in private sector focusing on procurement practices in Henkel Chemicals (E.A) in Kenya. Their study ascertained a good correlation of 70% between skilled staff and procurement processes. This correlation indicates employees' skills and competences ability impact positively on procurement productivity of Henkel Chemicals. This means improvement of staff competence in a procurement function, Increases procurement productivity that have a positive effect the organization's service delivery. According to KISM (2014) stated that the procurement staff in many PEs suffer from lack of information about procurement regulatory frame-work.

Competency Models (CM) Theory

Competency is described as the application of knowledge, skills and behaviors in undertaking the organizations' activities and duties (Caroline, 2018). A competency theory model is a framework

that assists to discover a combination of the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors which are demanded in an organization. The model can be considered important if the competences comply with the job activities of the individual staff (Waithaka *et al.*, 2012). It was argued by Munju and Ngugi (2013) that the technical competences can be attained through job training of the human resources to empower the organization with variety of key competences as required. According to Okoth (2013) say that, in 2013/2014 financial year Ksh. 300 billion was set aside to benefit the special interest groups in Kenya through participation in the public procurement. Nasio *et al.*, (2003) argues that the government both national and county should put more interest in promoting local investors for this will ensure the control of the economy is not hijacked by the foreign investors. According to Indire *et al.*, (2008) argues that the national and county governments should facilitate their procurement staff to growth and development through undertaking job training initiatives to boost their skills and knowledge to enhance better procurement management practices in while discharging their assigned duties in the devolved governments in Kenya. The theory highlights the importance of skills, knowledge and aptitude the procurement staff should have to effectively and efficiently discharge their duties in public procurement processes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Public procurement is the platform through which most government projects are executed, hence there is a need for monitoring and evaluating the implementation processes to achieve service delivery to the citizens and realize value for money (Juma, 2015). The Commission of Revenue Allocation report 2018/2019 revealed revenues allocated to counties was about Ksh. 314 billion for development as demanded by the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Caroline (2018) argued that most county governments have been criticized and are under investigation for procurement malpractices, corruption cases, ghost projects and massive wastage of public resources due to non-compliance in the procurement processes. The PPOA, 2016 report indicates that 40% of the Procuring entities had no adequate procurement staff with enough skills to drive the procurement functions professionally in the Counties. This was confirmed by Ringa (2017) who established that majority of county procurement staff have limited knowledge and experience to undertake procurement professional roles to effectively implement procurement procedures as required by the Act and this has dealt a major setback on service delivery. The PPOA Annual Report 2017/2018 revealed an average score for all the county executives was 39.70% which is considered non-compliant of Procurement system and a high risk level of 60.30%. The audit discovered that Migori County Government failed to provide the necessary procurement documentation required to support their procurement processes and as a result the entity was scored zero (0) on compliance and thus a high risk score of 100% of non-adherence of the procurement procedures. The higher the risk score, the higher the possibility of a procuring entity failing to obtain value for money expenditure in procurement activities. It was also clear from the report that the aggregate compliance level and implementation score of all the County Assemblies was 46.6% with risk level of 53.4% of procurement non-compliance. It was also reported that Trans Nzoia County Assembly failed to provide the required documents for procurement processes and as a result the entity scored zero (0) on compliance and a high risk of 100%. The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority report 2017/2018 established that 223 complaints from suppliers and the public against County governments procuring entity was received. The 146 complaints had been resolved at the end of FY 2017/2018, while 77 were

unresolved by the PEs. The complaints resulted from flaws in tender evaluation and specifications, on Supplier's delayed payments, lack of notification of awards, errors in tender notices, alleged corrupt practices during procurement proceedings, termination of procurement proceedings, failure by procuring entities to respond to bidder's requests for information regarding tenders. The PPOA Annual Report 2015/2016 revealed that most Procuring entities at the County governments have major challenges of failure in updating store records, security of store and failure to conduct regular stock taking. The Procuring entities have maintained Assets Registers that were not up to date as indicated in the report and this was non-compliance in implementing inventory controls and management. This was confirmed by Ombuki *et al.*, (2014) that implementation of Procurement practices remains a challenge to the county government despite efforts made by Procurement regulatory authority to establish effective compliance levels. A study by Victor (2012) & Daniel (2010) discussed on the implementation of PP in the public organizations in general. Njeru and Silas (2015) explored the implementation of PP in tertiary training institutions and left a major knowledge gap on management practices and implementation for PPR in devolved governments in Kenya.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive design. The population targeted was 47 devolved governments in Kenya. The study adopted census because of the small size of the population. A structured questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The study also undertook a pilot test on the instrument's reliability and validity in the 3 counties; Nyamira, Kisii, Homa-Bay Counties where nine (9) respondents were engaged in the pilot study. Cronbach's co-efficient Alpha and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used to measure the reliability and validity respectively. The data was cleaned and coded then entered into SPSS 25 to be analyzed. The use of descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis was considered. Study engaged the key informers from the 44 county Governments who positively responded hence achieving 100% response rate. The statistical tests were also done in the study. Presentation of data was in form of charts and tables as deemed appropriate. The study also used ANOVA to analyze the degree of relationship between the variables in the study.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive Findings

3.1.1 Procurement Staff competency and Implementation level of public procurement regulatory

The study sought to analyse the relationship between Procurement staff competency and implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory frame work in devolved governments in Kenya. Competence is a human characteristic, which allows him to perform work duties or better manage the situation. The characteristics are a set of attributes consisting of knowledge, skills, traits, social roles and motives (Shermon, 2004). The statements indicators were used to measure County procurement officer's perception on procurement staff competency on implementation level of public procurement regulatory frame work on a five-point Likert scale of 1-5; where 5-strongly disagree, 4-Disagree, 3-undecided, 2-Agree, 1-Strongly Agree.

The findings on Table 1 indicate that statement one which required the respondents view on influence of staff competency in terms of effective communication skills on procurement regulatory implementation had 30(68.2%) of the respondents who highly felt that effective communication skills highly influences procurement regulatory implementation, followed by 11(25.0%), and 3(6.8%) who felt that effective communication skills has influence procurement regulatory implementation. This implied that the majority (60) of the procurement officers highly felt that effective communication skills has influence on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .54$). The level of staff competency intern influences effective negotiation process on procurement regulatory implementation which had 26(59.1%) of the respondents who highly demonstrated that effective negotiation process has influence on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work, followed by 11(25.0%), and 5(11.4%), 2(4.5%). This implied that the majority of 26(59.1%) of the procurement officers highly felt that effective negotiation process has influence on the level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .73$). A significant part of the procurement bosses' job would be an understanding the nuances behind different compliance regulations to prevent the procurement process from being flawless. The procurement procedures and regulation on level of public procurement regulatory frame work had 23(52.3%) of the respondents who highly felt that procurement procedures and regulation on level of public procurement regulatory frame work, followed by 9(20.5%), 3(6.8%). This implied that the majority 23(52.3%) of the procurement officers highly felt that procurement procedures and regulation has influence on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.76$). The effect of knowledge on one's jobs description on level implementation of public procurement regulatory framework had 21(47.7%) of the respondents who highly felt that knowledge on one's jobs description have influence on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework, followed by 15 (34.1%), 7(15.9%) and 2(4.5%). This implied that the majority 21(47.7%) of the procurement officers highly felt that knowledge on one's jobs description has influence on level implementation of public procurement regulatory framework ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.78$). The knowledge on work relationship management on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework had 22(50%) of the respondents who highly felt that knowledge on work relationship management influence level of public procurement regulatory frame work, followed by 13 (29.6%), 7(15.9%) and 2(4.5%). This implied that the majority 22(50%) of the procurement officers highly felt that knowledge on work relationship management influence level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.75$). The influence of adoption of new working policy systems on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work had 19(43.2%) of the respondents who felt that adoption of new working policy systems influence procurement regulatory implementation, followed by 18(40.9%), 3(6.8%), 2(4.5%) and 1(2.3%). This implied that the majority 21(47.7%) of the procurement officers felt that adoption of new working policy systems influences level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.73$). The knowledge on financial management related issues on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work had 22(50%) of the respondents who moderately felt that knowledge on financial management related issues influence level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work, followed by 16 (36.4%), 4(9.1%) and 2(4.5%) felt that knowledge on financial management related issues influence level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work. This implied

that the majority 22(50%) of the procurement officers moderately felt that knowledge on financial management related issues influence level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.72$). The contract management skills on level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work had 19(43.2%) of the respondents who highly felt that knowledge on contract management skills influence level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work, followed by 17(35.6%), 5 (11.4%), 2(4.5%) and 1(2.3%). This implied that the majority 19(43.2%) of the procurement officers highly felt that knowledge on contract management skills influence level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.82$). Based on the procurement staff competency and how procurement officers perceived Public procurement regulatory implementation level, the most important factor perceived by procurement officers to contribute to level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work, was understanding level of staff competence in terms of procurement procedures and regulation (Mean=3.91) whereas the least important factor perceived by procurement officers to contribute to level of implementation of public procurement regulatory frame work was Staff adoption level of new working policy (Mean=3.37). The results indicated that many of the county officers were fairly competent to handle procurement processes adequately. These results were supported by the study finding of Ndumbi and Okello (2014) on their assessment on the effect of employee training on Compliance to Public Procurement system in Kengen Company in Kenya to understand on the situation in the energy. Their study revealed that most procurement staffs are not properly conversant with the Public Procurement rules. They further pointed out that staff competencies level not only influenced performance of procurement department but also the whole ministry. They concluded that in as much as skilled staff being competent in their work in giving solutions, the challenge is the incompetent staffs that are not productive in the ministry. Stable procurement process may be realized through skilled and knowledgeable staff on their effective communication skills and Procurement procedures & regulations to procure items and services. A study by Kimote and Kinoti (2018) involving Nakuru County reported many of the officers charged with the responsibility of implementing procurement policies were not adequately competent. And therefore, its important as stated by Hui *et al.*, (2011) that procurement officers should and must undergo training and be conversant with all the procurement procedures.

Table 1 Descriptive analysis of Staff competency and Implementation level of public procurement regulatory (N =44)

STATEMENTS	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std. dev
Knowledge level on effective communication skills	3(6.8%)	30(68.2%)	11(25.0%)	(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3.80	0.54
Level of understanding of effective negotiation process	5(11.4%)	26(59.1%)	11(25.0%)	2(4.5%)	0(0.0%)	3.74	0.73
Staff understanding of procurement procedures and regulations.	9(20.5%)	23(52.3%)	9(20.5%)	3(6.8%)	0(0.0%)	3.91	0.76
Staff knowledge on their job description	7(15.9%)	21(47.7%)	15(34.1%)	1(2.3%)	0(0.0%)	3.72	0.78
Staff level of knowledge on work relationship management	7(15.9%)	22(50.0%)	13(29.6%)	2(4.5%)	0(0.0%)	3.80	0.75
Staff adoption level of new working policy systems	1(2.3%)	18(40.9%)	21(47.7%)	2(4.5%)	1(2.3%)	3.37	0.73
Staff understanding on financial management related issues	2(4.5%)	16(36.4%)	22(50.0%)	4(9.1%)	0(0.0%)	3.40	0.72
Staff level on contract management skills	5(11.4%)	19(43.2%)	17(38.6%)	2(4.5%)	1(2.3%)	3.62	0.82

3.2 Regression Analysis

3.2.1 Regression Analysis for Procurement Staff Competency and Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory with no moderator.

The study was to analyse the relationship between staff competency and level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya. The null hypothesis states that there was no significant relationship between procurement staff competency and implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya against the alternative that there was a positive significant relationship between procurement staff competency and implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya. The hypothesis was tested by conducting simple linear regression, and the findings revealed that there was significant positive relationship between procurement staff competency on implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya.

Table 2 shows the regression analysis findings between Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory and procurement staff competency. From the Table 2, the value of R-square value was 0.420 implying that 42.0% of Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory was explained by procurement staff competency with no moderator. Besides that, the fitness of the model was also indicated by F-Statistics value of 30.382 with no moderator. These findings, implied that there was a significant relationship between Procurement Staff Competency and implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya. This means that Procurement Staff Competency significantly affects Implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya.

Similarly based on the same regression Table 2, t- test was also used to test the relationship between the predictor variable procurement staff competency and implementation level of public procurement regulatory and there was significance relationship between the two variables with p-value= 0.000000 < 0.05 for the model. The regression equations between Implementation level of public procurement regulatory and procurement staff competency for the model can be expressed as; $Y = -.379 + 1.070X_1$ without moderator. The model indicated that for every unit of procurement staff competency, the value of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya changes by 1.070 in the absence of moderator.

Table 2: Regression Analysis for Procurement Staff Competency and Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory without moderator.

Model	R	R Sq.	Adjusted R Sq.	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.648 ^a	.420	.406	.34722	.648 ^a

a. Predictors: (Constant), Procurement Staff Competency and Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory.

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Sq.	Df.	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.
	Reg.	3.663	1	3.663	30.382	.000 ^b
1	Residual.	5.064	42	.121		
	Total	8.727	43			

a. Dependent Variable: Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory

a. Predictors: (constant), Procurement Staff Competency

Overall regression coefficients

	Un Std Coeff		Std Coeff	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Er	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.379	.677		-.560	.579		
Procurement Staff Competency	1.070	.194	.648	5.512	.000	1.000	1.000

3.2.1 Regression Analysis for Procurement Staff Competency and Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory with moderator.

From the Table 3, the value of R- square value was 0.728 implying that 72.8% of Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory was explained by procurement staff competency with moderator. The fitness of the model was also indicated by F-Statistics value of 112.404 with p-value of $0.00000 < 0.05$ with moderator. The regression equations between Implementation level of public procurement regulatory and procurement staff competency for the model with the monitoring and evaluation as moderator can be expressed as; $Y = -1.089 + 1.286X_1$. The models indicated that for every unit of procurement staff competency, the value of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya changes by an increase of 1.286 in the presence of moderator.

These results suggest that the model improved more in the presence of moderator and they were also supported by the descriptive analysis. Based on these findings, null hypothesis, was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. The study findings were supported by Ndumbi and Okello (2014) who agreed that stability of procurement process may be realized through skilled and knowledgeable staff on their Procurement procedures & regulations to procure items and services. The results were also supported by Barsemoi, Mwangangi and Asienyo (2014) in their study that improvement of staff competence in a procurement function increases procurement productivity which has a positive impact on company's service delivery. This implies that a unit increase of procurement staff competency, the value of implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya changes by 1.286. It was therefore, concluded that Procurement Staff Competency had significant positive influence on Implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya.

Table 3: Regression Analysis for Procurement Staff Competency and Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory with moderator.

Model	R	R Sq.	Adjusted R Sq.	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.853 ^a	.728	.722	.23773	2.019

a. Predictors: (Constant), Procurement Staff Competency

Analysis of Variance						
TEx Model		Sum of Sq.	Df.	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.
	Reg.	6.353	1	6.353	112.404	.000 ^b
Dic1	Residual.	2.374	42	.057		
	Total	8.727	43			

a. Dependent Variable: Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory

b. Predictors: (constant), Procurement Staff Competency*Z

Overall regression coefficients							
	Un B	Std Coeff Std. Er	Std Coeff Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-1.089	.420		-2.597	.013		
Procurement staff Competency*Z	1.286	.121	.853	10.602	.000	1.000	1.000

4.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The findings of the study indicate that there was a significant relationship between Procurement Staff Competency and implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya. The regression analysis findings shows that the R- square value with no moderator was 0.420 implying that (42.0%) which indicated that for every unit of procurement staff competency, the value of implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya changed by 1.070 in the absence of moderator, and R- square value with moderator was 0.728(72.8%) of Implementation level of Public Procurement Regulatory as was explained by procurement staff competency. This indicates that for every unit of procurement staff competency, the value of implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya increased by 1.286 when the moderator was introduced. The findings were found to be significant as the p-value of 0.00000 which was less than 0.05. This means that Procurement Staff Competency significantly affects positively Implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis that; H_1 : There is a positive significant relationship between procurement Staff competency and implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya. The findings therefore, implied that procurement staff competency was an important factor in determining the level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya

Conclusion

The study concluded that most devolved governments in Kenya have invested in procurement staff capacity building with the understanding that highly competent procurement officials are also likely to propel the level of implementation of public procurement regulatory compliance to high levels, and to realize higher staff performance. It's important for the county government to heavily invest on procurement staff capacity building as an important factor in establishing the level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya.

Recommendations

The study also recommended the adoption of procurement staff competency as a way of improving the implementation level of public procurement regulatory. The study found out a strong positive significant relationship between procurement Staff competency and implementation level of public procurement regulatory framework in the devolved governments in Kenya. The study therefore, recommended that the county government to heavily invest on procurement staff capacity building as an important factor in improving the level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework in devolved governments in Kenya. Involving monitoring and evaluation, the study established that monitoring and evaluation was a key complement of procurement staff competency. Study discovered that education and procurement staff competence emerged as a key ingredient of level of implementation of public procurement regulatory framework. Since some staff members lacked technical skills beyond secondary education, the study recommended that the county governments need to identify, support and organize in-service training for the procurement staff officers to improve on their knowledge and skills capacity.

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