



Abstract

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Article:	Effects of Channels of Communication on Female Literacy
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ABSTRACT

This research explores possible avenues to accelerate female literacy through channels of communication as means of knowledge and information. 500 female respondents aged 14 years and above residing in Lahore district of Punjab, were selected based on random sampling technique. The study shows that channels of communication are successful streams and effective tools for enhancing female literacy. Females despite being literate still face socio-cultural barriers to access information and knowledge. The analysis shows that channels of communication particularly newspaper and magazine/digest are major contributing factors in enhancement of female literacy and education. Varied levels of effects on enhancement of literacy and education are recorded in case of mass media and IPC, when analyzed together. Literate female can access newspaper and magazine/digest more easily than TV and radio. Medium of information and knowledge with regard to literacy is proved to be mass media and IPC with varied degrees.

Keywords: Literacy, female, channels of communication, mass media, interpersonal communication

INTRODUCTION

Education is a cornerstone of women's empowerment. It enables them to respond to opportunities and challenges that they face of their traditional roles. It allows to impact on their invisible participation in economic, social, spiritual and professional development in the society. A literate woman is a resource not only for her family or children, but for the society as a whole. Being literate, ability to contribute in the decision making could be a broad-based gain for her as well. It is a well-known proverb that 'if you educate a man, you educate an individual and if you educate a woman, you educate a family'. Despite clear advantages of female education, parents prefer to educate their sons in many cultures and societies. The role of a female in society is often perceived as a person engaged in household chores; formal education may thus be seen as a waste of resources. She is considered an economic burden on the family, as she is to marry and to move out as someone else's liability.

According to 1998 Population Census of Pakistan, out of 132 million of the population of the country, females constitute about 63 million (48 percent) of the total population, where only 32 percent of the females were reported as literate (Population Census Organization, 1998).

Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, especially among female population. Despite recent efforts by the Government of Pakistan with the support of international donor agencies, to accelerate literacy level, there are still serious challenges to confront to reach that objective. The behaviour and attitude of the people living in a certain society either support or oppose the attainment of literacy especially for female population.

The social, economic and cultural constraints in some societies act as barriers for the parents or guardians of the females to allow them to attain literacy. Security concern is another factor which hinders the attainment of literacy by the female population. A female child is considered as a burden on the household economy in some societies, as a result investing in her is regarded as the waste of money and time; education and literacy for the females are thus not considered as the priority areas for the parents or guardians.

Lack of basic infrastructure and awareness also contribute in the low enrollment of girls in schools. Reviewing further the situation of low enrolment of girls in Pakistan, the Government accepts that there are many factors that contribute to this continued problem. Poverty and illiteracy of

parents generate a negative attitude towards girls' education (Saleem, 2009). This study analyses the assumption that the current low levels of female literacy are due to non-availability of assertive information and communication to break this barrier.

Literacy is an integral part of the global goal of Education for All (EFA)- "Taleem Sab Ky Leye" commitment to which Pakistan is a signatory to EFA Dakar Declaration 2000. However, Pakistan is lagging behind in achieving the EFA goals. This can only be possible by bridging the prevailing information and communication gap in our societies by giving due importance to female literacy. There is a great opportunity to attain the required goals and targets of EFA by extensively using the specialized channels of communication.

The use of channels of communication in enhancing literacy has been receiving a great deal of attention as possible means of enhancing development, although strong and unambiguous evidence to justify this attention is lacking (Roberts, 2000; Wade, 2002). The study is focusing on channels of communication on two key areas: Mass media (newspaper, magazine/digest, radio, television); and Interpersonal Communication (mosque announcements, government workers, family members, friends/peers).

There is a growing interest in exploring and using the medium or channels of communication in enhancing literacy, especially in the developing countries, but this interest is primarily motivated by the potential Information Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance the acquisition of literacy skills (Wagner and Kozma, 2005; Wachholz and Meleisea, 2006). Hamelink (1997) defines ICTs as encompassing "all those technologies that enable the handling of information and facilitate different forms of communication among human actors, between human beings and electronic systems, and among electronic systems". This broad definition included both 'older' technologies, such as radio, television and telephone, as well as 'newer' technologies, such as mobile technology and computers (Wachholz and Meleisea, 2006). Effects of channels of communication on society are numerous and diverse. These may have the cause and effect relationship with information, access, value, skill and opinion. The impact of channels of communication is so profound and manifold that they affect the societies on whole. Marshall McLuhan's idea that "the medium is the message" illustrates that it is the media that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. For him, each

medium of communication generates social and psychological effects on its audience. These effects constitute the message of the medium (McLuhan, 1967).

Media serve as both the primary and, in some cases, the only mechanism communicating information to the larger groups of people. In addition, media often serve as the international communication device among public officials and government leaders. Mass media has the capacity to reach larger groups of people by transmitting carefully constructed messages. Mass media is used as an effective vehicle to raise awareness, change attitudes and behaviour and plays an important part in forming public opinion. Mason and Azhar (1984) illustrated success of radio in running a campaign, to counter an acute problem of Goiter -a throat disease, caused by a lack of adequate amount of iodine in diet of the residents of Swat and Chitral in Pakistan.

“Interpersonal communication (IPC) refers to dyadic communication in which two individuals sharing the roles of sender and receiver become connected through the mutual activity of creating meaning.” (Trenholm & Jensen, 2008, p. 29). Interpersonal communication has been used by the development practitioners to gear up the development messages on the grass roots or local level decreasing levels of physical proximity and feedback.

Nathan (1984) described that the electronic media, comprising of radio and television, play an important role in information dissemination, non formal education, enrichment and entertainment. In developing countries, both these media play an important role in creating awareness among rural people, sensitizing and motivating them towards adoption of innovations as required by the modern day world. Radio and television can give a boost to economic, political, social and national development. They can help to solve many problems and create awareness of facilities provided by government and development agencies so that people can participate in development initiatives and efforts.

Mass media are ‘mobility multiplier’ (Lerner, 1958) and act as an efficient vehicle to transmit information and knowledge than any other technology. According to Lerner, “the multiplicative property of communication lies in its power to raise and spread empathy among its audiences (see Sparks, 2007. p.23). The mass media user is exposed to a variety of images, ideas, opinions, information or situations that allows them to observe, think, perceive and form opinions on how

things are done differently elsewhere. Without, education and literacy, it is not possible to comprehend the balanced development. Mass Literacy is considered as a key for sustainable development, socio-economic growth and peace. Curle (1999) observed “countries are under-developed because most of their people are under-development, having had no opportunity for expanding their potential capacities in the service of society.”

In communication studies, the approach of media literacy is an expanded information and communication skill that is responsive to the changing nature of information in our society (Malik, 2008). It is an ability to decode, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms (Aufderheide, 1993). Nathan (1984) described that the electronic media, comprising of radio and television, play an important role in information dissemination, non formal education, enrichment and entertainment. In developing countries, both these media play an important role in creating awareness among rural people, sensitizing and motivating them towards adoption of innovations as required by the modern day world. This study analyse the effects of channels of communication on female population and the information and communication gaps contributing in female illiteracy in both rural and urban areas.

HYPOTHESIS

The channels of communication and their access are significant contributing factors in enhancing the literacy in female population.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A total of 500 respondents were selected through a detailed mapping of the sample areas from the rural and urban female population of Lahore district of Punjab province. Population was distributed in nine towns and three towns (namely Nishter, Allama Iqbal and Gulberg Towns) were selected randomly. From each of the town, one union council was randomly selected. From all three towns a total of 500 households were selected randomly using the excel command $\text{Rand}(\) * x$, where x represents the size of households in the given union council. Furthermore, a random sampling technique was applied by selecting every 7th household, having at least one female of 14 or more years of age. A list of households to be interviewed was prepared with the help of local communities in the randomly selected streets. From the household lists the eligible female respondents were

selected to obtain the required sample. Verbal consent was obtained from all the female respondents before data collection. The assembled data was collected and processed using the Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 using Mini tab tools. The data were counter checked and cleaned manually before placing the results in tabular form. To understand the findings, graphic forms were added where required. Statistical tests including chi-square, t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were applied.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1: Frequency and percentage of respondents with reference to their age, marital status and age at marriage (n=500)

Characteristics		n	%
Age (yrs)	14-24	371	74.2
	25-34	68	13.6
	>34	38	7.6
	No response	23	4.6
Marital status	Married	62	12.4
	Unmarried	438	87.6
Age at marriage (yrs)	14-20	16	25.8
	21-25	30	48.4
	26-30	8	12.9
	31-35	2	3.2
	No response	6	9.7

The Table-1 shows that the majority of the female respondents 74.2% were in the age group of 14-24 years. While, 13.6% of the female respondents were from 25-34 years of age group while 7.6% belonged to 34 or more years of age group. The table depicts, 4.6% of the female did not respond to the question on age.

From a sample size of n=500, only 62 (12.4%) female respondents were married. Out of which 25.8% of the female respondents got married at the age of 14-20 years, 48.4% of the females got married at the age of 21-25 years, 12.9% of the respondents got married at 26-30 years of age, 3.2% of the respondents got married at the age of 31-35 years. 9.7% of the married female

respondents did not respond to the question. The analysis shows that a significantly high percentage (26%) of literate female got married at quiet early age.

With reference to married literate female, the trends indicate that 72% of the female respondents belonged to the age group of 14-24 years. Only 12.4% of the respondents were married. It is also interesting to note that still over 25% of the married respondents got married in the age group of 14-20, whereas near 50% of the married respondents got married between the age group of 21-25.

Table-2: Frequency and percentage of respondents with regard to their formal education and type of education (n=500)

Characteristics	n	%
Formal education Yes	458	91.6
Formal education No	42	8.4
Type of education Religious education	40	8.7
Primary	43	9.4
Middle	22	4.8
Matriculation	71	15.5
FA	50	10.9
BA	95	20.7
MA	91	19.9
Technical	13	2.8
Other	26	5.7
No response	7	1.5

The Table-2 depicts that 91.6% of female respondents had received formal education while only 8.4% have not received education. The Table reflects that 8.7% of females have received religious education. While, 9.4%, 4.8% and 15.5% had received education up to primary, middle and matriculation levels respectively.

Whereas, 10.9%, 20.7% and 19.9% of female respondents had received the education up to FA, BA and MA levels respectively. The Table also reflects that 2.8 % of female respondents have received technical education. While, 5.7% of the female respondents mentioned other educational level and 1.5% of them did not respond to the educational qualification level question.

It is interesting to note that one third of the literate female respondents received education up to matriculation level and another one third had received education up to bachelor level. Table also reveals that only small portion of the female respondent received technical education which reflects that perhaps lack of technical education facilities for female or such facilities are too far away from their place of residence.

Table 4.3: Distribution of literate female in rural and urban area with reference to benefits of literacy (n=500)

Responses	Rural		Urban		Total		χ^2
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Ability to read	49	31.8	43	14.1	82	18.3	23.93* *
Technical skills	9	5.8	19	6.2	28	6.2	
Having general knowledge	12	7.8	30	9.8	42	9.4	
Better decision making	20	13.0	41	13.4	61	13.6	
Better life/future	32	20.8	106	34.8	138	30.7	
Economic/financial stability	18	11.7	43	14.1	61	13.6	
To get good job	14	9.1	23	7.5	37	8.2	
Total	154	100.0	305	100.0	449	100.0	

**p<.01

Table-3 exhibits the responses of the literate female regarding their opinion on benefits of literacy. In the rural area 31.8% of the literate female reported the ability to read as a benefit of literacy while the percentage of responses was comparatively lower in urban area i.e. 14.1%. Whereas, 20.8% of literate female in rural area were of the opinion of 'Better Life/Future' as benefit of literacy, while 34.8% of literate female in urban area considered 'Better Life/ Future' as the benefit of literacy.

Table-4: Opinions of literate females on factors involved in female illiteracy

	Channels of Communication							
	Newspaper		Magazine		Radio		TV	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Reasons of illiteracy								
Traditions or culture	143	55.6	128	53.6	120	54.8	188	44.0
Poverty	74	28.8	72	30.1	64	29.2	160	37.5
Household cores	25	9.7	24	10.0	23	10.5	49	11.5
Lack of interest	15	5.8	15	6.3	12	5.5	30	7.0
Total	257	100.0	239	100.0	219	100.0	427	100.0
Father/husband support in education								
No	11	4.3	9	3.8	10	4.6	22	5.2
Sometime	19	7.5	25	10.5	24	11.0	79	18.5
Yes	225	88.2	204	85.7	184	84.4	325	76.3
Total	255	100.0	238	100.0	218	100.0	426	100.0
Mother/mother-in-law support in education								
No	13	5.2	6	2.6	12	5.6	34	8.1
Sometime	13	5.2	18	7.7	20	9.3	49	11.6
Yes	225	89.6	211	89.8	184	85.2	339	80.3
Total	251	100.0	235	100.0	216	100.0	422	100.0
Parents financially support in education								
No	10	4.0	6	2.5	10	4.6	40	9.4
Sometime	31	12.3	39	16.5	36	16.7	100	23.4
Yes	211	83.7	192	81.0	170	78.7	287	67.2
Total	252	100.0	237	100.0	216	100.0	427	100.0

The Table-4 shows that more than half of the literate female who read newspaper, magazine and listen to radio and watch television attribute reasons of illiteracy to tradition or culture whereas; more than one third of literate female watch television attribute reasons of illiteracy to the status of poverty, whereas the proportion of literate female reading newspaper, magazine, listen radio and

watch television relate reasons of illiteracy to household chores and lack of interest is significantly low.

The percentage of literate female indicating father/husband, mother and mother-in-law support in education is as high as 89.8% in relation to access to the above stated channels of communication. This significantly high percentage of parental support indicate encouraging trend for female to attain greater literacy level. It can therefore be assumed that channels of communication are playing role to motivate parents in support of education for their female folk.

The table also indicates the female literate response to receiving financial support from parents in education is again more than 80% for those who have access to newspaper, magazine and radio. However, those literate females who have access to television indicate somewhat lesser support from their parents to receive financial support in education.

Table-5: Distribution of opinion of illiterate female in rural and urban area with reference to reasons of female illiteracy (n=42)

Responses	Rural		Urban		Total		χ^2
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Traditions or culture	4	11.0	1	16.7	5	16.7	
Poverty	25	69.4	3	50.0	28	50.0	
Household chores	5	13.9	2	33.3	7	33.3	1.9
Lack of interest	2	5.6	0	0	2		3
Total	36	100.0	6	100.0	42	100.0	

The Table-5 shows that 11% of illiterate female in rural area consider traditions and culture as reasons of female illiteracy while a comparatively higher percentage i.e. 16.7% were of the same view in the urban area. Poverty was considered as the major cause of female illiteracy by the respondents, 69.4% in the rural area whereas, 50% of respondents in the urban area were of the same opinion. Responsibility of taking care of household chores was also considered one of the root causes of

female illiteracy as 13.9% of illiterate females in rural area responded to it while 33.3% illiterate females in urban area were of the same view.

Interestingly, when asked if lack of interest plays a role in female illiteracy, the percentage was 5.6% of the illiterate female respondents in rural area and 0% in urban area. It may be deduced that where the lack of interest to get education among rural female is considered as one of the causes of female illiteracy by illiterate female there no single respondent in urban area was of the view that the factor of lack of interest was a reason of female illiteracy.

In this particular question, only 42 literate female responded as they had some degree of clarity on the issue of illiteracy. From this data, it can be inferred that, the large number of literate female respondents may not give importance to literacy for the illiterate population. This could be a lack of awareness on the part of literate female respondents on the benefits of literacy.

Table-6: Comparison between rural and urban female on General Awareness, Literacy, Health, Decision Making and Human Rights and Skills

Awareness	Rural		Urban		df	t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
General awareness	-.30	0.91	.40	0.78	349	-8.183***
Literacy	-.13	0.87	.36	0.76	395	-6.127***
Health	-.192	0.88	.38	0.75	393	-7.150***
Decision making	-.134	0.86	.23	0.79	394	-4.292***
Human rights	-.248	0.89	.37	0.85	430	-7.344***
Skills	-.22	0.93	.36	0.90	434	-6.58***

***p<.001

Table-6 shows the results of independent samples t-test between rural females and urban females on type of awareness. The mean scores of rural female and urban female are statistical

significant different at $\alpha=.001$ on awareness, education, health, decision making, human rights and skills. Urban females mean scores are more than rural females in all types of awareness.

Table-7: Means, Standard deviations for the effect of newspaper, magazine, radio and TV on six type of awareness

Awareness	Newspaper		Magazine		Radio		TV	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
General awareness	0.35 _a	0.78	0.27	0.82	0.22	0.86	0.08 _a	0.92
Literacy	0.29 _a	0.77	0.28	0.75	0.18	0.88	0.12 _a	0.86
Health	0.30 _a	0.73	0.28	0.73	0.17	0.83	0.10 _a	0.87
Decision making	0.21 _a	0.79	0.21	0.78	0.11	0.89	0.05 _a	0.91
Human rights	0.31 _a	0.80	0.26	0.85	0.22	0.90	0.06 _a	0.93
Skills	0.21 _a	0.87	0.22	0.90	0.16	0.94	0.08 _a	0.97

Note. Means with same subscript differ significantly at $p < .05$

To show the significant difference between two groups i.e. newspaper vs. Television groups are significantly different on variable skills, abbreviation is used (a) to avoid further bifurcation of tables.

The Table-7 shows as to which type of media is more effective for increasing awareness, means scores of newspaper, Magazine, Radio and Television were compared. Newspaper means scores on general awareness, literacy, health decision making and human rights and skills has statistical significant difference from television means scores on General awareness, Literacy, Health decision making and Human rights and skills respectively but other sources of information are not statistical significant different from each other.

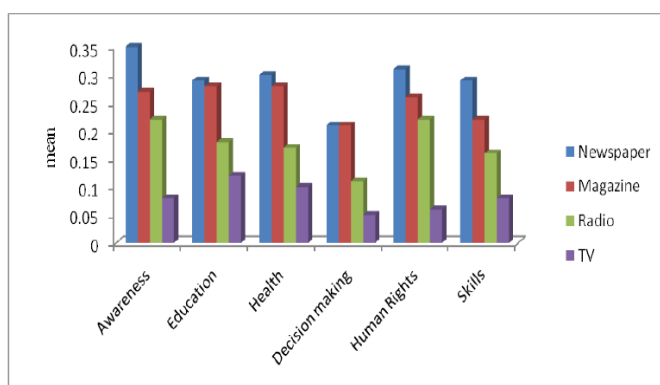


Figure-1: Effect of newspaper, magazine, radio and television on six type of awareness

Table-8: One-way analysis of variance for the effect of media on awareness of female literacy

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
General awareness	Between groups	22.393	4	5.598	6.479	0.000
	Within groups	336.101	389	0.864		
	Total	358.494	393			
Literacy	Between groups	13.889	4	3.472	4.045	0.003
	Within groups	362.250	422	0.858		
	Total	376.139	426			
Health	Between groups	16.534	4	4.133	4.864	0.001
	Within groups	359.478	423	0.850		
	Total	376.012	424			
Decision making	Between groups	13.139	4	3.285	3.919	0.004
	Within groups	357.917	427	0.838		
	Total	371.057	431			
Human rights	Between groups	20.187	4	5.047	5.645	0.000
	Within groups	378.156	423	0.894		
	Total	398.343	427			
Skills	Between groups	15.226	4	3.806	3.829	0.005
	Within groups	418.581	421	0.994		
	Total	433.807	425			

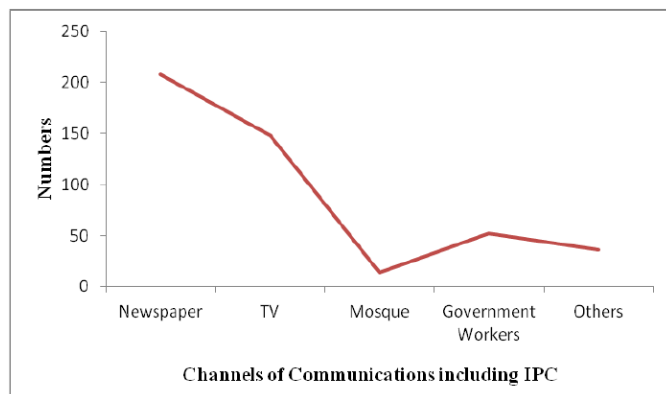
One-way Analysis of variance was used to observe the effect of media on awareness of female literacy. P-values of F-tests show that there is statistical significant difference among channels of communication on awareness of female literacy. These differences can be further observed through mean graphs.

Table-9: Reasons of increase in awareness through channels of communication including IPC regarding education and literacy (n=458)

Channels	N	%
Newspaper	208	45.5
TV	148	32.3
Mosque	14	3.0
Government workers	52	11.4
Others*	36	7.9
Total	458	100.0

*Others: peers, interaction with community leaders, political agents, volunteer workers etc.

The Table-9 shows that 45.4% and 32% of the literate female receive information and knowledge using newspaper and television, respectively. Only 3% of literate female receive information and knowledge through mosque (announcements) and 11.4% through government workers e.g. literacy and/or polio eradication campaigns.



vision, mosque, government workers and channels of communication including mass announcements, government workers and others) ved by the respondents. The graph indicates a

sharp declining trend for the IPC component. The mosque announcements on specific subjects like promotion of literacy and education is far less than announcements on frequently carried out campaigns in the communities.

CONCLUSION

This study upholds the importance of the subject matter of female literacy as a key fundamental right of the female. This thesis attempted to look into the detail analysis of the subject of the study, the “effects of channels of communication on female literacy”.

The study showed that the majority of the literate females from rural and urban Lahore district are receiving education despite low socio-economic or sometimes cultural elements. They are forced to discontinue their education at some point in time due to various barriers. The study showed that the lower marriage age of female is more eager to become literate in comparison with married literate female. The study also showed that the interest of female to become literate is quite significant among young married female in age group of 14-20 and 21-25 years.

The study also revealed that in urban setting, the literate female attributed one of the main reasons for illiteracy is the heavy involvement of females in household chores. The comparison between rural and urban respondents also indicated that traditions and culture has shown marginal difference. The research also showed majority of literate female in rural setting considered the benefits of literacy related to their ‘Ability to read’. While in urban setting, the literate female viewed

the benefits of literacy to a 'Better Life/ Future'. It can be deduced that the respondents were unclear in identifying the benefits of education towards their economic empowerment and stability as well as technical skills.

The study revealed that the significant information and communication gap exist among literate female on importance of further education due to socio-cultural barriers.

The study revealed that a large number of respondents viewed that the educational material (curriculum books, copies, pen, pencils, bags etc.) was expensive. From the analysis of this component, it can be concluded that the lower cost of the educational material could result in attracting more female population towards education.

In summary, it can be concluded that there are number of barriers to identify the key elements (social, economical, cultural), which act as the barriers towards attainment of literacy and education female population in both rural and urban areas. The channels of communication and their access are significant contributing factors in enhancing the literacy in female population.

The critical analysis of effects of channels of communication on a group of six types of awareness components: General awareness, Literacy, Health decision making and Human rights and skills illustrated that the most effective media for increasing awareness invariably found in newspaper, in all six components. Subsequently, the effectiveness of other media such as magazine/digest, radio and television showed decreased levels of awareness out of all six types of awareness components with regard to mass media.

The study also indicated that newspaper and magazine/digest have greater effect on female decision making against the channel of communication related to radio and television.

Conclusion of Hypothesis: The channels of communication and their access are significant contributing factors in enhancing the literacy in female population.

There was ample evidence that the channels of communication and their access are significant contributing factors in enhancing the literacy in female population. Hence the null hypothesis has been accepted.

The acceptance of this hypothesis is based on the evidences captured in the analysis that the channels of communication particularly newspaper and magazine/digest are the major contributing

factors in enhancement of female literacy and education. Varied levels of effects on enhancement of literacy and education have also been recorded in case of mass media and IPC channels, when analyzed together. The literate female can access newspaper and magazine/digest more easily than the television and radio. The medium of information and knowledge with regard to literacy is proved to be mass media and IPC with varied degrees.

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