

JOB SATISFACTION OF GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURE OFFICERS WORKING IN THE EXTENSION SERVICE OF NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the job satisfaction status of government agriculture officers working in the extension service of Nepal and to find out the significant satisfaction determining factors as perceived by them. Semi-structured questionnaire was applied via online Google forms and findings were drawn from 112 responses. 64.29% respondents perceived their overall job satisfaction to be neutral. Regarding the individual factors, they were found to be satisfied with four factors, namely; Physical facilities at the office, Guidance of/and relationship with supervisors/office chief, Cooperation of/and relationship with co-workers and welfare/retirement facility, but dissatisfied with capacity building and job promotion opportunity while neutral to pay factor. Regarding the most preferred attribute of job satisfaction, capacity building and job promotion opportunity ranked first. Guidance of/and relationship with supervisors/office chief and Pay factor ranked second and third respectively. 52.63% of the respondents working in central or policy level offices were found to be with less workload than they expect. 54.5% of respondents expressed having unfair practices in case of various opportunities within the organization. There should be enough and effective capacity enhancement opportunities and the concerned organization should foster a fair system to make them happy and productive manpower of the country.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development is one of the most powerful tools to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity and feed a projected 9.7 billion people by 2050 (World Bank, 2020). Nepalese economy is considerably dependent on agriculture, which provides employment opportunities to around 65 % of the total population and contributes about 27 % in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (MoALD, 2022). Despite the government of Nepal's (GON's) priority and policy supports for more than two decades, the growth of agriculture has been prolonged (less than 3.0 percent), mainly due to inadequate access to demand-driven technologies and extension services and inputs, credits, markets and incentives (Sah & Babu, 2019). Agricultural extension service is the foundation for any meaningful development in the agricultural sector (Dessalegn, 2014). Agricultural extension work becomes effective when the extension professionals are qualified, motivated, committed, and responsive to the ever-changing social, economic and political environment (Gebrehiwot, Kinfu & Deribe, 2012).

The administrative structure of the agriculture extension service in Nepal has been changing with the changing policy environment in the country. Before the country's restructuring, most agricultural extension functions were under the purview of Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD) and its central and district level units. But with the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015 and a successful election of federal, provincial, and local levels of government in 2017, agriculture has been under the concurrent right of all levels of government – federal, provincial, and local, as per the constitutional provision. However, most of the extension functions have been vested on the local and provincial level government (Jaishi, Nepali & Shahi, 2018). For government officials, satisfaction with their job has a strong implication for upgrading the quality of government services and directly impacting the quality of services given to the citizen. Agriculture officers play a dynamic role in their respective fields. They are involved in various activities as Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) to solve farmers' problems and plan, implement, and report agricultural programs assigned

to them. As such, to achieve sustained agricultural productivity growth, agriculture officers' competence and their level of job satisfaction count crucial.

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which employees have pleasurable or positive emotional state towards the job (Locke, 1976). It is an important area from an organizational perspective because it correlates with other variables such as job motivation, organizational commitment, performance, turnover, and absenteeism that directly impact an organization's effectiveness (Seid, Muluken & Mulugeta, 2013). So, employee satisfaction has been momentous in recent times to develop and accomplish organizations' goals and objectives. There are a variety of factors that can influence a person's level of job satisfaction. According to Kaya (1995), job satisfaction is the sum of all negative and positive aspects of the individuals' salary, physical and emotional working conditions, authority, and autonomous usage of this authority. A study conducted by Ellickson and Logsdon (2002) reflected that job satisfaction of public sector employees was significantly influenced by perceptions of employee satisfaction in terms of pay, promotional opportunities, relationships with supervisors, employees' performance management systems, and fringe benefits.

It is often criticized that government organizations are not doing enough to provide reliable and quality services (Subedi & Chaudhary, 2014). According to Sattar (2014), shortage of economic resources (low salary, poor working conditions), corruption, nepotism and favoritism, political interference and instability, dysfunctions of bureaucracy are the leading issues of developing states regarding job satisfaction of their employees. Subedi & Chaudhary (2014) found that civil servants of Nepal were with a low level of job satisfaction regarding the salary and facilities. However, they had average satisfaction levels in other dimensions of satisfaction as supervisor, promotion, work opportunities, and human relationship characteristics. Despite its importance, issue of job satisfaction has not still received proper research attention neither from researchers nor managers in any sector of Nepal. In such context, this study aimed to assess the job satisfaction level and the significant factors associated with it as perceived by the government agriculture officers working in extension service of Nepal.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Population sampling and data collection

Though the study was mainly based on a quantitative research approach, qualitative research approach was

also adopted to draw views about related issues in general. The population chosen consisted of 6th, 7th and 8th level agriculture officers of the provincial government and Class III officers of the federal government of Nepal. The data was collected in the period of May to August, 2020. The researcher purposively requested maximum of agriculture officers of each province via online Google form, until required sample size was reached. Out of 120 respondents who submitted the questionnaire, 112 responses were taken into account with at least 5 representations from every province, based on the trueness of the response.

2.2 Survey instrument

The job satisfaction assessment questionnaire comprised of six factors of job, namely; Physical Facilities at office, Guidance of/and relationship with Supervisors/ Office Chief, Cooperation of and relationship with Co-workers, Pay (Salary, Allowances, and Reward), Welfare/Retirement facilities, Capacity Building and Job Promotion opportunity, each of which consisted 3 to 5 statements related to various aspects of those factors, as such 25 indicators in total. Statements in each factor were designed so that respondents had to choose their degree of agreement or disagreement next to each statement, which was the measure of the extent to which they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their current jobs.

2.3 Measurement of level of job satisfaction

A five-point Likert interval scale measurement was taken to measure the level of job satisfaction. Statements in the questionnaire were designed in such a way that respondents had to choose their degree of agreement or disagreement next to each statement of various factors of job satisfaction, which was the measure of the extent to which they were satisfied or dissatisfied with that factor in their current jobs, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Measures of five-point Likert interval scale

Measure	Likert scale	Meaning
Strongly disagree	1	Strongly dissatisfied
Disagree	2	Moderately dissatisfied
Neither agree nor disagree	3	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Agree	4	Moderately satisfied
Strongly agree	5	Strongly satisfied

2.3.1 Overall satisfaction

Overall satisfaction of the respondents towards their job was assessed from mean value of the scale values assigned to 25 indicators/statements related to 6 factors.

Facet satisfaction

Facet satisfaction of the respondents towards particular factor was assessed based on the mean value of the scale values for that factor assigned by 112 respondents on 3 to 5 indicators/statements related to that factor.

2.3.2 Category of satisfaction level

Job satisfaction level was grouped into three categories, which was based on the mean value of the scale values assigned to indicators on each factor as shown in the Table 2.

Table 2. Measures of satisfaction level

Mean value	Satisfaction level
>3+S.D.	Satisfied
3-S.D. - 3+S.D.	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Neutral)
<3 - S.D.	Dissatisfied

Measurement of Most Significant Factors of Job Satisfaction

The respondents were asked to choose only 3 in order, out of given six factors of job satisfaction which they think more important than others and rank them as first, second and third. Rank value of 3, 2, and 1 was given for the first, second, and third important factors, and the index value was calculated to finalize the rank using following formula.

Estimated index value to finalize the ranks

$$I_{prob} = \sum \frac{S_i F_i}{N}$$

where,

I_{prob} = Index value for intensity ($0 < I < 1$)

S_i = Scale of value of i^{th} intensity

F_i = Frequency of i^{th} response

N = Maximum probable score of $\sum S_i F_i$ (336)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 3 and 4 show the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Almost half of the respondents were from Bagmati province. This was because the maximum number of central offices of federal government is located in this province and also there are relatively less vacant seats of agriculture officers in the offices of either government. Lesser number of participations from province 1, Karnali and Sudharpachchim province was due to high number of vacant seats of agriculture officers in the offices of provincial government in those provinces. Lesser number of participations from the province 2 was mainly due to the ignorance to respond. Lesser percentage of response (only 6) from the officer level 6th was mainly due to lesser number of them in the provincial government and also their ignorance to respond. Primary reason behind the variation in the number of participations from various discipline was the variation in available officers of respective discipline, for example, soil officers are in comparatively lesser number in the agricultural extension system of Nepal.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographics	Number	Percentage
Working office		
Federal office	54	48.2
Provincial office	58	51.8
Central/policy level office	38	33.9
Implementation office	74	66.1
Provincial participation		
Koshi Province	10	8.9
Madhesh Province	7	6.3
Bagmati province	50	44.6
Gandaki province	19	17
Lumbini province	14	12.5
Karnali province	5	4.5
Sudharpachchim province	7	6.3
Designation level		
Officer level 6 th	5	4.46
Officer level 7 th	37	33.03
Officer level 8 th	16	14.28
Officer class III	54	48.21

Working discipline		
Extension	41	36.6
Horticulture	20	17.9
Agronomy	11	9.8
Plant protection	15	13.4
Agri-Economics	19	17
Soil Science	6	5.4

As shown in the Table 4, female respondents were only 18.75%, which clearly shows that government agriculture extension system of Nepal is male dominated. The demographics of respondents shows increase in female (15.28%) extension advisors in Nepalese Extension System, which is higher than the percentage of female extension workers in Nepal- 6.9% (Ghimire *et al.*, 2016), -7.7% (worldwide Extension, 2011). Almost two third of respondents had completed master's degree which indicates that maximum of agriculture officers come to the government section come after post-graduation. Less number of respondents having intermediate education tells that officer level 6th, who was the promoted technicians in the provincial government, responded less. More than two third of respondents were Brahmin/Chhetri and only 2 out 112 were from Dalit caste. This clearly reflects that civil service employment is dominated primarily by so called high castes. Only 8.9 % of respondents from the urban family background might reflect that maximum of those who study agriculture subject come from rural and semi-urban areas.

Table 4. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographics	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	91	81.2
Female	21	18.8
Age		
Up to 30 years	59	52.7
More than 30 to 40 years	46	41.1
More than 40 years	7	6.3
Job duration		
Less than 5 years	57	50.9
5 to 10 years	45	40.2
More than 10 to 20 years	6	5.4
More than 20 years	4	3.6

Education level		
Intermediate	5	4.5
Bachelor	24	21.4
Master	83	74.1
Caste group		
Brahmin/Chhetri	79	70.5
Janajati	20	17.9
Dalit	2	1.8
Madhesi	11	9.8
Family background		
Rural	52	46.4
Semi-Urban	50	44.6
Urban	10	8.9

3.2 Status of job satisfaction

3.2.1 Overall satisfaction status

As discussed in the methods, overall satisfaction level of respondents was drawn, which was as presented in Table 5. The result showed that only 30.36% of the agriculture officers were satisfied with their job, 64.29% of them were indifferent (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), and the remaining 5.36% were dissatisfied with their job.

Table 5. Overall satisfaction level of respondents

Category	Number	Percentage
Satisfied	34	30.36
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Indifferent)	72	64.29
Dissatisfied	6	5.36

3.2.2 Satisfaction status for various factors of job

Satisfaction level for each of factors taken as a measure of job satisfaction was also measured, which was found as shown in Table 6. Mean value of assigned values for all indicative statements attached to each factor was calculated across all 112 respondents and the satisfaction level was categorized into three groups as discussed in the methodology.

Table 6. Satisfaction status for various factors of job

S.N.	Factors	Mean	S. D.	Category	Remarks
1	Physical facility at the office	3.57	0.29	Satisfied	>3+S.D.
2	Guidance of and relationship with supervisors/office chief	3.69	0.11	Satisfied	>3+S.D.
3	Cooperation of and relationship with co-workers	3.82	0.18	Satisfied	>3+S.D.
4	Pay (salary, allowances, and reward)	2.86	0.27	Indifferent	3-S.D. - 3+S.D.
5	Welfare and retirement facility	3.41	0.34	Satisfied	>3+S.D.
6	Capacity building and job promotion opportunity	2.41	0.26	Dissatisfied	<3-S.D.

As observed in Table 6, the six factors taken as a measure of job satisfaction in the study possessed variation in the mean values, which ranged between (2.4-3.82). Agriculture officers were found to be at a satisfied level for four factors, namely; physical facility at the office, Guidance of and relationship with supervisors/office chief, Cooperation of and relationship with co-workers and Welfare and retirement facility with mean value 3.57, 3.69, 3.82 and 3.41 respectively while they were at indifferent level for the pay factor with mean value 2.86. However, they were found to be dissatisfied with the factor “Capacity building and job promotion opportunity” with a minimum mean score (2.41). This illustrates that this factor contributes the most significant proportion for overall dissatisfaction of agriculture officers under study. The findings are consistent with Subedi and Chaudhary (2014) in case of Guidance of and relationship with Supervisors/office chief and that with coworkers as well as pay factor, but in contrast in case of capacity building and job promotion opportunity. Subedi and Chaudhary (2014) found the government employees to be at average level of satisfaction

3.2.3 Comparing the average job satisfaction level for various demographic variables

Mann-Whitney test was run for variables; working office, gender and marital status. As shown in the Table 7, the p-value of the test was found to be higher than 0.05 for the variables; gender and whether working in central/policy level or implementation level office, saying that there is no significant difference in the job satisfaction level for them. However, lesser p-value

(0.012<0.05) and higher mean value for provincial respondents concluded that satisfaction level is significantly higher in provincial agriculture officers than that in federal agriculture officers.

Table 7. Mean comparison: Mann-Whitney U Test

Variable	Category	N=112	Mean	Mean Rank	z- value	p-value
Working office	Federal	54	3.13	48.54	-2.505	.012
	Provincial	58	3.37	63.91		
Working Office	Central/Policy	38	3.20	52.68	-.891	.373
	Implementation	74	3.27	58.46		
Gender	Male	91	3.28	58.37	-1.272	.204
	Female	21	3.14	48.38		

Kruskal-Wallis test was run to test the satisfaction level against variables; designation level, working discipline, age, job duration. As shown in Table 8, the p-value of the test was found to be higher than 0.05 for all these variables, concluding that satisfaction level of agriculture officers does not differ significantly among various categories of these variables.

Table 8. Mean comparison: Kruskal-Wallis test

Variable	Category	N=112	Mean	Mean Rank	p-value
Designation level	Officer 6 th	5	3.57	78.20	.062
	Officer 7 th	37	3.32	59.29	
	Officer 8 th	16	3.39	67.94	
	Class III	54	3.13	49.00	
Working discipline	Extension	41	3.27	58.54	.371
	Horticulture	20	3.26	56.60	
	Agronomy	11	3.30	57.41	
	Plant Protection	15	3.36	64.03	
	Planning	19	3.22	54.21	
	Soil	6	2.86	29.00	
Age	Up to 30	59	3.19	51.50	.195
	>30-40	46	3.34	63.04	
	>40	7	3.20	55.64	
Job duration	<5	57	3.22	52.86	.083
	5-10	45	3.33	63.14	
	>10-20	6	2.92	32.17	
	>20	4	3.41	70.13	

Based on the difference in mean value, some variables were subjected to ANOVA test and then post hoc test

if necessary. As reflected in the Table 9, for different categories of education level, the p-value was found too small compared to 0.05, saying that there is sufficient evidence that agriculture officers having a different level of education differ significantly regarding their levels of job satisfaction.

Table 9. Mean comparison for education level: ANOVA test

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	1.971	2	.985	5.208	.007
Within groups	20.621	109	.189		
Total	22.592	111			

Table 10. Mean comparison for education level: Post hoc test (multiple comparisons)

Category	Mean	Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Intermediate	3.628	Bachelor	0.191	0.21	0.65
		Master	0.449	0.20	0.07
Bachelor	3.437	Intermediate	-0.191	0.21	0.65
		Master	.258*	0.10	0.03
Master	3.179	Intermediate	-0.449	0.20	0.07
		Bachelor	-.258*	0.10	0.03

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The post hoc test, as presented in Table 10, suggested that satisfaction level differs just between Bachelor and Master level. However, there was no significant difference between the two pairs (bachelor and intermediate, master and intermediate).

3.3 Significant factors of job satisfaction

The study also found out which job factors the respondents feel most important by forced ranking, as described in methods. They were asked to choose the three most important factors out of the given six factors of job satisfaction in order. The rank value of 3, 2, and 1 was given for the first, second, and third essential factors, and the composite rank value for each factor was calculated as the sum of the product of the response number and the rank value across all six factors of job satisfaction and dividing that with maximum possible

value that could be, which is 336 i.e. if all respondents had chosen any factor first important, the maximum value would be 336. As such, the index value ranged between 0 to 1. For example, the index value for the first row, i.e., “physical facilities at the office,” was calculated as follows: $21 \times 3 + 12 \times 2 + 19 \times 1 = 106 / 336 = 0.32$. Table 11 below is the detail of ranking of job satisfaction factors in order of respondents’ preference.

Table 11. Ranking of job satisfaction factors in order of respondents’ preference

Factors	1 st Important (N=112)	2 nd Important (N=112)	3 rd Important (N=112)	Composite rank value	Rank
Physical facilities at office	21	12	19	0.32	IV
Guidance of and relationship with Supervisors/ office chief	31	28	15	0.49	II
Cooperation of and relationship with co-workers	4	14	26	0.20	V
Pay (Salary, allowances, and reward)	30	11	21	0.40	III
Welfare/retirement facility	2	3	14	0.08	VI
Capacity building and job Promotion opportunity	24	44	17	0.53	I
Total	112	112	112		

As shown in the table above, capacity building and job promotion opportunity was the first essential factor, with a composite rank value of 0.53. Next to this, the Guidance of/and relationship with supervisors/office chief was most important, with a 0.49 rank value. Based on the rank value, pay (salary, allowances, and reward), with 0.40, was the third most important factor of job satisfaction. Finally, welfare/retirement facilities were the least important factor among the six factors, with a rank value of only 0.08. The findings are consistent with findings of Pathak (2015) in case of employees in commercial banks.

3.4 Workload status of agriculture officers

Too much workload and a lesser workload may also be one of the job dissatisfying factors. More workload gives physical and mental exhaustion, which might bring problems in health and family matters. On the

other hand, a lesser workload may cause inactiveness and may hinder capacity enhancement. The study collected information about the status of workload at the respondents' current office. As shown in Table 12, only 42 percent of agriculture officers feel that they have optimum workload. Thirty-three percent are with less workload than expected, indicating one third of agriculture officers are not being efficiently utilized.

Table 12. Feeling about work load for respondents

S.N.	Feeling	Number	Percentage
1	Less than I expect	37	33.0
2	As I expect/optimum	47	42.0
3	More than I expect	28	25.0

To find out whether there is any significant difference in the workload situation for provincial or federal officers and whether they work in central/policy level office or implementation office and for male and female officers, chi-square test was run via SPSS. The p-value of the test was found to be much higher (0.555) than 0.05 for gender, slightly higher (0.056) for working office (federal versus provincial), but lower (0.007) for working office (central/policy level versus implementation level). This indicated that there was no significant difference in the workload situation for male and female officers and federal and provincial officers, but the workload situation differs significantly for those who work in the central/policy level office and implementation office at a 5 percent level of significance. 52.63 % of officers working in the central or policy level office expressed that they had less workload while only 22.97% of officers working in the implementation level said that. This indicated that more than half of the agriculture officers of central/policy level office are not efficiently utilized. So, number of agriculture officers should be made lesser in the central or policy level office or they should be given extra job responsibilities.

Table 13. Workload comparison: Chi-Square Test

Variable	Category	Number	Less than I expect (%)	Optimum (%)	More than I expect (%)	Total	p-value
Working office	Federal	54	37.04	48.15	14.81	100.00	.056
	Provincial	58	29.31	36.21	34.48	100.00	
	Total	112	33.04	41.96	25.00	100.00	

Working office	Central/Policy level	38	52.63	28.95	18.42	100.00	.007
	Implementation level	74	22.97	48.65	28.38	100.00	
	Total	112	33.04	41.96	25.00	100.00	
Gender	Female	21	33.33	33.33	33.33	100.00	.555
	Male	91	32.97	43.96	23.08	100.00	
	Total	112	33.04	41.96	25.00	100.00	

3.5 Feeling about unfair practices within the organization

Every employee expects fair practices within the organization in which he/she works. If there is a feeling of any unfair practices that might be the cause of dissatisfaction and lower the efficiency of the employee, which finally affects the productivity and output of the organization. The study collected the information if there is any feeling about unfair practices among the respondents. As presented in Table 14, only 10.7% of officers don't feel any unfair practices. 54.5% of officers feel unfair practices moderately to strongly while 34.8% feel that partially.

Table 14. Feeling about unfair practices within the organization

S.N.	Feeling	Number	Percentage
1	No, I don't feel any unfair practices at all	12	10.7
2	I partially feel so	39	34.8
3	I moderately feel so	33	29.5
4	I strongly feel so	28	25.0

The Chi-Square test was applied to find out whether there is any significant difference in the feeling about unfair practices among some variables; working office, gender, designation level, and working period. The p-value of the test was found to be higher than 0.05 for these variables; indicating that there was not any significant difference.

3.6 Dissatisfied issues

The study also collected some qualitative information if the respondents feel any particular issues in which they are unsatisfied with. As expressed by majority of the respondents, there is bias in opportunity of exposure visit, international training and study, rewarding, posting and transfer on the basis of political affection

or personal connection. Besides, most common unsatisfied issues indicated by the respondents include low salary, late and no fixed or guaranteed system of promotion, political pressure in selection of beneficiary and execution of programs. Some of the respondents expected well health insurance and loan facilities for government employees and education facility for their children. As expressed by many of the officers, there is also some sort of dissatisfaction due to difficulty in implementation of programs most of which are often designed by the central level without well understanding of ground realities also because of poor implementation of policies and programs and poor monitoring from higher level. Considering this, policies and programs should be formulated so to execute effectively and efficiently as well as there should be sound monitoring activity from the authorities of higher level which is lacking or not in best version.

As suggested by some of the officers, there should be paid visiting leave every year for exposure and refreshments. Most of the officers are unsatisfied due to the rule that they are allowed for further study only in the subject of related discipline in which they are working in. So, that would be better if there is an opportunity to study any subject on leave irrespective of in which discipline the employee is working for. This is desirable because this not only provides an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in his/her interested field but also the organization have manpower with additional competence which could be utilized as per need.

Most of the respondents working at the implementation level feel less competent to deliver quality technical support to farmers due to not having enough training and capacity development opportunities. Further, they don't get enough time to enhance their technical knowledge by studying and field experience because their major responsibility is to distribute subsidies, due

to which their maximum time is spent in creating files of the applicant of subsidized programs, monitoring of them and assisting subsidiaries for payment. Therefore, they suggest that Field-based knowledge enhancement should be encouraged for extension officers by frequent visits to farmers and by researching with farmers to verify the latest technologies. For that official load should be minimized for them.

4. CONCLUSION

To achieve a sustained growth in agricultural productivity, agriculture officers' competence and their level of job satisfaction count crucial. Considering the most important determinant of job satisfaction and dissatisfied with, there should be enough and effective capacity enhancement opportunities and the concerned organization should foster a fair system to make them happy and productive manpower of the country. The agriculture officers should be assigned with new dimension of extension prevailing in the world like digital services, IT based delivery etc. Offering an opportunity to be promoted to any other discipline if one fulfills the certain qualifications could be one of the ways out to dissatisfaction with respect to the promotion of agriculture officers. The officers at the provincial and federal level office should be developed as resource persons for facilitating the major concerns of the respective provinces and assisting local level agriculture technicians. In addition, they should develop professional skills and knowledge by themselves to deliver to the farmers as a key responsibility of their own, instead of expecting all from the government. Further, government should focus more on effective implementation of indirect ways of subsidizing farmers like insurance premium, interest subsidy through banks, output based subsidy, smooth marketing system development etc. rather than direct and production based subsidy programs.

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