

Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

A Comparative Study of Mental Limits and Ego Inflation amongst Male and Female Students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Al-Nusoor University

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Article History

Received: 06-06-2026;

Reviewed: 25-07-2026;

Accepted: 23-08-2026;

Published: 24-08-2026.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to identify differences between male and female students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Al-Nusoor University, in terms of the variables of mental limits and self-aggrandisement. The researcher adopted a descriptive approach using comparative studies, as this was deemed appropriate for the nature and objectives of the research. The research population comprised 124 third-year students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Nusoor University for the academic year 2025–2026, whilst the final research sample comprised 80 students (60 male and 20 female), representing 64.52 per cent of the research population. The researcher used the Mental Limits Scale and the Self-Grandiosity Scale developed by Al-Hashimi (2025), after verifying their face validity and reliability. The data were analysed statistically using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), relying on the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, percentage, coefficient of variation, Pearson's correlation coefficient, the Spearman–Brown equation, and the t-test for two independent samples. The results showed that the research sample scored highly on the variables of mental boundaries and self-aggrandisement compared with the hypothetical means for the two scales. The results also indicated statistically significant differences between male and female students in the mental boundaries variable, favouring the male students, whilst no statistically significant differences were found between them in the self-aggrandisement variable. In light of the results, the researcher concluded that male students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences have a higher level of mental boundaries than female students, whilst male and female students are comparable in terms of self-aggrandisement. The researcher recommended paying attention to the psychological well-being of the faculty's students through psychological counselling programmes, organising educational programmes that contribute to the development of mental boundaries and the enhancement of self-awareness, as well as conducting similar studies linking the variables of mental boundaries and self-aggrandisement to other psychological and educational variables.

Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

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Keywords: Mental Boundaries; Self-Aggrandisement; University Students; Faculty Of Physical Education And Sports Sciences; Al-Nusoor University.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi perbedaan antara mahasiswa laki-laki dan perempuan di Fakultas Pendidikan Jasmani dan Ilmu Olahraga, Universitas Al-Nusoor, dalam hal variabel batas mental dan peningkatan diri. Peneliti mengadopsi pendekatan deskriptif menggunakan studi komparatif, karena dianggap sesuai dengan sifat dan tujuan penelitian. Populasi penelitian terdiri dari 124 mahasiswa tahun ketiga di Fakultas Pendidikan Jasmani dan Ilmu Olahraga Universitas Al-Nusoor untuk tahun akademik 2025–2026, sementara sampel akhir penelitian terdiri dari 80 mahasiswa (60 laki-laki dan 20 perempuan), mewakili 64,52 persen dari populasi peneliti. Peneliti menggunakan Skala Batas Mental dan Skala Keagungan Diri yang dikembangkan oleh Al-Hashimi (2025), setelah memverifikasi validitas wajah dan keandalan mereka. Data dianalisis secara statistik menggunakan Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), dengan mengandalkan rata-rata aritmatika, standar deviasi, persentase, koefisien variasi, koefisien korelasi Pearson, persamaan Spearman–Brown, dan uji t untuk dua sampel independen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sampel penelitian memperoleh skor tinggi pada variabel batas mental dan pengembangan diri dibandingkan dengan rata-rata hipotetis untuk kedua skala tersebut. Hasil juga menunjukkan perbedaan signifikan secara statistik antara siswa laki-laki dan perempuan dalam variabel batas mental, yang lebih menguntungkan siswa laki-laki, sementara tidak ditemukan perbedaan signifikan secara statistik antara mereka dalam variabel pembesaran diri. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa mahasiswa laki-laki di Fakultas Pendidikan Jasmani dan Ilmu Olahraga memiliki batas mental yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan mahasiswa perempuan, sementara mahasiswa laki-laki dan perempuan sebanding dalam hal kebesaran diri. Peneliti merekomendasikan untuk memperhatikan kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa fakultas melalui program konseling psikologis, mengorganisir program pendidikan yang berkontribusi pada pengembangan batas mental dan peningkatan kesadaran diri, serta melakukan studi serupa yang menghubungkan variabel batas mental dan pembesaran diri dengan variabel psikologis dan pendidikan lainnya.

Kata Kunci: Batasan Mental; Pengembangan diri; Mahasiswa Universitas; Fakultas Pendidikan Jasmani dan Ilmu Olahraga; Universitas Al-Nusoor.

INTRODUCTION

Mental boundaries and self-characteristics are fundamental psychological concepts that contribute to the formation of an individual's personality and influence their behavioural, cognitive and social patterns. This concept has received increasing attention in recent studies in the fields of educational psychology and personality psychology, owing to its role in explaining individual differences in thinking styles and interactions with others. Mental boundaries refer to the degree of rigidity or flexibility characterised by an individual in their self-perception and in organising their relationship with the surrounding environment; clear mental boundaries reflect a psychological distinction between the self and others, whilst unclear boundaries indicate an overlap between the self and others and excessive influence from the social environment.

Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

Narcissism is considered one of the key psychological variables that reflects a pattern of thinking and behaviour characterised by an exaggerated sense of self-worth, a feeling of self-importance, and a constant desire to be admired and to stand out. Recent studies have indicated that levels of narcissism vary amongst students and are influenced by a range of demographic factors, most notably gender and field of study. They have also shown that this variable is linked to self-esteem, expectations of achievement, and the gap between a student's expectations and their actual academic attainment, which is reflected in their academic behaviour and social interaction within the university environment (Zajenkowski & Gignac, 2024: 21).

The importance of studying these two variables in the field of physical education and sports science is highlighted, given the nature of this discipline, which requires a high degree of balance between an individual's self-awareness and their ability to interact and work within a team, whether in training situations or sporting competitions. Furthermore, some studies have indicated variations in levels of narcissistic tendencies amongst students in faculties of physical education and sports science, with the possibility of gender-related differences; this necessitates an investigation of these differences within the university environment (Gezer, 2010: 569).

In light of the above, the present study is significant in that it aims to identify differences between male and female students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Nusoor University in terms of the variables of mental boundaries and self-aggrandisement, thereby contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge regarding these two variables, and providing indicators that can be utilised in the development of counselling and educational programmes aimed at promoting mental health and personal and social adjustment among the faculty's students.

Research Problem

University life is a stage during which students' psychological and personality traits take shape, as their behaviour and academic and social interactions are influenced by a range of psychological variables, the most notable of which are psychological boundaries and ego inflation. Mental boundaries represent one of the key indicators reflecting an individual's ability to regulate their relationship with themselves and others, whilst self-aggrandisement reflects an individual's level of self-esteem and their desire to excel and gain recognition. The study of these two variables is of particular importance for students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, given the nature of the discipline, which requires constant interaction, teamwork, competition and behavioural discipline.

Although there has been an increase in studies addressing each variable separately, the researcher notes a scarcity of studies comparing male and female students in terms of mental boundaries and self-aggrandisement within the Iraqi university environment, particularly in faculties of Physical Education and Sports Science. Furthermore, the lack of clarity regarding the nature of gender differences in these two variables limits the possibility of developing counselling or educational programmes based on accurate scientific data that take into account the psychological characteristics of students.

Hence, the research problem arose from the lack of clarity regarding whether there are statistically significant differences between male and female students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Nusur University in terms of

Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

mental limits and self-aggrandisement. This prompted the researcher to conduct this study to answer the following question:

Are there statistically significant differences between male and female students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Nusoor University in terms of the variables of mental boundaries and self-aggrandisement?

Research Areas

Human Domain:

Third-year students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Al-Nusoor University, for the academic year 2025–2026.

Temporal Scope:

The period from 1 December 2025 to 8 February 2026.

Spatial Scope:

The lecture theatres at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Al-Nusoor University.

Research Hypotheses:

1. There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science in terms of mental limits.
2. There are no statistically significant differences in self-aggrandisement between male and female students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Science.

METHODS

The researcher adopted a descriptive approach using comparative studies, as this was appropriate to the nature and objectives of the present study; this approach enables the identification, analysis and interpretation of differences between male and female students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences in terms of the variables of mental limits and self-aggrandisement, in the light of the theoretical framework and previous studies.

Research Population and Sample

The research population consisted of third-year students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Al-Nusoor University, for the academic year 2025–2026, totalling 124 students, comprising 95 male students and 29 female students. Excluded from the research population were the participants in the exploratory and stability trials, numbering (25) students—comprising (20) male students and (5) female students—were excluded from the research sample, as were (19) students because the researcher was unable to contact them or because their responses to the two scales were incomplete.

The final research sample thus comprised (80) students who were regular attendees and on whom the Mental Limits and Self-Grandiosity scales could be administered, comprising (60) male students and (20) female students, representing (64.52%) of the original research population. Table (1) shows the distribution of the research population and sample.

Table 1. Distribution of the research population and sample.

Percentage	Issue	Sample	t
%64.52	80	Main Application Sample	1
%20.16	25	Sample Exploratory Experiment and Consistency	2

Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

%15.32	19	Excluded	3
%100	124	Total	

Data collection methods

The researcher relied on the following methods to collect research data:

1. Arabic and foreign sources and references relevant to the research topic.
2. The Mental Boundaries Scale.
3. The Narcissism Scale.
4. Data collection forms for the two scales.
5. Appropriate statistical methods for data analysis and the derivation of results.

Mental Limits Scale

The researcher adopted the Mental Limits Scale developed by Al-Hashimi (2025), as it was appropriate for the objectives of the present study, which were to identify differences

between male and female students in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Nusur University with regard to the variable of mental limits. This scale had previously been administered to students in the Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at the Faculty of Basic Education, University of Mosul.

In its final form, the scale consists of 45 items distributed across six dimensions, namely: boundaries between thoughts and feelings; self-regulation; physical boundaries; boundaries relating to opinions and judgements; cognitive boundaries; and interpersonal boundaries. The items were distributed across these dimensions in accordance with the original scale.

The researcher adopted the five-point Likert scale for responses, comprising five options: (always, usually, sometimes, rarely, never). The response options were assigned weights ranging from 5 to 1 points for positive items, and the reverse for negative items.

The scale scores ranged from a minimum of 45 points to a maximum of 225 points, whilst the hypothetical mean for the scale was 135 points. The researcher adopted the marking scheme developed by Al-Hashimi (2025) to mark the responses of the research sample participants. The complete version of the scale, including the distribution of items across its dimensions and the positive and negative items, is provided in Appendix 1. (Al-Hashimi, 2025: 67).

Self-inflation scale

The researcher adopted the self-inflation scale prepared by Al-Hashemi (2025), to fit the objectives of the current research represented in the comparison between male and female students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences at Al-Nsour University in the self-inflation variable. This scale was previously applied to the students of the Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences at the Faculty of Basic Education at the University of Mosul.

In its final form, the scale consists of (40) items distributed on three axes, namely: the ideal self, the social self, and the realistic self, and the paragraphs were distributed to these axes according to what was stated in the original scale.

The researcher adopted the five-point Likert scale for the answer, as it included five alternatives: (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never), and the answer alternatives were given weights ranging from (1-5) to the positive paragraphs, and vice versa to the negative paragraphs.

The scores of the scale ranged between (40) degrees as a minimum and (200) degrees as a maximum, while the hypothetical average of the scale reached (120) degrees. The researcher adopted the correction key set by Al-Hashemi (2025) in correcting the responses of the research sample members, and the full picture of the scale, including the distribution of paragraphs on its axes and the positive and negative paragraphs, is provided in Appendix (1). (Al-Hashimi, 2025: 79).

The researcher relied on the five-point Likert scale to correct the responses of the research sample members, as the answer alternatives were given weights that vary according to the type of paragraph (positive or negative), as shown in Table (2).

Table 2. Shows the mechanism of correcting the paragraphs of the Mental Limits and Self-Inflation Scales according to the five-point Likert scale.

Start 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Probably 4	Always 5	Positive paragraphs
Start 5	Rarely 4	Sometimes 3	Probably 2	Always 1	Negative vertebrae

Scientific Parameters of the Two Scales

Apparent honesty

Apparent honesty is one of the types of honesty that is used to verify the validity of the paragraphs of the scale in measuring the trait or phenomenon to be measured, and it is inferred by presenting the scale to a group of experts and specialists to judge the suitability of its paragraphs, their formulation, and alternatives to the answer. In this regard, Abbas et al. (2009) point out that the best way to verify the apparent truthfulness is to present the paragraphs of the scale to a group of experts to judge their validity in measuring the characteristic to be measured (Abbas et al., 2009: 262).

In order to verify the apparent truthfulness of the two scales in the current environment, the researcher presented the scales of mental limits and self-aggrandizement in their final form to a group of experts and specialists in sports psychology, measurement and evaluation, with the aim of expressing their opinions on the appropriateness and clarity of the paragraphs and the validity of the answer alternatives to achieve the research objectives.

The results of the arbitration showed that the mental limits scale obtained an agreement ratio of (87.5%), while the percentage of agreement on the self-inflation scale reached (87.5%), which is higher than the minimum acceptable rate for the adoption of paragraphs, as the researcher adopted an agreement ratio of (75%) or more as a criterion for the acceptance of the paragraph, based on what Bloom et al. (1983) pointed out, who believes that the paragraph can be adopted if it obtains a percentage of agreement of at least (75%) from the opinions of experts (Bloom et al., 1983): Table (2) shows the percentages of the experts' agreement on the two scales.

Table 3. Shows the approval rates of the experts

Percentage of agreement	Disagrees	Agrees	Number of Experts	Scale	t
%87.5	1	7	8	Aqila Border Scale	1
%87.5	1	7	8	Self-Inflation Scale	2

Consistency of the two measures

Consistency is one of the basic characteristics that should be present in measurement tools, as it reflects the consistency and stability of the results of the scale in measuring the phenomenon to be studied, and the validity of the results of the scale is highly related to its stability and validity, as the results of any measurement instrument cannot be trusted unless they have an appropriate degree of consistency (Farhat, 2001: 143).

In order to verify the stability of the scales of mental limits and self-inflation, the researcher adopted the Split-Half Method, which is one of the most common methods in estimating stability due to its economy of time and effort (Barhoum and Abdel Nour, 2004: 149). This method is also characterized by avoiding the problem of reapplying the test, and eliminating the effect of variables that may occur on the scientific, psychological or health status of the examinee, which may affect his level of performance when re-testing (Al-Tamimi and Al-Taie, 2005: 176).

To achieve this, the two scales were applied to a sample of (25) male and female students from the research community, and from outside the main application sample. Then the paragraphs of each scale were divided into odd and even paragraphs, and the Pearson correlation coefficient was extracted between the scores of the two halves, reaching (0.81) for the mental limits scale and (0.82) for the self-inflation scale. These values represent the stability coefficient of the half-scale.

To obtain the full stability coefficient of the scale, the correlation coefficients were treated using the Spearman-Brown equation, with the total stability coefficient (0.89) for the Mental Limits Scale and (0.90) for the Self-Hypertrophy Scale, which are high stability coefficients that indicate that the two scales have a good degree of internal consistency, confirming their validity to be applicable to the main research sample, as described in Appendix (1).

First survey application of the two measures

The researcher conducted the first survey application of the mental limits and self-inflation scales on a sample of (25) male and female students from the research community, and from outside the main application sample, during the period from 4/1/2026 to 5/1/2026.

The purpose of this application was to verify the clarity of the instructions of the two scales and their paragraphs, and their suitability for the sample members, as well as to determine the time required to answer each scale. The results of the application showed that the instructions of the two scales were clear, and that all the paragraphs were understandable to the sample members, and the time taken to answer the Mental Limits Scale was between (16-19) minutes, while the time taken to answer the Self-Hypertrophy Scale ranged between (17-20) minutes.

Final application of the two measures

After completing the scientific procedures of the two scales and ensuring their validity and consistency, the researcher conducted the final application on the main research sample of (80) male and female students from the third stage at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences at Ensour University, during the period from 7/1/2026 to 8/1/2026.

The self-inflation scale was applied on the first day, while the mental limits scale was applied on the second day, with the answer instructions clarified to the examinees and the emphasis was placed on answering all the paragraphs accurately and objectively.

Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

Statistical methods

The researcher adopted the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in processing the research data, and used the following statistical methods: Percentage, Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, Simple correlation coefficient (Pearson), Spearman-Brown equation, Test (v) for two independent samples that are not equal in number, The hypothetical mean, Coefficient of difference.

RESEARCH RESULTS

After completing the application of the mental limits and self-inflation scales to the research sample of (80) male and female students from the third stage at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences at Ensour University, the researcher entered the data and processed it statistically, with the aim of achieving the research objectives and answering his questions. In order to identify the statistical characteristics of the two scales among the members of the research sample, the researcher extracted the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, hypothetical mean, and coefficient of difference for each of the scales of mental limits and self-aggrandizement. As shown in Table (3).

Table 4. Shows the statistical parameters of the mental limits and self-aggrandizement scales of the combined sample of male and female students.

Divergence coefficient	Hypothetical Average	$\pm$	Going to-	Sample	Variable
% 10.28	135	17.23	167.46	80	Mental limits
% 10.60	120	16.67	157.25	80	Self-inflation

It is clear from Table (4) that the arithmetic mean of the Mental Limits Scale reached (167.46) with a standard deviation of (17.23), which is higher than the hypothetical average of the scale of (135), which indicates that the members of the research sample enjoy a high level of mental limits. The arithmetic mean of the Self-Inflation Scale was (157.25) with a standard deviation of (16.67), which is also higher than the hypothetical average of the scale of (120), which indicates that the members of the research sample have a high level of self-aggrandizement.

It is also clear from Table (4) that the coefficient of difference reached (10.28%) for the Mental Limits Scale, and ***(10.60%)*** for the Self-Inflation Scale, which are values less than (30%), which indicates the homogeneity of the members of the research sample in both variables and the lack of dispersion of their responses, as Al-Tikriti and Al-Obaidi (1999) indicate that the coefficient of difference if it is less than (30%), this indicates the homogeneity of the sample and its decrease in its dispersion in the studied variable (Al-Tikriti and Al-Obaidi, 1999): 212).

In order to achieve the two research objectives related to detecting the differences between male and female students in the variables of mental limits and self-aggrandizement, the researcher used the (T) test for two independent samples, as shown in Tables (5) and (6).

Table 5. Shows the differences between male and female students in the mental limits variable

Sig	Value T	$\pm$	Going to-	Issue	Sample	t
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Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

0.001	3.58	13.89	178	60	Students	1
		15.21	159.27	20	Female Students	2

Table (5) shows that there are statistically significant differences between male and female students in the mental limits variable, as the calculated value of (v) was (3.58) at the significance level of (0.001), which is lower than the approved significance level (0.05), which indicates that there are real differences between the two groups, and these differences were in favor of students whose arithmetic mean reached (178.00), compared to the average of female students (159.27). Thus, the first objective of the research was achieved, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis of this variable was rejected.

In order to achieve the second objective of the research, which is related to identifying the differences between male and female students in the self-inflation variable, the researcher used the (T) test for two independent samples, as shown in Table (6).

Table 6. Shows the differences between male and female students in the variable of self-inflation

Sig	Value T	$\pm$	Going to-	Issue	Sample	t
0.537	0.624	18.15	155.61	60	Students	1
		14.94	159.35	20	Female Students	2

DISCUSSION

The results of Table (5) showed that there are statistically significant differences between male and female students in the variable of mental limits and in favor of students. The researcher attributes this result to the nature of the life and social experiences that students go through, which may contribute to the development of independence, the ability to organize oneself and deal with different situations, as well as the nature of sports activities that require decision-making, responsibility, and continuous interaction with the surrounding environment. It links neural development to some abilities related to cognition and self-regulation, in addition to the impact of acquired experiences on the development of these aspects (Nazareth et al., 2013: 54). Rameriz & Gonzalez, 2025: 48 also pointed out that differences in some biological factors and previous experiences may contribute to the emergence of differences between males and females in some psychological traits, which is consistent with the researcher's findings in the current study.

The results of Table (6) showed that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female students in the variable of self-inflation, which indicates that the levels of this variable are converging among the sample members regardless of gender. The researcher attributes this to the fact that self-aggrandizement represents a trait or cognitive trend that may be affected by the factors of socialization and the university environment more than by sex, especially that the sample members belong to the same educational environment, study the same curricula, and practice the same sports activities, which contributes to Convergence of their experiences and psychological tendencies. This finding is consistent with Ahmed and Jameel (2024) that gender differences in self-aggrandizement are not necessarily constant across all

Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

societies or measurement tools, and is consistent with the finding (Magee & Upenieks, 2019: 86) that apparent differences between the sexes may be influenced more by the way the scale's items are formulated than by reflecting real differences in the level of self-aggrandizement.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions:

1. Students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Nusoor University have a level of mental limits higher than the scale's assumed mean.
2. Students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences at Al-Nusoor University have a level of self-aggrandisement higher than the scale's assumed mean.
3. There are statistically significant differences between male and female students in the mental limits variable, in favour of the male students.
4. There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students in the self-aggrandisement variable

Recommendations

1. Attention should be paid to the psychological aspects of students at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Sciences through the implementation of psychological and educational counselling programmes.
2. Awareness programmes and lectures should be organised to develop mental boundaries and enhance self-awareness among students.
3. Take into account the differences between male and female students when designing counselling programmes relating to psychological aspects.
4. Conduct similar studies on other samples, academic years and universities, and link mental limits and self-aggrandisement to other psychological, educational and sporting variables.

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Jurnal Pendidikan Kepelatihan Olahraga: Pejuang

Volume 2 Nomor 3 Oktober 2026

E-ISSN: 3090-1278

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