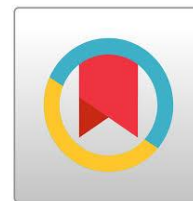# Breaking Barriers: The Rise of Balinese Women in Politics and the Challenges They Face

Mendobrak Hambatan: Bangkitnya Perempuan Bali di Dunia Politik dan Tantangannya

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ARTICLE INFORMATION		
Keywords *Balinese Women;* *Political Careers;* *Gender Equality*		**ABSTRACT** This research aims to examine the strategies used by female politicians in Bali to balance their political careers with their social and cultural roles in the family and society. In addition, this study will also analyze the factors that influence the development of Balinese women's political careers. The method used is descriptive qualitative research with data collection through interviews and documentary studies. Interview data was collected from Balinese women politicians who are running for legislative members (Caleg) in the 2024 legislative elections (Pileg) from the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), as well as from academics experienced in gender studies. The results showed that time management strategies and effective communication approaches are solutions for Balinese women in their multi-tasking roles. In addition, Balinese women are expected to innovate creatively by using technology to facilitate the management of household and work affairs in line with the concept of work-family balance. There are three important factors that influence Balinese women's political careers: first, cultural factors related to the still dominant patriarchal culture; second, structural factors reflecting the lack of allocation of strategic positions for women; and third, institutional factors related to the weakness of existing regulations to protect women's interests in the political arena.
Kata Kunci *Perempuan Bali;* *Karir Politik;* *Kesetaraan Gender;*		**ABSTRAK** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi yang diadopsi oleh politisi perempuan di Bali dalam menyeimbangkan karir politik mereka dengan peran sosial dan budaya dalam keluarga serta masyarakat. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga akan menganalisis faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi pengembangan karir politik perempuan Bali. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara dan studi dokumentasi. Data wawancara diambil dari politisi perempuan Bali yang mencalonkan diri sebagai anggota legislatif (caleg) pada Pemilu Legislatif (pileg) 2024 dari Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (PSI), serta dari akademisi yang berpengalaman dalam kajian gender. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi manajemen waktu dan pendekatan komunikasi yang efektif menjadi solusi bagi perempuan Bali dalam menjalankan peran multitasking. Selain itu, perempuan Bali diharapkan untuk berinovasi secara kreatif dengan memanfaatkan teknologi, guna mempermudah pengelolaan urusan rumah tangga dan pekerjaan sesuai dengan konsep work-family balance. Terdapat tiga faktor penting yang memengaruhi karir politik perempuan Bali: pertama, faktor kultural yang terkait dengan budaya patriarki yang masih dominan; kedua, faktor struktural yang mencerminkan kurangnya alokasi jabatan strategis bagi perempuan; dan ketiga, faktor institusional yang berkaitan dengan kelemahan aturan yang ada dalam melindungi kepentingan perempuan di arena politik.

Introduction

Bali is a unique island, and one of its uniqueness lies in the consistency of its cultural traditions, customs and norms. The culture and social norms that most Balinese still adhere to is the patrilineal culture. Patrilineal culture requires Balinese women to take on the responsibility of looking after domestic affairs. Balinese Hindu women are even said to have the function of Triple Roles. According to Moser, the Triple Roles function of Balinese women is based on "reproductive roles" (domestic), "productive roles" (career and work) and "customary roles" (social) (Nariswari; 2023). The reproductive role refers to the responsibility of caring for children, husbands and various household chores. The productive role refers to the duty to help the husband earn a living. Meanwhile, the customary role refers to the task of taking care of religious activities and customs. The religious and cultural roles of Balinese women have become norms and traditions that are maintained in the daily lives of Balinese people.

Gender studies on Balinese women which are associated with the concept of triple roles presents a unique insight into how Balinese women carry out the triple roles. The triple roles refer to women's dedication to household affairs, economics, even religious and cultural activities. The uniqueness of this study lies in the ability of Balinese women to create harmony between family, society, and tradition which is able to form a strong image or identity of Balinese women themselves. In the midst of a modern world, Balinese women are able to maintain their central role in carrying out domestic obligations (family), religious tradition obligations, and local economic obligations which make Balinese women unique compared to women in other regions.

Another cultural tradition that is still strongly held by the Balinese people in general is the patrilineal cultural system. Patrilineal culture believes that men are more important than women (Ariyanti & Ardhana, 2020). The patriarchal system places women in subordination to men, and Balinese society itself still adheres to the Purusa system, where men are given the authority to take care of and manage all family responsibilities. Women are sometimes seen as imperfect if they do not have a son to carry on the family line (Anissa Sekar Ayu; Galuh; Putra Ardiansyah ; Royhan Ahmad Danarlie, 2022). In the purusa system, women have no rights or authority in the family and this is seen as weakening their position. Patrilineal culture has become a custom and social norm that still prevails in the lives of Balinese people. Patriarchal culture tends to weaken the position of women in Balinese life.

However, with the development of more modern times and the tide of democracy that has swept various countries around the world, the existence of women in politics is necessary.

In several European countries, the number of women holding public office is on the rise. According to UN Women data, as of 1 January 2023, 11.3 per cent of women were head of state and 9.8 per cent of women were head of government (Women, 2023). This is an increase from 2022, when the figures were only 5.3 per cent and 7.3 per cent respectively (Women, 2023). In Indonesia itself, a regulation was enacted, namely Law No. 10 of 2008 on Elections for Members of the DPR, DPD and DPRD, which emphasises that political parties can participate in elections if they have achieved 30 per cent female representation in their leadership at the central level. This eventually became the catalyst for more Balinese women to enter politics.

Based on data from the Bali Provincial Central Statistics Office (BPS), there is an increasing trend in women's representation in legislative elections at the district/city level, which is 16.36% in 2021, 16.36% in 2022, and 18.18% in 2023 (BPS, 2024). There are several names of legislative candidates who will colour the local political constellation in Bali in 2024, such as Ni Wayan Sari Galung, S.Sos (PDI-Perjuangan), Ni Putu Yuli Artini, S.E., M.M. (Golkar Party), I Gusti Ayu Mas Sumatri, S.Sos., M.A.P. (Nasdem Party), and several PSI party cadres, namely Luh Gede Ervina Asri Yudiari, S.I.P., M.M., and Desak Gede Maya Agrevina, SP. The active participation of Balinese women in political activities shows that the role of women is important in the development process. Women do not always have to be objects of development, but women can also be subjects or key actors in promoting the creation of inclusive development that involves the participation of different elements of society. Looking at the increasing trend of Balinese women's participation in politics, here is one of the data on the distribution of the level of women's participation in parliament at the city, regency and provincial levels of Bali.

Table 1. Participation rate of Balinese women in parliament at city,

regency and provincial levels

District/City	Percentage of Women's Involvement in Parliament in Bali Province by District/City (Percent)		
	2021	2022	2023
Jembrana District	20.00	17.14	17.14
Tabanan District	25.00	25.00	25.00
Badung District	22.50	22.50	22.50
Gianyar District	10.00	12.50	12.50
Klungkung District	16.67	16.67	16.67
Bangli District	10.00	10.00	10.00
Karangasem District	6.67	6.67	6.67
Buleleng District	17.78	17.78	17.78
Denpasar City	8.89	8.89	11.11
Bali Province	16.36	16.36	18.18

Source : (BPS, 2024)

The data above explains that the level of participation of Balinese women in practical politics has increased in the period 2021 to 2023, starting at only 16.36% in 2021-2022 and increasing to 18.18% in 2023. This data shows a positive signal that women have started to become politically literate. The importance of women's participation in development and political decision-making is in line with the global programme for achieving sustainable development - the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which emphasises the issue of gender equality. It is considered necessary to involve women in the development process because women are important assets of a country that will produce superior young generations. The development of a nation's human resources was born in the hands of women, because women are the first educators in the family environment (Nova, 2022). Even according to Darwin, a country will never become a great country, now or in the future, if it is unable to appreciate the existence of women (Manembu, 2017).

In addition, the role of women in political decision-making is seen as important because of their ability to make substantive and responsive decisions (Kemenkopmk, 2021). Women are seen as more capable of voicing women's aspirations, especially in terms of gender justice and welfare. Gender-based justice is a reflection of the quality of the democracy that Indonesia operates. Women's representation in politics, which is on the rise, must be accompanied by adequate quality education for the women themselves. A good quality of education will be able to produce women leaders who are intelligent, broad-minded and sensitive to various social problems of society. It should also be emphasised that through politics, women are able to express their aspirations regarding the demands and interests of women in order to obtain justice, equal treatment before the law, the state, society and politics (Nimrah, 2015).

Some earlier research on gender and politics can be seen in Azeema Begum's 2023 paper entitled "Political Participation of Female in Pakistan: Prospects and Challenges', which explains that the challenges faced by women in Pakistan in politics are more about cultural barriers, namely the patriarchal culture adopted by most Pakistanis. In everyday life, men in Pakistan believe that women are individuals who do not deserve to be involved in political activities. Lack of education about the importance of women's role in decision-making, misinterpretation and orthodox behaviour are obstacles for women in Pakistan to enter the world of practical politics (Begum, 2023). A 2016 study by Rajesh Choudhary titled 'Women in Indian Politics: Challenges, Progress, and Future Prospects" explains that the challenges women face in their careers in practical politics are structural barriers. Women are often denied access to important positions in the party structure, and it is not uncommon for women to be discriminated against, resulting in a lack of access to the decision-making process (Choudhary, 2016). And the 2014 study by Ju Hui Judy Han, Jennifer Jihye Chun entitled "Introduction: Gender and Politics in Contemporary Korea' explains how the issue of gender inequality is still a topic of discussion in the social life of Korean society. Gender inequality in Korea itself is caused by historical factors, including the colonisation of Korea by Japan, where there was a division of class, race, sexuality and migration that put women in a marginal position. This long history has influenced Korea's male-dominated political constellation (Han & Chun, 2014).

Therefore, previous studies have mostly explained the barriers faced by women in politics because of social, cultural and historical factors. Meanwhile, this study uses a multidimensional approach in seeing the opportunities that can be obtained by Balinese women politicians in the political sphere, especially the strategies carried out in dealing with socio-cultural barriers in the family and society, where communication strategies, time management, education, and information technology become alternatives for Balinese women politicians to compete with men. This research wants to show optimism for the existence of women in politics. This research also analyses the factors that influence Balinese women politicians in developing their political careers. The explanation of the strategies and factors influencing Balinese women's political careers is expected to contribute to the academic field of gender studies, and also to provide best practices for Balinese women who want to enter the world of practical politics.

Method

This research is a type of descriptive qualitative research. The data collection techniques used in this research are derived from the results of interviews and documentary studies. The type of data used comes from primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from interviews with several Balinese women politicians who are legislative candidates in the 2024 legislative elections (Pileg), who are from the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI Party), and academics who are practitioners in the field of gender studies. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from various journal literature as well as official websites related to the research topic. To obtain data validity, this research uses source triangulation. Source triangulation is testing data from different data sources, namely interview data and documentation studies. Interview data was obtained from informants from Balinese women politicians from the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), and practitioners in the field of gender studies. Furthermore, researchers also use document data from journals, and official websites related to the research topic. The purpose of source triangulation is to check facts from one source against another (Alfansyur & Mariyani, 2020). This is done to get different insights (views) and information whose truth is valid.

Results and Discussion
Work Life Balance (WLB) Strategy

Balinese women are multi-tasking women, i.e. women who are able to do a job in relatively the same amount of time. Some Balinese women politicians are faced with the condition of fulfilling domestic roles (taking care of the household), cultural roles (customary activities) and public roles (political career), which requires good time management skills. Time management skills are the ability of Balinese women to manage their time well in order to achieve their goals. Time management skills are closely related to the concept of work-life balance. This ability to manage time is the ability to adapt to certain situations in order to realise the commitments and goals to be achieved and to benefit society, individuals and the business world (Shaikh et al., 2023). Balinese women politicians are sometimes required to perform cultural roles (customary activities) in the midst of their busy campaigning duties.

Based on information from female political informants from the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), it can be understood that Balinese women need time management skills to balance their political roles with their cultural roles in the family and community. The role of customs and culture is paramount for Balinese women because it is related to building harmonious relationships with fellow human beings. In Bali itself, the community adheres to the Tri Hita Karana belief, which means the three causes of human happiness, where there are teachings of

Parahyangan, which means the balance of relationships with God, Pawongan, which means the balance of relationships with fellow human beings, and Palemahan, which means the balance of relationships with nature. This Tri Hita Karana concept has become a social norm in the lives of the Balinese people. And customary activities are one of the manifestations of the Tri Hita Karana teachings, and Balinese women play an important role in preserving/maintaining these norms.

Time management is also related to women's ability to multi-task, juggling several tasks at once. When women are faced with different domestic and public tasks, they naturally have ways of managing these tasks at the same time. One of the PSI women politicians also mentioned that she is able to perform domestic tasks and political tasks at the same time, where she can follow political news through podcasts or YouTube while looking after the children. At least this way she is not left behind with new political issues to discuss in the party. The use of digital technology is also one of the innovations that can be used by women to anticipate the various domestic and public tasks that are being carried out. The rapid development of new technologies has blurred the lines between work and life, with people able to connect their work and personal lives 24 hours a day through various media (Hubbard, 2016). The rapidly increasing sophistication of today's information technology has made human life easier. This technological development is a golden opportunity for women as agents of change to compete fairly with men. Innovative Balinese women are able to use technology to perform various domestic and non-domestic tasks simultaneously. Through digital media, many Balinese women are also able to promote their achievements and accomplishments to gain recognition and support from the community. Digital media is also a bridge for Balinese women to show their quality in contributing to various development programmes.

The ability of Balinese women is also closely related to the concept of work-life balance, where a person is able to share roles and feel satisfaction from the roles that have been carried out, reflected in the low level of work-family conflict, the high level of work-family facilitation (Putra, 2020). In addition, a Balinese woman politician needs to communicate with her family, especially her husband. Communication is needed to solve problems in an adaptive way (Setyaningsih, 2008). For example, in Bali, the tradition of the ngayah is still strongly held by the community. The ngayah tradition has to be carried out by all Balinese and if the woman is unable to attend the ngayah activity, she can be represented by her husband. In this case, good communication is needed between husband and wife in carrying out these traditional duties. The support of the husband also has a great influence on the political career of a Balinese woman politician. A sense of understanding from the husband to be willing to replace the wife's

duty to carry out her traditional cultural role is a strong foundation for the development of Balinese women's careers. Time management and communication patterns embody the spirit of feminism in Bali. The concept of feminism itself focuses on the women's emancipation movement that demands equal rights for men and women (Wirasandi, 2019). In Bali itself, the situation of women is gradually improving. Currently, many Balinese women have received higher education, have the opportunity to develop their careers and have access to public positions. With various innovations in time management, communication approaches and mastery of technology, many talented Balinese women politicians will undoubtedly be born.

Factors Influencing the Political Careers of Balinese Women Politicians

The political career of women politicians in Bali is certainly a mixed bag. On the one hand, there are conditions where women are given the green light to pursue a career in politics, but on the other hand, there are also women who face cultural barriers that tend to make women unable to compete with men. There are several factors that influence the political careers of Balinese women politicians as follows (1) Cultural factors, the cultural factors referred to here are related to the patriarchal culture that places women in subordination to men. Patriarchal culture is a cultural system adopted by most Balinese people. Patriarchal culture places women in an inferior position amidst the dominance of male superiority. This cultural system is a result of man-made social construction and has been adopted as a social norm in society. The patriarchal culture is also reinforced by the Purusa system adopted by the Balinese people. The Purusa system in Bali means that the existence of men in Bali is necessary, even all rights and duties outlined for the next generation of a family are taken from the Purusa line, which is a descendant of the father (Buana, 2018). Therefore, the Balinese always see the presence of sons in a family as a must, and girls are often seen as a second option after sons. Cultural factors ultimately create a social stigma in society that views women as weak. Women are always underestimated and undervalued. The Balinese woman has extraordinary abilities, but is unfortunately undervalued (Nisa, 2018). This patriarchal culture is also reflected in the decision-making process at the lowest level of Balinese society, the banjar. Men often never consult or agree with their wives, whose decisions in the banjar can affect the traditional roles Balinese women are expected to fulfil (Fatanti et al., 2021). The lack of women's participation in the decision-making process leads to various challenges for women politicians in their political activities. Women politicians who are involved in practical politics often face various challenges related to community stigma that affect the implementation of their political duties. When women politicians want to make political approaches with the community, the

community is sometimes less enthusiastic, due to the negative view that women do not have qualified political skills.

(2) Structural factors, gender inequality is seen in the lack of strategic positions for women. Most strategic positions in political parties and the government are held by men. Positions as leaders of political parties, members of the legislature and regional leaders are still dominated by men. In the legislature itself, there are far more men than women (Villian Pramesti Swara, 2023). The lack of women in legislative positions is shown in the data of DPRD Badung regency candidates for the periods 2009-2014, 2014-2019, which shows that 97.50% are filled by male legislators and only 2.50% are filled by female candidates (Silaban et al., 2021). Therefore, the position of women in terms of representation is still very worrying. And also in the internal political parties in Indonesia, the party administrators from the chairman to the secretary to the treasurer are mostly men. Women are very rarely placed in strategic positions, and this is inextricably linked to the strong patriarchal ideology of Indonesian society. Women are also in a marginal position (limitation) in the decision-making process, where this marginality is reinforced by the cultural traditions adopted by the community and religious doctrine (Diska Widayani & Sri Hartati, 2014). Based on information from gender policy practitioners, it can be understood that the few women who hold important positions in politics and government are due to gender bias in society. Patriarchal ideology, which views men as superior, creates social practices that discriminate against women. Gender inequality in the attainment of structural positions means that women will never be able to compete with men.

And then (3) institutional factors, institutionally there are rules that seem to be weak in protecting the interests of women in politics. The affirmative action policy, i.e. the 30% quota for women's representation in elections, has not been able to produce a maximum number of women politicians who sit in parliament. The conduct of elections is often fraught with various violations by political parties that fail to meet the minimum nomination requirement of 30% female candidates in each constituency. Policies are seen as ineffective in voicing women's aspirations and as paying lip service (Kompas, 2024). In addition, women's representation is often ignored in the process of determining seats after elections. Existing policies should be able to guarantee that political parties in each constituency must prioritise women's votes in determining the seats of candidates to be placed in Parliament. Women are often ignored and seen as complementary to men in achieving their political ambitions.

Gender is often confused with sex. Gender itself is understood as the result of a social construction linked to the history of human life (Nova, 2022). The concept of gender emphasises the social aspects of women related to rights that should be fair, equal to men and not natural. Meanwhile, sex is a biological classification between women and men and is natural. Gender refers to the labelling of women, which creates the perception that women have a primary duty in the domestic sphere, are weak, gentle and tend to be more emotional, while men are seen as superior, stronger and more rational. This labelling is adopted and practised by most Indonesians as a gender ideology.

The patriarchal cultural system that Indonesia has adopted has created a division of labour between women and men, where women are seen as having the main task of only taking care of household matters, while men are seen as having the main task outside the home, namely developing careers and earning income. According to Fakih, there are several conditions for women's marginalisation in social life, such as the subordination of women's position, which considers that women do not deserve to be leaders; an unbalanced division of labour, which places women only in the narrow domestic sphere; psychological violence, which women tend to experience because of the assumption that women are weak individuals; stereotypes that view women as troublemakers; and the marginalisation of women's involvement in the public sphere, which can trigger poverty for women (Nova, 2022). It is therefore necessary to have a conceptual understanding of gender and sex. A wise understanding of the concepts of gender and sex will open up great opportunities for women to develop more and contribute actively to the life of the state and society.

Feminist theory emerged as an attempt to change the condition of women. Feminism emerged as a resistance movement against the inequality experienced by women in the social, economic, political and religious spheres. Women are always placed in an inferior position and men in a superior position. Women are seen as people who have the main task in the domestic sphere, such as taking care of the household and fulfilling social roles in the community. Meanwhile, men have the noble task of earning an income and have the opportunity to develop careers in the public sphere. According to Widodo in , the definition of feminism itself is the resistance against slavery (misogyny) and the resistance movement to obtain equal recognition in terms of rights and duties, degrees and equal standing before the law (Nova, 2022).

According to Nancy F. Catt, there are several elements that make up the concept of feminism, namely: (a) A belief that the world was created without gender distinctions (gender equality). This belief does not see a hierarchical relationship between the sexes. (b) The belief that structures in society are created to harm the position of women. (c) The concept of

feminism strongly challenges the system of gender distinction or gender mixing, and the concept of feminism seeks to place women as a separate group in society (Wibowo et al., 2022). Feminist theory is also understood as a way of expressing the rights of women who have been ignored in various aspects of social, economic, political, legal and even religious life. The movement against women's oppression in different parts of the world eventually led to the emergence of various new schools of feminism such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, postmodern feminism, anarchist feminism and socialist feminism. These schools of feminism are a form of resistance, a criticism of the system that tends to marginalise and discredit the position of women.

In Nancy F. Catt's thinking, there are several important points regarding the concept of feminism, the first of which is an understanding of redistributive and recognitional justice. Redistributive justice refers to the socio-economic justice that women receive in realising the same economic opportunities as men. In this case, women are expected to obtain justice in the acquisition of resources and the distribution of wealth owned by the state. Recognition refers to the presence of women who are recognised for their existence without any attempt at social discrimination. Recognition in this case refers to the role of women, culture and the condition of minority groups. The second is cultural dualism, which emphasises the recognition of women's identity as a marginalised and excluded group. The third is the concept of inclusivity, which increasingly provides space for women to be equal and to voice their grievances in the community. According to Nancy F. Catt, the recognition of women in the public sphere is the most important prerequisite for the realisation of true social justice.

Balinese women politicians still face obstacles and challenges in achieving socio-political equality with men. The patriarchal culture embraced by the community is the main key that hinders women's careers. When combined with Nancy F. Catt's thinking, the treatment point is still a challenge for Balinese women in a career in politics. Balinese women have to work hard to be equal to male politicians. The efforts made include pursuing higher education in order to gain an advantage over men. Balinese women are also expected to be more responsive and sensitive to community issues. Balinese women politicians are also expected to have technological skills that can create a space for justice to obtain economic resources and information sources aimed at improving their standard of living. Treatment is therefore currently the main issue for Balinese women entering politics. Through fair treatment, redistributive justice and the principle of inclusiveness can be realised. It takes a lot of effort on the part of women to achieve the condition of gender equality, and this requires the support and commitment of those closest to Balinese women's careers in politics.

Conclusion

Balinese women who are multi-taskers have strategies for balancing their political careers and socio-cultural roles in the family and community through time management patterns and communication approaches. Time management patterns are the ability of Balinese women to manage time in the best possible way to complete a task. The communication approach is the ability of Balinese women to make their partners understand the triple roles they have to play in balancing socio-cultural roles with various activities in the political world. In addition, cultural, structural and institutional factors have a strong influence on the political career of a female politician in Bali. Cultural factors related to the patriarchal system that places Balinese women in an inferior position and men in a superior position, structural positional factors related to the small number of women representatives who have managed to occupy important positions in government politics, and institutional factors that seem weak in protecting the interests of women in various political activities.

There are several recommendations that can be offered in this research, which are related to the findings of the above problems, such as (a) Changing gender biased thinking patterns. Gender-biased thinking tends to exclude one gender and consider other genders as less important. Gender bias is also influenced by a society's patriarchal culture. It is therefore important to be open to the various changes that are taking place in modern society, (b) There must be equal opportunities for women to occupy strategic positions. Inclusive policies need to be developed in all aspects of community life, where these policies aim to promote the progress of all people from different groups, regardless of differences in gender, religion, ethnicity and class. It is hoped that the importance of the presence of women in key positions in government policy will result in various gender friendly policies, (c) Various rules/regulations need to be reviewed as a form of the government's commitment to protect women's interests, e.g. the Election Management Rules regarding a minimum percentage of 30% for women representatives seem to be procedural and not substantive. In addition, there is a need for more research that can be used to advocate for women's increased role in decision-making at all levels, as the study can provide a picture of what Balinese women's real contribution is in different areas, both at the family, village and government levels. The study can promote more inclusive and equitable changes.

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