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PREDICTIVE FACTORS OF PARENTS' SUPPORT AND PUPILS' EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS ON THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF GRADE 3 PUPILS

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ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension is a foundational skill for learning in the early grades and may be influenced by both home-related and child-related factors. This study determined whether parents' support and pupils' executive function skills predict the listening comprehension of Grade 3 pupils in public elementary schools in Cagayan de Oro City. Parents' support was examined in terms of parent-child communication, quality of reading exposure, and dialogic reading; executive function skills in terms of working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control; and listening comprehension at the literal, inferential, critical, and creative levels. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed with 358 Grade 3 pupils and their parents or guardians, selected through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using an adapted Parent Support Questionnaire, an Executive Function Behavioral Inventory, and a Listening Comprehension Test based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory and Barrett's Taxonomy of Comprehension, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Parents' support ($M = 3.10$) and executive function skills ($M = 3.21$) were high, while listening comprehension was average ($M = 5.83$). Parent-child communication and creative comprehension received the highest ratings in their respective domains, while quality of reading exposure and critical comprehension received the lowest. Parents' support and executive function skills together significantly predicted listening comprehension, $F(2, 355) = 64.03$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .27$, with executive function ($\beta = .33$) slightly stronger than parents' support ($\beta = .30$). The study underscores that both the language support pupils receive at home and the cognitive skills they bring to the task matter for how well they understand what they hear. This study was completed in November 2026 (School Year 2026–2027).

Keywords: *parents' support, executive function skills, listening comprehension, Grade 3 pupils*

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is an important core language skill. This skill enables listeners to construct meaning from spoken messages by drawing on what was said, contextual cues, and prior knowledge (Colognesi & Zito, 2025). It underpins communication, reading proficiency, and academic success (Rakhmatullayeva, 2024). For Grade 3 pupils, who are moving from learning to read toward reading to learn, it matters even more, since they must follow instructions, identify key ideas, and make sense of spoken information in class. This skill is associated with two factors. Parents are children's first teachers and can reinforce learning at school by reading aloud to children, talking about books together and explaining what the words mean (Sonnenschein et al., 2022).

Executive function skills (working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility) help children concentrate, hold information, filter distractions, and process spoken language (Souissi et al., 2022). Working memory shows the most consistent association with listening comprehension in the elementary years (Bablekou et al., 2023; Spiegel et al., 2021).

To close learning gaps among young learners, DepEd launched the Learning Recovery Program and the Bawat Bata Makababasa Program, both meant to build pupils' basic reading skills. These efforts, and the indicators used to track them, concentrate chiefly on decoding and reading outcomes, and say little about how well pupils comprehend what they hear, even though listening comprehension is the oral-language basis of reading comprehension. Listening comprehension is also rarely assessed in schools, since the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) administers its listening comprehension test only to non-readers (Department of Education, 2018). As a result, school heads, teachers, and parents have little local evidence on whether interventions should target the home, the child's cognitive skills, or both.

Existing research leaves further gaps. Studies of Grade 3 learners in Iligan City (Pepito & Sambo, 2023) and Kadingilan, Bukidnon (Fortaleza & Lomarda, 2025) linked parental involvement to reading outcomes, not listening comprehension. The one Philippine study that included listening comprehension covered a single school (Cernechez, 2026). Work on executive function and the home literacy environment has been done largely abroad with preschool-aged children (Opao, 2026), and most studies treat parental support and executive function as single constructs. This study separates parental support into parent-child communication, quality of reading exposure, and dialogic reading, and executive function into working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control. It measures listening comprehension at four levels: literal, inferential, critical, and creative. To the researcher's knowledge, no study has examined these together among Grade 3 pupils in the public schools of Cagayan de Oro City.

This study is therefore conducted to determine whether parents' support and pupils' executive function skills significantly predict the listening comprehension skills of Grade 3 pupils in the public elementary schools of Cagayan de Oro City. Its findings can show educators, school administrators, and parents where to invest: strengthening home support, building pupils' executive function skills, or both.

The study aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), Target 4.1 and Indicator 4.1.1(a), which tracks Grade 2 or 3 reading proficiency and makes Grade 3 a critical milestone for foundational literacy. It also contributes to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), Target 10.3, by informing support for pupils whose learning may be limited by differences in home and cognitive resources.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study assumes that parents' support and pupils' executive function skills predict the listening comprehension of Grade 3 pupils. Pupils who receive stronger home support and have stronger executive function skills are expected to attend to, retain, and interpret spoken information better, and so to show higher literal, inferential, critical, and creative listening comprehension.

Listening comprehension is treated here as a multidimensional process rather than a single passive skill (Goh & Vandergrift, 2022; Rost, 2025). Bottom-up decoding supports the literal level, while top-down processing supports the inferential, critical, and creative levels, and deriving higher-order meaning depends on how well the listener first decodes the literal message (Ke & Wang, 2022). The literal level relies heavily on working memory (Wang et al., 2022). The inferential level integrates linguistic cues with prior knowledge (Rost, 2025), and the critical level draws on critical thinking in comprehension (Paige et al., 2024). The creative level extends what is heard into new ideas, and creative thinking has been linked to children's reading skills (Azoni & Bezerra, 2022).

The study is anchored on three frameworks. Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory holds that language is acquired when learners understand messages through meaningful, natural interaction, which fits findings that high-quality language exposure supports listening comprehension (Hjetland et al., 2023). Vygotsky's Social Development Theory holds that interaction with more knowledgeable others, such as parents, supports cognitive development, which fits evidence that responsive parent-child interaction is linked to children's language skills (Levickis et al., 2023; Tulviste & Tamm, 2023) and that parents and teachers shape executive function development (Koşkulu-Sancar et al., 2023). The Active View of Reading (Burns et al., 2023) adds that executive functions help children regulate attention and thinking while comprehending, and Wright et al. (2024) found that they predict verbal comprehension in the early grades.

Parents' support is expected to matter because dialogic reading, in which parents prompt the child and give feedback, is associated with gains in oral language and comprehension (Dong et al., 2024; Pillinger & Vardy, 2022; Yang et al., 2025). Home support still matters at Grade 3: among Filipino Grade 3 learners, parental involvement was significantly related to reading ability skills, including word recognition, speed, and

comprehension (Pepito & Sambo, 2023). Executive function matters because spoken language is transient. Listeners must hold words in mind (working memory), ignore classroom noise (inhibitory control), and update their understanding as the message unfolds (cognitive flexibility) (Cartwright, 2023; Souissi et al., 2022). Background noise has been shown to affect primary school children's narrative listening comprehension (Carlie et al., 2024), and cognitive flexibility explains unique variance in reading comprehension among elementary pupils (Hund et al., 2023).

Figure 1 shows parents' support and executive function as two related factors that together shape listening comprehension. Parents' support gives children rich language input to follow and interpret, and executive function skills are the cognitive tools for using that input. The line connecting the two boxes reflects that the factors do not work in isolation: among children aged 9 to 11, parenting skills had a significant effect on executive function, which in turn mediated the link between parenting and reading (Azar et al., 2023). This study does not test mediation, but it examines the collective and unique contributions of the two predictors to pupils' literal, inferential, critical, and creative listening comprehension.

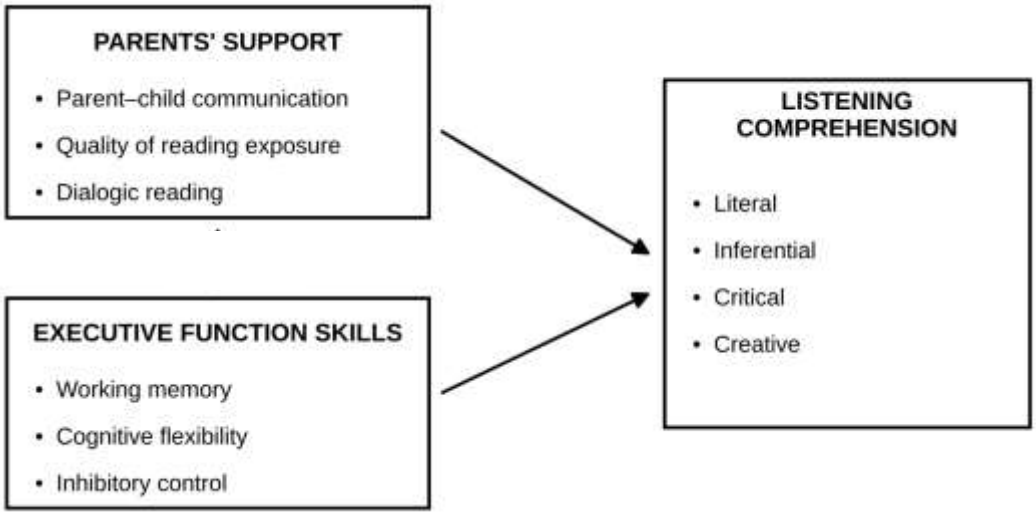


Figure 1. Schematic Presentation of the Study

Research Questions

This study determined whether parents' support and pupils' executive function skills predict the listening comprehension of Grade 3 pupils in public elementary schools in Cagayan de Oro City during School Year 2026–2027. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of parents' support in terms of parent-child communication, quality of reading exposure, and dialogic reading?

2. What is the level of the pupils' executive function skills in terms of working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control?
3. What is the level of the pupils' listening comprehension skills in terms of literal, inferential, critical, and creative comprehension?
4. Do parents' support and executive function skills significantly predict listening comprehension?

Research Questions 1 to 3 were hypothesis-free. For Research Question 4, three null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

H_{01}: Parents' support and executive function skills do not significantly predict listening comprehension.
H_{02}: Executive function skills do not significantly predict listening comprehension.
H_{03}: Parents' support does not significantly predict listening comprehension.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a descriptive-correlational design, which examines relationships among variables as they naturally occur, without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design suited the study because it describes the present levels of parents' support, executive function skills, and listening comprehension, and because multiple regression could test how well the first two predict the third. Because the variables were not manipulated, the findings show association and prediction, not cause and effect.

Participants and Sampling

The population consisted of enrolled Grade 3 pupils and their parents or guardians in two public elementary schools in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City during the first term of School Year 2026–2027: School A (N = 464) and School B (N = 222). Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error was applied to each school separately, which yielded 215 respondents from School A and 143 from School B, or a total of 358 pupil and parent or guardian respondents out of 686 pupils. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling, with school as the stratum, using a random number generator on the official master lists, with a randomized reserve list for pupils who did not consent or became unavailable. Only the researcher performed the randomization, and class advisers handled logistics only. Pupils were eligible if they were officially enrolled in Grade 3, had a willing parent or guardian, and had signed consent and assent forms on file. Academic performance, behavior, and disability were never grounds for exclusion.

Research Instruments

Three instruments were used. The Parent Support Questionnaire was adapted from Buvaneswari and Padakannaya (2017), whose instrument was also used by Galpo et al. (2026) to assess the home literacy environment of Grade 2 learners. It consisted of

24 items on parent-child communication, quality of reading exposure, and dialogic reading, and was translated into Visayan so that parents could understand it better. The Executive Function Behavioral Inventory, based on Diamond's (2013) conceptualization of executive functions, consisted of 30 statements distributed equally among working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control. Both questionnaires used a four-point frequency scale. The Listening Comprehension Test, aligned with DepEd Grade 3 learning competencies and constructed from a Table of Specifications based on the Phil-IRI and Barrett's (1976) Taxonomy of Comprehension, presented an age-appropriate story read aloud and measured literal, inferential, critical, and creative comprehension, with each level scored on a 10-point scale.

Validity and Reliability

Content and face validity were established by a panel of subject-matter and language education experts, who evaluated the items for clarity, language appropriateness, relevance, and alignment with learning objectives. A pilot test with 30 pupils from a non-participating school, who were not part of the final sample, yielded Cronbach's alpha values of .700 to .926 across constructs, including .810 for parent-child communication, .901 for quality of reading exposure, and .926 for dialogic reading, which indicate high to excellent internal consistency.

Construct validity was examined through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the lavaan package in jamovi. The measurement model specified six latent factors: working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control for executive function, and parent-child communication, quality of reading exposure, and dialogic reading for parents' support. Items with problematic loadings were removed one at a time, re-estimating the model after each deletion. The final model showed good fit, $\chi^2(512) = 1093.00$, $p < .001$, CFI = .909, TLI = .901, RMSEA = .056, 90% CI [.052, .061], SRMR = .044, which meets the recommended cutoffs (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The significant chi-square is common in models with many estimated parameters and is not on its own diagnostic of poor fit (Kenny, 2020). Standardized loadings of the retained items ranged from .420 to .914.

Scoring and Interpretation

Responses to the two questionnaires were averaged per component and interpreted as follows: 3.51–4.00, Very High (Always); 2.51–3.50, High (Very Often); 1.51–2.50, Low (Sometimes); and 1.00–1.50, Very Low (Never). Listening comprehension scores were interpreted per level as 9–10, Outstanding; 7–8, Very Good; 5–6, Average; 3–4, Fair; and 1–2, Poor.

Data Gathering and Ethical Considerations

Data gathering began after clearance from the Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee and approval from the Schools Division Superintendent, district supervisors, and school principals. Parents or guardians signed an informed consent form translated into the local vernacular, and pupils gave their assent, so that participation was voluntary and could be ended at any time without penalty. The Parent Support Questionnaire was

sent home through communication logs, while the pupils completed the Executive Function Behavioral Inventory and the Listening Comprehension Test in a quiet classroom. The researcher read the story once, after a short practice item, and pupils then had 20 minutes to answer. Pupils were assigned numeric codes, test sheets were kept in a locked cabinet, and digital files were stored in a password-protected folder, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) and the principles of the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

Statistical Treatment of the Data

Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe parents' support, executive function skills, and listening comprehension (Research Questions 1 to 3). For Research Question 4, multiple linear regression was used with the total scores of parents' support and executive function as predictors and the total listening comprehension score as the outcome. Regression assumptions were checked before the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1. *What is the level of parents' support in terms of parent-child communication, quality of reading exposure, and dialogic reading?*

Table 1 shows that parents' support was High overall (M = 3.10, SD = 0.60), and all three components were also High. Parent-child communication obtained the highest mean (M = 3.28, SD = 0.57), followed by dialogic reading (M = 3.11, SD = 0.77), while quality of reading exposure obtained the lowest (M = 2.90, SD = 0.66). This suggests that parents are most consistent in everyday communication with their children, while practices that depend on making reading materials, time, and resources available are comparatively less frequent, though still often practiced. The finding is consistent with Fortaleza and Lomarda (2025), who found parents of Grade 3 learners in a municipality in Bukidnon highly involved across all dimensions of parental involvement.

Recent evidence also links this kind of support to children's language and early literacy development: responsive parent-child conversation is associated with children's language skills (Tulviste & Tamm, 2023), dialogic reading can improve a wide range of language and literacy skills (Pillinger & Vardy, 2022), and adult literacy practices and books at home show stronger associations with children's skills than home tutoring (Nag & Vagh, 2023).

Table 1
Summary of Parents' Support

Components	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Parent-child communication	3.28	0.57	High
Quality of reading exposure	2.90	0.66	High
Dialogic reading	3.11	0.77	High
Overall	**3.10**	**0.60**	**High**

Note. Scale: 3.51–4.00 (Very High); 2.51–3.50 (High); 1.51–2.50 (Low); 1.00–1.50 (Very Low).

Research Question 2. *What is the level of the pupils' executive function skills in terms of working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control?*

As shown in Table 2, the pupils' executive function skills were High overall (M = 3.21, SD = 0.46), and all three components were High. Inhibitory control obtained the highest mean (M = 3.23, SD = 0.52), followed by cognitive flexibility (M = 3.20, SD = 0.55) and working memory (M = 3.19, SD = 0.58). The means differ only slightly, which shows that no component was noticeably weaker than the others. A High interpretation means that pupils can, most of the time, hold in mind information they have just heard, adjust their thinking when new information arises, and control their attention and impulses. These are widely recognized as the core executive functions, and they have been associated with academic achievement among children aged 8 to 11, with inhibition and working memory most strongly associated with achievement (Perpiñà Martí et al., 2023). Executive functions have also predicted reading comprehension in children aged 8 to 12 beyond basic reading and listening comprehension (Imre & Kibby, 2026).

Table 2
Summary of Pupils' Executive Function Skills

Components	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Working memory	3.19	0.58	High
Cognitive flexibility	3.20	0.55	High
Inhibitory control	3.23	0.52	High
Overall	**3.21**	**0.46**	**High**

Note. Scale: 3.51–4.00 (Very High); 2.51–3.50 (High); 1.51–2.50 (Low); 1.00–1.50 (Very Low).

Research Question 3. *What is the level of the pupils' listening comprehension skills in terms of literal, inferential, critical, and creative comprehension?*

Table 3 shows that listening comprehension was Average overall (M = 5.83, SD = 1.86), and all four components were Average. Creative comprehension obtained the highest mean (M = 6.42, SD = 2.01), followed by literal (M = 5.74, SD = 2.26) and inferential comprehension (M = 5.71, SD = 2.18), while critical comprehension obtained the lowest (M = 5.44, SD = 2.26). An Average interpretation means that pupils answered about half of the items correctly: they can sometimes recall, infer, evaluate, and create from what they hear, but not yet consistently. About 38% of the pupils scored Fair or Poor

in critical comprehension (f = 94 and f = 42 of 358), compared with about 20% in creative comprehension (f = 48 and f = 25).

Critical listening had the lowest mean, which makes sense because judging what is heard asks the pupil to hold the message in mind, compare it with what they know, and give a reason (Ke & Wang, 2022). Creative listening had the highest mean, possibly because creative questions allow more than one acceptable answer, so pupils can answer from their own experience. This pattern is partly consistent with Ramírez Sierra and Fernández-Reina (2022), who found that third graders were average in literal comprehension but lower in inferential and critical comprehension, although in this study the literal and inferential means were almost the same. The gaps among the four components are small, so they are better read as tendencies than as clear weaknesses. Even so, critical thinking in comprehension has been found to predict later reading comprehension (Paige et al., 2024), so pupils would benefit from more chances to judge and explain what they hear.

Table 3
Summary of Pupils' Listening Comprehension Skills

Components	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Literal	5.74	2.26	Average
Inferential	5.71	2.18	Average
Critical	5.44	2.26	Average
Creative	6.42	2.01	Average
Overall	**5.83**	**1.86**	**Average**

Note. Scale: 9–10 (Outstanding); 7–8 (Very Good); 5–6 (Average); 3–4 (Fair); 1–2 (Poor).

Research Question 4. *Do parents' support and executive function skills significantly predict listening comprehension?*

Table 4 shows that parents' support and executive function skills together significantly predicted the pupils' listening comprehension, $F(2, 355) = 64.03$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .27$, so H_{01} was rejected. The two factors accounted for 27% of the variance in listening comprehension, which is a large effect, since R^2 values of .25 and above and f^2 values of .35 and above are commonly treated as large (Emerson, 2023), and the f^2 for this model is approximately .37. The remaining 73% of the variance was attributable to factors outside this study. How well a pupil understands spoken information is therefore linked both to the thinking skills the pupil brings and to the language support received at home, but neither alone fully explains it (Wallace, 2022).

Table 4
Multiple Regression Analysis of Parents' Support and Executive Function Skills on Listening Comprehension

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	−1.406	0.654		−2.15	.032
Executive function	1.346	0.195	.33	6.91	< .001
Parents' support	0.941	0.150	.30	6.29	< .001

Note. $R = .52$, $R^2 = .27$, adjusted $R^2 = .26$, $F(2, 355) = 64.03$, $p < .001$. B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient.

Of the two predictors, executive function had the larger standardized coefficient (β = .33). Holding parents' support constant, a pupil whose executive function score was one point higher was expected to score about 1.35 points higher in listening comprehension on the 10-point scale (B = 1.346, t = 6.91, p < .001), so H_{02} was rejected. Listening requires holding spoken information in mind, linking it to what was said earlier, and ignoring distractions, which are the skills that executive function covers. This agrees with Bablekou et al. (2023), who found that working memory and listening comprehension contributed the most to children's developmental profiles, and with other recent studies linking executive functions to children's comprehension (Imre & Kibby, 2026; Orsolini et al., 2023).

Parents' support also significantly predicted listening comprehension (B = 0.941, t = 6.29, p < .001), so H_{03} was rejected. The standardized coefficient (β = .30) means that pupils whose parents' support was one standard deviation above average were expected to have listening comprehension about 0.30 standard deviations higher, with executive function held constant. This is close to the effect of executive function and implies that the home contributes to listening comprehension even after pupils' cognitive abilities are taken into account, although the effect is modest in raw points. Parents who talk with their children, read with them, and ask them questions give them regular practice in listening to and understanding spoken language. This is consistent with Nag and Vagh (2023), who linked home language and literacy environments to children's language and literacy skills.

Taken together, the results show that listening comprehension is associated both with what pupils bring to the task, their executive function, and with what their home provides. A large share of the differences still comes from factors this study did not measure, such as school language exposure, parents' education level, and classroom noise (Carlie et al., 2024), and vocabulary and morphological knowledge (Valentini & Serratrice, 2023). Because the study is correlational, the findings show association, not that either factor causes differences in listening comprehension.

Conclusions

Parents' support and executive function skills together significantly predicted the listening comprehension of Grade 3 pupils, and the two predictors were of similar strength, with executive function slightly stronger. This supports the view that parents scaffold children's language and thinking, as proposed in Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, and that executive functions help children regulate attention and thinking while

they comprehend, as proposed in the Active View of Reading. Parents' support and executive function skills were high, with parent-child communication the strongest component of support and quality of reading exposure the weakest, yet listening comprehension was only average, with critical comprehension the weakest level and creative comprehension the strongest.

The study is limited by its use of self-reported questionnaires, so response bias is possible. Its descriptive-correlational design shows relationships and prediction but cannot establish cause and effect. The participants were Grade 3 pupils from two public elementary schools in one city, which limits generalization, and 73% of the variance in listening comprehension remained unexplained.

Recommendations

In view of the findings, the following are recommended. First, teachers may strengthen pupils' critical listening and inference-making by asking pupils to give and explain opinions about stories they hear, and by using read-alouds with inferential questions, scaffolding, and feedback. Second, parents are encouraged to continue talking with their children about school and to strengthen reading exposure at home by setting aside regular reading time, making age-appropriate reading materials available, and reading interactively with their children. Third, school administrators may organize parent orientations on dialogic reading and home reading routines, provide simple take-home guides in the language families use, and support teachers in building pupils' executive function skills during listening tasks. Finally, future researchers may examine other factors that could explain the remaining variance, such as vocabulary, morphological knowledge, parents' education level, and classroom noise, using larger samples, other grade levels or schools, and mixed methods.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study was cleared by the Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee and complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Informed consent from parents or guardians and assent from pupils were secured before data collection, and participation was voluntary.

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