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Implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program: Teachers' Readiness, Attitudes, Challenges, and Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

This study examined teachers' readiness, attitudes, challenges, lived experiences, and assessed effectiveness of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program in the Division of Bohol during School Year 2026–2027 as a basis for a comprehensive action plan. Anchored in program implementation, reading readiness, constructivist, and sociocultural learning perspectives, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design involving 277 Grade 7 ARAL teachers from 129 public secondary schools. Data were collected using a validated researcher-developed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews and analyzed through descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed high teacher readiness (M = 3.16), highly favorable attitudes (M = 3.22), highly encountered challenges (M = 2.88), and highly assessed program effectiveness (M = 3.08). Regression analysis showed that readiness, attitudes, and challenges significantly predicted assessed effectiveness (R^2 = 0.643, $p < .001$), explaining 64.3% of its variance, with attitudes emerging as the strongest predictor. Teachers reported challenges involving limited instructional time, inadequate resources, additional workloads, irregular learner attendance, and insufficient parental support. Qualitative findings highlighted differentiated instruction, diagnostic assessment, collaboration, and adaptive teaching practices as coping mechanisms. The study concluded that teacher preparedness, positive attitudes, and effective challenge management were essential to ARAL implementation. It recommended continuous professional development, adequate resources, flexible scheduling, stronger stakeholder collaboration, and regular monitoring. The study supported Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by promoting equitable learning recovery and collaborative educational interventions. Its sustainability contribution emphasized institutional capacity building, educational continuity, and strengthened stakeholder participation for long-term program implementation.

Keywords: *ARAL Program, Educational Sustainability, Implementation Challenges, Learning Recovery, Program Effectiveness, Teacher Attitudes, Teacher Readiness*

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning recovery remains a significant priority in Philippine basic education because persistent deficiencies in foundational competencies affect learners' academic progression and educational opportunities. Betthäuser et al. (2023) documented substantial learning deficits associated with pandemic-related educational disruptions, while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) reported that Filipino learners continued to perform below international averages in reading, mathematics, and science. These findings underscore the importance of sustained, evidence-based learning interventions. To address these concerns, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act No. 12028, establishing the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program to provide targeted interventions for learners performing below expected proficiency levels. The Department of Education subsequently issued implementing guidelines emphasizing appropriate learning assessments, instructional interventions, resource provision, and program monitoring (Department of Education [DepEd], 2025a, 2025b). Effective implementation, however, requires more than policy compliance. Teachers must possess the knowledge, instructional skills, resources, professional commitment, and adaptability necessary to address diverse learning needs. Recent research highlights the importance of teacher development, structured interventions, and institutional support in improving instructional delivery (Nickow et al., 2024; Ventista & Brown, 2023). Accordingly, this study examined teachers' readiness, attitudes, challenges, lived experiences, and assessed effectiveness of ARAL Program implementation among Grade 7 teachers in the Division of Bohol during School Year 2026–2027 as a basis for a comprehensive action plan.

Research Problem

Despite the implementation of learning recovery initiatives, educational systems continue to encounter difficulties in addressing foundational learning gaps. UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank (2022) emphasized the need for systematic learner assessment, focused instruction, catch-up interventions, and sustained institutional support. Similarly, Nickow et al. (2024) demonstrated that structured tutoring interventions could positively influence academic achievement, highlighting the importance of effective instructional delivery. In the Philippines, teachers implementing the ARAL Program have reported limited instructional time, insufficient learning resources, increased workloads, and difficulties addressing learners' varied proficiency levels. Batistis and Siat (2025) identified these challenges while emphasizing the importance of differentiated instruction, professional development, and administrative support. Abria et al. (2025) further highlighted the relevance of instructional material quality, clarity, and practicality in supporting ARAL learning interventions. Recent investigations have also documented implementation challenges in local contexts. Taray and Mepieza (2026), in their study of Key Stage 1 ARAL tutors in the Division of Bohol, identified concerns involving parental participation, learner attendance, and financial support. Adlawan and Paglinawan (2026) likewise examined the experiences of non-language teachers serving as ARAL tutors, emphasizing the demands of delivering remediation beyond their teaching specializations. Although these studies provided important insights, further investigation was needed into the combined influence of teacher readiness, attitudes, demographic characteristics, and implementation challenges on assessed program effectiveness among Grade 7 teachers in Bohol. Understanding these relationships, alongside teachers' lived experiences and coping mechanisms, was essential for developing responsive and sustainable implementation strategies. The present study addressed this concern by integrating quantitative assessments and qualitative experiences to determine the factors associated with teachers' assessed effectiveness of the ARAL Program and formulate an evidence-based action plan.

Assumptions of the Study

The study was guided by the assumption that effective ARAL Program implementation involved teachers' professional preparedness, attitudes toward learning recovery, and ability to manage instructional and institutional challenges. These dimensions reflected the importance of professional development, supportive working conditions, and effective instructional practices in educational programs (OECD, 2025; Ventista & Brown, 2023). The study tested the following null hypothesis: H_0: Teachers' demographic profile, readiness, attitudes, and challenges do not significantly influence the assessed level of effectiveness of the implementation of the ARAL Program.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine teachers' readiness, attitudes, challenges, lived experiences, and assessed effectiveness of the ARAL Program implementation among Grade 7 teachers in the Division of Bohol during School Year 2026–2027. Specifically, it sought to describe teachers' demographic and professional profiles in terms of age, designation, workload, teaching experience, subject handled, educational attainment, and relevant training; assess their readiness in knowledge, skills, resources, collaboration, and adaptability; examine attitudes concerning workload, student outcomes, professional growth, benefits, and implementation; and identify challenges involving resources, institutional support, sustainability, learner attendance and motivation, and home support. Furthermore, the study evaluated program effectiveness based on teachers' assessments, experiences, judgments regarding learner outcomes, and perceptions of sustainability. It examined the influence of demographic characteristics, readiness, attitudes, and challenges on assessed effectiveness; explored teachers' lived experiences and coping mechanisms; integrated quantitative and qualitative findings; and developed a comprehensive action plan to strengthen ARAL Program implementation.

Theoretical or Conceptual Basis

The study was anchored in the complementary perspectives of program implementation, reading readiness, constructivist learning, and sociocultural learning, which collectively explained the relationships among teacher preparedness, instructional practices, institutional conditions, and assessed program effectiveness. The program implementation perspective emphasized the role of teachers as frontline implementers who translated educational policies into instructional practices. Effective implementation required clear guidelines, resource availability, professional commitment, and organizational support. These principles were consistent with DepEd's ARAL implementing guidelines and contemporary evidence emphasizing instructional leadership and supportive educational systems (DepEd, 2025b; UNESCO, 2024). The reading readiness perspective supported the identification of learners' actual proficiency levels before delivering targeted instruction. Diagnostic assessments and differentiated interventions enabled teachers to respond to foundational learning deficiencies. This approach aligned with the ARAL-Reading guidelines and international recommendations for assessment-based learning recovery (DepEd, 2025a; UNESCO et al., 2022). The constructivist and sociocultural learning perspectives emphasized active learner participation, guided instruction, scaffolding, and meaningful social interaction. Their application supported differentiated learning activities, small-group instruction, and collaborative learning environments. Contemporary evidence on tutoring effectiveness and teacher professional learning reinforced the value of structured instructional support and responsive teaching practices (Nickow et al., 2024; Ventista & Brown, 2023). Within this framework, teachers' demographic characteristics, readiness, attitudes, and implementation challenges served as explanatory variables, while the assessed effectiveness of ARAL implementation represented the outcome variable. The relationships among these

dimensions informed the development of a comprehensive action plan for improving program delivery and sustainability.

The study supported SDG 4 (Quality Education) by addressing foundational learning gaps and promoting equitable literacy and numeracy development through effective learning recovery interventions (UNESCO et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2024). It also contributed to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by emphasizing collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents, and educational partners to strengthen program implementation (DepEd, 2025b; Taray & Mepieza, 2026). Overall, the study promoted educational and institutional sustainability through teacher development, resource management, and continuous program improvement.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-method design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component employed descriptive-correlational and predictive designs to assess teachers' demographic profiles, readiness, attitudes, challenges, and perceived program effectiveness. The qualitative component adopted a phenomenological approach to explore teachers' lived experiences and coping mechanisms. Quantitative findings were subsequently integrated with qualitative insights to explain the factors influencing ARAL Program implementation.

Research Locale or Study Setting

The study was conducted in 129 public secondary schools implementing the ARAL Program in the Division of Bohol, Central Visayas, Philippines, during School Year 2026–2027. These schools were distributed across three congressional districts and classified as small, medium, large, and very large. The setting provided diverse institutional contexts for examining teacher preparedness, implementation challenges, and program effectiveness at the junior high school level.

Participants or Data Sources

The participants comprised 277 Grade 7 ARAL teachers from 129 public secondary schools in the Division of Bohol. Purposive sampling was employed to identify teachers directly involved in program implementation, while stratification according to school size ensured representation across different institutional contexts. All 277 identified ARAL tutors participated in the quantitative survey, while selected teachers from the same group participated in semi-structured interviews to provide deeper insights into their experiences and implementation challenges.

Research Instruments or Materials

The study utilized a researcher-developed survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire consisted of six components covering teachers' demographic profiles, readiness, attitudes, implementation challenges, assessed program effectiveness, and lived experiences. Its development was guided by DepEd Order No. 018, s. 2025 (ARAL Program Guidelines), the DepEd Teacher Self-Assessment Tool (SAT/e-SAT) for SY 2025-2026, and DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020: Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP). Teachers' readiness was assessed through knowledge, skills, resources, collaboration, and adaptability, while attitudes covered workload, student outcomes, professional growth, benefits, and implementation. Challenges included resources, institutional support, sustainability, learner attendance and motivation, and home support. Assessed effectiveness focused on teachers' assessments, experiences, judgments regarding learner outcomes, and

evaluations of program sustainability. Responses were measured using four-point Likert scales. The qualitative instrument contained one main question and eight probing questions addressing teachers' experiences and coping mechanisms. The instruments underwent expert validation and pilot testing to establish clarity, relevance, and reliability. The questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, indicating good internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed three phases. During the preparatory phase, the researcher secured institutional clearances and obtained permission from the appropriate university and Department of Education authorities, including school administrators. Eligible Grade 7 ARAL teachers were identified, and their informed consent was obtained. During actual data collection, validated questionnaires were distributed either in printed or electronic form, depending on school accessibility. Participants were oriented on the study's objectives, confidentiality measures, and survey instructions. Completed questionnaires were collected and organized for analysis. Semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted with selected teachers at convenient schedules. Interview notes were documented, and some interviews were recorded with participants' consent. Following data collection, quantitative responses were encoded and classified according to the study variables, while qualitative responses were transcribed, reviewed, and organized for thematic analysis. Findings from both components were integrated to formulate evidence-based recommendations for improving ARAL Program implementation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A normality test was conducted to determine the appropriate statistical procedures. Frequency counts and percentages described teachers' demographic characteristics, while weighted means assessed readiness, attitudes, challenges, and perceived program effectiveness using four-point rating scales. Multiple regression analysis determined the influence of teachers' demographic profiles, readiness, attitudes, and challenges on the assessed effectiveness of ARAL Program implementation. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended responses were analyzed thematically through coding, categorization, and identification of recurring patterns. The resulting themes were integrated with the quantitative findings to explain implementation experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and factors affecting program effectiveness.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed ethical safeguards through institutional authorization, informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of participants' responses. Necessary permissions were secured from the concerned university and educational authorities before data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and procedures, and interviews were scheduled according to their availability. Audio recording was conducted only with consent, while collected responses were handled confidentially and used for research purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Quantitative Findings on ARAL Program Implementation

3.1.1 Demographic Profile of Teachers

The findings revealed that most respondents were aged 31–40 years (40.1%), followed by 21–30 years (32.9%). The majority were Teacher III (45.1%) and Teacher I (35.4%). Most handled teaching workloads of 20–25 hours (52.3%) or 26–30 hours (29.2%), while 61.8% had ten years or

less of teaching experience. Reading in English was the most common ARAL assignment (58.1%), followed by Mathematics or Numeracy (27.1%). Moreover, 54.2% had earned master's degree units, while 42.6% had attended orientation and training on the ARAL Program framework. These findings indicated that ARAL implementation primarily involved early- to mid-career classroom teachers with substantial teaching responsibilities. Their professional development needs and additional instructional demands reflected the importance of institutional support and capacity building. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2025) emphasized that professional learning, collaboration, and working conditions influence teachers' experiences and capacity to meet instructional demands.

3.1.2 Level of Teachers' Readiness

Teachers demonstrated high overall readiness to implement the ARAL Program, with a composite mean of 3.16. Collaboration obtained the highest mean (3.22), followed by skills and adaptability (3.21 each), knowledge (3.19), and resources (2.94). Collaboration with colleagues and adjustment of instructional strategies were among the stronger readiness indicators. However, opportunities for professional training received a relatively lower rating (2.86), indicating a need for additional capacity development. The findings suggested that teachers possessed the essential knowledge, skills, and adaptability required for ARAL implementation, although resource availability and specialized training needed improvement. Ventista and Brown (2023) highlighted the importance of continuous professional learning in strengthening instructional practices. Similarly, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2025a) emphasized assessment-based, learner-centered, and targeted instructional interventions, reinforcing the need for sustained teacher preparation.

3.1.3 Level of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the ARAL Program

Teachers demonstrated highly favorable attitudes toward ARAL implementation, with an overall composite mean of 3.22. Perceived program benefits obtained the highest mean (3.29), followed by student outcomes (3.27), professional growth (3.25), implementation (3.24), and workload (3.04). Teachers particularly recognized the program's contribution to remediation and enrichment, although balancing ARAL responsibilities with existing teaching duties received a relatively lower rating of 2.91. These findings indicated that teachers valued the program's educational benefits and professional development opportunities despite additional workload demands. Batistis and Siat (2025) similarly reported that teachers recognized the importance of ARAL in addressing foundational learning gaps while experiencing difficulties associated with increased responsibilities. The OECD (2025) further emphasized that supportive professional environments and manageable administrative demands were important to teacher well-being and sustained engagement.

3.1.4 Challenges Encountered in ARAL Implementation

Teachers reported highly encountered implementation challenges, with an overall composite mean of 2.88. Home support presented the greatest difficulty (3.03), followed by sustainability and learner attendance and motivation (2.92 each), resources (2.88), and institutional support (2.67). Specific concerns included insufficient home resources, inconsistent learner attendance, inadequate professional support, limited instructional time, and difficulties sustaining program activities. These findings indicated that implementation challenges extended beyond classroom instruction to family participation, resource availability, and institutional

coordination. Taray and Mepieza (2026) similarly identified limited parental involvement, inconsistent learner participation, and insufficient funding as challenges affecting ARAL implementation in the Division of Bohol. UNESCO (2024) emphasized the importance of educational leadership, collaboration, and capacity development in strengthening institutional responses to educational challenges.

3.1.5 Assessed Effectiveness of the ARAL Program

Teachers assessed ARAL Program implementation as highly effective, with an overall composite mean of 3.08. Judgments regarding learner outcomes received the highest composite mean (3.21), followed by teachers' assessments (3.09), implementation experiences (3.03), and program sustainability (3.02). Improvements in literacy and comprehension received favorable evaluations, while learner participation, teacher training, funding, and long-term resource support remained areas requiring improvement. The findings suggested that teachers perceived ARAL as beneficial in addressing foundational learning deficiencies, although continued support was necessary to sustain implementation. Nickow et al. (2024) found that structured tutoring interventions produced positive effects on learners' academic performance. However, the present findings represented teachers' assessments rather than independently measured gains in student achievement. Sustained effectiveness therefore required continuous assessment, instructional support, and monitoring consistent with DepEd (2025b).

3.2 Relationships Among Teachers' Characteristics and Program Effectiveness

3.2.1 Influence of Readiness, Attitudes, and Challenges

Multiple regression analysis revealed a statistically significant model, $F(39, 237) = 11.0$, $p < .001$, with $R = 0.802$ and $R^2 = 0.643$. The predictors collectively explained 64.3% of the variance in teachers' assessed effectiveness of ARAL implementation. Teachers' readiness ($B = 0.28566$, $p < .001$), attitudes ($B = 0.51343$, $p < .001$), and challenges ($B = 0.08522$, $p = .024$) were statistically significant positive predictors. Attitudes had the largest reported unstandardized coefficient among these three variables. These results indicated that higher readiness and more positive attitudes were associated with higher assessed program effectiveness. The smaller positive coefficient for challenges suggested that teachers reporting more implementation difficulties also tended to report higher effectiveness after accounting for the other predictors; this association did not establish that challenges improved implementation. The findings were consistent with evidence emphasizing teacher professional development, engagement, and supportive working conditions (Ventista & Brown, 2023; OECD, 2025).

3.2.2 Influence of Demographic and Professional Characteristics

Most demographic and professional comparisons were not statistically significant. However, significant differences were identified among teachers aged 61 years and above compared with those aged 41–50 ($B = 1.41990$, $p < .001$), municipally paid teachers compared with Teacher III ($B = 0.30799$, $p = .006$), and teachers with 16–20 years ($B = −0.17748$, $p = .049$) and 26–30 years of experience ($B = −0.55203$, $p = .025$), compared with those having 11–15 years of experience. Workload, subject assignment, and educational attainment showed no statistically significant category comparisons. These findings suggested that selected demographic characteristics were associated with differences in assessed effectiveness, although most comparisons were nonsignificant. The significant age result required particular caution because only one participant belonged to the 61-and-above age category. Overall, the findings highlighted the

relevance of professional preparedness and attitudes alongside demographic characteristics. The OECD (2025) similarly demonstrated that teachers' professional experiences and instructional demands varied across career stages and working conditions.

3.3 Qualitative Findings on Teachers' Lived Experiences

3.3.1 Teachers' Readiness and Adaptive Instructional Practices

The qualitative findings revealed that teachers demonstrated readiness through guided instruction, differentiated activities, diagnostic assessment, remediation, and continuous learner monitoring. Participants encountered learners with varying proficiency levels, including Grade 7 learners who continued to demonstrate foundational competencies associated with earlier key stages. Teachers responded through simplified explanations, scaffolded lessons, contextualized materials, guided practice, peer tutoring, and formative assessments. These findings indicated that teachers' readiness was demonstrated through their capacity to adjust instruction to actual learner needs. DepEd (2025a) emphasized that ARAL-Reading interventions should be appropriate to learners' reading proficiency rather than based solely on age or grade level. Similarly, Nickow et al. (2024) established the educational value of structured tutoring, supporting the importance of focused instructional assistance for learners requiring remediation.

3.3.2 Teachers' Attitudes and Professional Growth

Teachers described ARAL implementation as challenging but professionally rewarding. They expressed happiness, fulfillment, pride, and motivation when learners demonstrated improvement. Participants also reported developing patience, empathy, creativity, differentiated instructional skills, and classroom management competencies. However, they experienced exhaustion, pressure, and concerns regarding additional responsibilities and program sustainability. The findings suggested that positive attitudes and professional commitment helped teachers continue delivering ARAL interventions despite implementation difficulties. Batistis and Siat (2025) similarly observed that teachers valued learning recovery initiatives while facing workload and resource constraints. The OECD (2025) further emphasized the relationship of professional collaboration, working conditions, and teacher well-being, indicating the importance of adequate institutional support.

3.3.3 Implementation Challenges and Coping Mechanisms

Teachers identified limited instructional time, diverse learning abilities, irregular attendance, insufficient materials, additional preparation, and documentation requirements as major challenges. They managed these difficulties through strategic time management, simplified instructional activities, prerequisite-focused reteaching, differentiated instruction, and collaboration with colleagues, administrators, and parents. Participants also reported adjusting learning activities and recognizing incremental learner progress to maintain engagement. These findings demonstrated how teachers used adaptive instructional practices and collaborative support to manage implementation constraints. Taray and Mepieza (2026) similarly documented parental participation, learner attendance, and resource limitations in ARAL implementation in Bohol. Batistis and Siat (2025) also emphasized differentiated instruction, contextualized materials, and school-level collaboration as practical responses to learning recovery challenges.

3.4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of findings revealed that high teacher readiness (M = 3.16) was supported by qualitative evidence of differentiated instruction, diagnostic assessment, and adaptive teaching practices. Highly favorable attitudes (M = 3.22) corresponded with teachers' reported motivation, fulfillment, and professional growth. Meanwhile, highly encountered challenges (M = 2.88) were confirmed by experiences involving limited time, inadequate resources, learner attendance difficulties, and insufficient home support. The qualitative findings explained how teachers continued implementing ARAL through collaboration, resourcefulness, and flexible instructional approaches despite these constraints. Overall, the integrated findings indicated that teacher preparedness, professional commitment, and adaptive strategies were central to the assessed effectiveness of ARAL implementation. However, long-term sustainability required stronger institutional assistance, continuous professional development, adequate instructional resources, flexible scheduling, streamlined documentation, and greater parental participation. These priorities were consistent with DepEd's ARAL implementation framework and contemporary evidence on educational leadership, teacher development, and stakeholder participation (DepEd, 2025b; UNESCO, 2024; Taray & Mepieza, 2026). The findings provided the basis for a comprehensive action plan to strengthen ARAL Program delivery and sustainability in the Division of Bohol.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the assessed effectiveness of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program among Grade 7 teachers in the Division of Bohol was significantly associated with teachers' readiness, attitudes, and ability to manage implementation challenges, while demographic characteristics were generally not significant predictors. Teachers demonstrated high readiness and positive attitudes, with attitudes emerging as the strongest predictor of assessed effectiveness. Despite challenges involving limited instructional time, inadequate resources, additional workloads, irregular learner attendance, and insufficient parental support, teachers sustained implementation through diagnostic assessment, differentiated instruction, collaboration, and adaptive teaching strategies. However, long-term program sustainability required stronger institutional support, adequate resources, continuous professional development, and shared stakeholder responsibility.

The study recommended continuous teacher training in ARAL pedagogy, diagnostic assessment, differentiated instruction, and Individual Reading Intervention Plan (IRIP) development. School administrators and the Department of Education should provide adequate localized instructional materials, technology, funding, learning spaces, and clear implementation guidelines while simplifying documentation and reporting requirements. Longer and more flexible ARAL schedules within official working hours, dedicated tutors, regular monitoring, and strengthened Learning Action Cell (LAC) collaboration were also recommended. Moreover, parental engagement, community partnerships, and sustained policy support should be strengthened to ensure effective and sustainable implementation. Future research should examine long-term learner outcomes and additional institutional factors influencing program effectiveness.

The study was confined to 277 Grade 7 ARAL teachers in the Division of Bohol during School Year 2026–2027 and primarily relied on teachers' assessments and experiences of program implementation. Longitudinal changes in learners' literacy and numeracy performance were not directly established. Consequently, further longitudinal investigations were recommended to

evaluate sustained learning outcomes and examine the contributions of leadership support, funding, and community involvement.

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