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MARITIME LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN THE RIAU ISLANDS PROVINCE OF INDONESIA: CHALLENGES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

This study formulates a conceptual framework for maritime leadership in the governance of island provinces, with emphasis on Indonesia's Riau Islands Province. Using a qualitative, desk-based approach, the research synthesised peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, and prior studies to identify governance challenges and leadership needs in archipelagic contexts. Key issues include fragmented marine spatial planning, weak inter-sectoral coordination, degradation of maritime cultural values, illegal exploitation of marine resources, and conflicts between economic growth and coastal ecosystem preservation. The proposed framework comprises three interconnected pillars: (1) transformative, collaborative, and visionary leadership styles; (2) integrated, coherent, and cross-sectoral institutional structures; and (3) inclusive, adaptive, and sustainability-oriented maritime policies. This framework addresses the limitations of conventional, land-centric leadership models by aligning governance approaches with the socio-geographical realities of island provinces. The findings provide theoretical advancement in maritime governance studies and practical guidance for policymakers, reinforcing the strategic role of island provinces in national development and supporting Indonesia's ambition to position itself as a global maritime axis.

KEYWORDS: Maritime Leadership, Maritime Governance, Maritime Vision and Mission, Maritime Policy, Maritime Institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, scholarly interest in maritime affairs has expanded considerably, with research covering diverse themes such as the maritime axis (Junef, 2019; Puspitawati, 2020; Raharjo et al., 2019), maritime infrastructure (Pramuja & Tobing, 2020; Dirgantari & Barus, 2021; Ridwan, 2022), maritime tourism (Desiana & Gustasya, 2022; Dwi Kartika et al., 2021; Pramuji, 2022), maritime economy (Desiana & Gustasya, 2022; Hatim & Abubakar, 2019; Zulkifli et al., 2022), maritime society (Ridwan, 2022), maritime security (Arry Prasetyo et al., 2023; Danur Cahya et al., 2023; Hadiwijaya, 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2022; Trisnaputra, 2023), and maritime resources (Dianita et al., 2022; Junaedi, 2022). Of these, the most frequently examined topics in recent years have been maritime security, the maritime axis, the maritime economy, maritime infrastructure, and maritime tourism. Methodologically, the majority of these studies have employed qualitative descriptive approaches, while quantitative and survey-based methods have been applied primarily in research on maritime infrastructure and maritime communities (Hatim & Abubakar, 2019; Ridwan, 2022).

Within this broad body of literature, maritime leadership—defined as the capacity of leaders in the maritime sector to influence, motivate, and coordinate stakeholders toward the success of maritime organizations—remains relatively underexplored. Maritime leadership also carries a historical and cultural dimension, particularly in Southeast Asia, where the maritime dominance of the Srivijaya and Malacca kingdoms illustrates the longstanding leadership traditions of Malaysia and Indonesia (Ali, 2019; Samsudin, 2019). This heritage offers valuable insights for shaping contemporary maritime governance practices.

Existing studies on maritime leadership have often been framed within related themes. Some have examined leadership through the maritime axis concept (Abeysinghe & Wijesinghe, 2021; Nisa, 2020; Rinika et al., 2023), while others have focused on marine and island-based governance (Fanning et al., 2021; Mondré & Kuhn, 2022; Weiland et al., 2021), policy and bilateral relations in international affairs (Aufiya, 2022; Guerreiro, 2021), and aspects of national defense and security, particularly in relation to borders (Ashfaq et al., 2023; Firman & Djoko, 2023). Although these studies contribute to the understanding of maritime governance, they do not explicitly formulate a leadership model tailored to the governance needs of archipelagic provinces.

Some related works provide a foundation for this

research. Skrzyszewka & Beran (2016) examined governance and coordination between government and educational institutions to enhance maritime resources and promote sustainable development. Zhang and Sun (2020) and Koray et al. (2025) analysed the resilience and adaptation of the maritime industry in the post-COVID-19 context. Gilek et al. (2021) emphasized the integration of social sustainability into marine spatial planning to ensure inclusive governance outcomes, while Lin et al. (2024) and Mao et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of international cooperation in marine biodiversity governance. Collectively, these studies underscore the need for adaptive strategies, cross-sectoral coordination, and inclusive policy frameworks.

Despite these contributions, there remains an urgent need to establish a conceptual framework for maritime leadership that reflects the governance realities of island-based provinces such as the Riau Islands. While recent studies have addressed multiple aspects of maritime affairs, most remain sectoral or nationally oriented and do not position leadership as a central analytical variable in provincial maritime governance. This research seeks to address this gap by developing a context-specific conceptual framework for maritime leadership. Theoretically, the study enriches the academic discourse on leadership in maritime governance. Practically, it provides policymakers in island provinces with guidance to formulate policies and leadership strategies aligned with their maritime identity. In the long term, such a framework is expected to enhance the strategic positioning of Indonesia's archipelagic regions within the national maritime development agenda, contributing to the realization of Indonesia's vision as a global maritime axis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Maritime Governance: Concepts and Global Perspectives*

Maritime governance encompasses the systems, processes, and relationships through which oceanic and coastal resources are managed, regulated, and utilised (Sperling, 2022; Akpınar & Ozer-Caylan, 2022). At its core, it is a multi-level, multi-actor process that integrates environmental stewardship, economic development, and social equity within marine spaces. Globally, governance frameworks have evolved from sectoral, state-centric approaches towards integrated, ecosystem-based management that incorporates diverse stakeholders and knowledge systems (Borys, 2021). This shift reflects

recognition that maritime spaces are complex socio-ecological systems requiring adaptive, collaborative, and participatory governance mechanisms. Internationally, successful maritime governance models—such as Australia’s Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Norway’s integrated ocean management regime—illustrate the benefits of strong leadership, cross-sectoral coordination, and science-policy integration. These models emphasise the need for clarity of roles among institutions, robust enforcement mechanisms, and sustained stakeholder engagement, all of which are critical for achieving ecological sustainability and socio-economic resilience (Ehler & Douvère, 2009).

2.2. Maritime Leadership: The Human Dimension of Governance

Leadership is increasingly recognised as a determinant of governance success in maritime and coastal contexts (Said & MacMillan, 2020). Effective maritime leadership goes beyond administrative oversight; it involves vision-setting, coalition-building, and innovation promotion in contexts where multiple interests and conflicting priorities converge. Transformational leadership has been linked to enhanced cooperation, improved compliance with regulations, and stronger conservation outcomes in marine protected areas (Evans *et al.*, 2015). In archipelagic and resource-dependent regions, leaders must navigate institutional fragmentation, capacity constraints, and socio-cultural diversity. Servant leadership principles are particularly relevant, as they foreground community needs and empower local actors to take ownership of governance processes (Greenleaf, 2002; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, collaborative leadership—characterised by transparency, trust-building, and facilitation—has proven effective in mediating conflicts between industrial, artisanal, and conservation interests in shared maritime spaces (Pinkerton, 2019).

2.3. Indonesia’s Maritime Policy Landscape

Indonesia’s status as the world’s largest archipelagic state, with more than 17,000 islands, positions it uniquely within global maritime governance discourse. The government’s vision of Indonesia as a “Global Maritime Fulcrum” (*Poros Maritim Dunia*) underscores the strategic, economic, and geopolitical importance of its maritime domain (Bateman & Bergin, 2011; Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, 2016). Policies such as the National Ocean Policy (*Kebijakan Kelautan Indonesia*) aim to integrate marine resource management, maritime

security, infrastructure development, and blue economy growth. However, implementation challenges persist, including overlapping jurisdictional mandates among ministries, inconsistent enforcement of maritime regulations, and insufficient integration of local governance structures (Siry, 2011). These challenges are amplified in outer provinces such as the Riau Islands, where maritime boundaries, cross-border trade, and transnational fishing activities add layers of complexity.

2.4. The Riau Islands Province: Strategic and Governance Challenges

The Riau Islands Province occupies a critical maritime corridor linking the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea, making it a hotspot for shipping, fishing, and maritime trade. Its geostrategic location renders it both an economic asset and a security concern. Yet, the province’s governance is complicated by geographic dispersion, resource competition, and multi-level jurisdictional overlaps. Scholars note that the province struggles with fragmented institutional arrangements, where provincial, district, and national agencies often operate in silos (Fauzi & Anna, 2002). In addition, decentralisation reforms have devolved certain responsibilities to local governments without adequate financial or technical capacity, leading to inconsistent policy implementation (Budiarto, 2017). Furthermore, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains a persistent threat, often linked to cross-border activities with neighbouring states (Satria & Matsuda, 2004).

2.5. Conceptual and Empirical Gaps in Maritime Leadership and Governance Research

While substantial literature exists on maritime governance and leadership theory in general, there is a lack of context-specific frameworks tailored to Indonesian archipelagic provinces such as Riau Islands. Most governance studies in Indonesia focus on either resource management (e.g., fisheries, coral reefs) or maritime security, without fully integrating the leadership dimension. Similarly, leadership studies often focus on terrestrial contexts, neglecting the unique spatial, ecological, and cultural complexities of maritime governance. There is also limited empirical research linking institutional integration, stakeholder participation, and adaptive policy mechanisms in the Riau Islands context. Addressing this gap requires a conceptual framework that brings together visionary leadership, integrated institutional structures, and inclusive,

adaptive policy processes—components that are currently discussed in isolation in the literature.

3. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objective of formulating a conceptual construction of maritime leadership within the context of island-based provincial governance, this study employed a qualitative research approach using a library research design. Given its conceptual and theoretical nature, the study was grounded in an in-depth review of relevant literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy documents, and prior research reports addressing leadership, maritime regional governance, and the governance characteristics of island provinces. This approach enabled the systematic analysis and synthesis of theoretical perspectives to build a comprehensive and contextually relevant understanding of maritime leadership in the unique socio-geographical setting of the Riau Islands Province. Data collection involved identifying, inventorying, and critically reviewing scientific publications from the past five years, encompassing both domestic and international sources, with particular attention to articles published in internationally reputable journals. This ensured that the analysis was informed by the most recent theoretical developments and empirical findings in maritime leadership and governance. The analysis process combined content analysis and thematic analysis techniques. Content analysis was applied to systematically examine and classify the literature to identify core concepts, theoretical propositions, and emerging themes. Thematic analysis was used to uncover patterns of thought, conceptual linkages, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge. The integration of these techniques facilitated the development of a theoretical synthesis that informed the formulation of a conceptual framework for maritime leadership at the provincial level. This framework addresses the specific governance challenges of island-based provinces and responds to the limitations of conventional leadership models that are predominantly designed for land-based administrative contexts. By aligning leadership principles with the maritime identity and strategic role of the Riau Islands Province, the framework aims to contribute to both academic discourse and practical policymaking in Indonesia's maritime development agenda.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Key Challenges in Maritime Leadership towards Effective Governance in the Islands

Region

The Riau Islands Province, as one of Indonesia's maritime-based provinces, faces multifaceted challenges in establishing effective maritime leadership and governance. According to Kamaluddin & Setyadiharja in Indra's (2021) study, leadership in the maritime domain often encounters systemic weaknesses. First, the strategic foundation of maritime leadership remains underdeveloped, lacking the capacity to integrate key maritime economic instruments such as fisheries and marine-based mining. Second, the maritime sector has yet to serve as a coherent political base for economic development, with sectoral institutions often facing role confusion. Third, there is a persistent "backwashing" perception that relegates core maritime sectors—particularly fisheries—to a secondary status, leading to sectoral stagnation and marginalization. Fourth, budgetary allocations from the State Budget remain largely land-oriented, hindering equitable prosperity for maritime regions.

A further obstacle lies in the declining maritime-oriented mindset among both the government and local communities. This erosion of maritime culture, as observed by Mukhlis and Setyadiharja (2017), undermines development strategies that should reflect the region's maritime character. When land-based priorities dominate, development risks eroding local maritime wisdom and identity, thereby weakening governance that is contextually adapted to an island region.

Illegal fishing presents another significant governance challenge. Alamsyah (2017) documents widespread IUU (illegal, unreported, and unregulated) fishing in the province, involving both capture fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Violations include operations by 72 foreign fishing vessels, 104 Yustisia vessels, and 462 non-Yustisia vessels. Common methods range from falsifying permits and breaching fishing zones to using prohibited gear, underreporting catches, and direct transshipment to foreign ports. Leadership weaknesses during the 2010–2015 period were marked by insufficient commitment to combating illegal fishing, overlapping authorities, and incomplete fisheries legislation.

Port governance is similarly constrained. Syafril & Sujarwanto (2015) identify prolonged shipping routes, infrequent vessel visits—particularly during adverse weather—and high inter-island transport dependency as critical issues. These conditions necessitate stronger maritime leadership strategies, including the development of efficient route networks, strategic vessel placement, and reliable

shipping schedules.

Border governance adds another layer of complexity. Riau Islands' extensive maritime boundaries are challenged by inadequate resource management, weak law enforcement capacity, minimal integration of border development programs, and insufficient infrastructure (Hendrayadi, 2018). Darmawan & Nurmandi (2015) classify these challenges into three streams:

1. Problem stream – Limited infrastructure, low accessibility, and regional isolation.
2. Political stream – Divergent priorities among key actors, weak coordination, and minimal budgetary commitment to border development.
3. Policy stream – Identified priorities such as fisheries, maritime industry, sustainable tourism, inter-island connectivity, environmental management, and improved governance remain under-implemented.

Beyond local challenges, Riau Islands reflects governance issues common to archipelagic regions globally. The absence of strong and coordinated Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) institutions undermines sectoral integration, leading to conflicts between maritime industries, as seen in other contexts like Taiwan (Yang et al., 2024). Weak stakeholder coordination further limits the responsiveness of maritime policies to local needs (García-Sanabria et al., 2021), while ongoing IUU fishing continues to strain resources and security (Österblom et al., 2015; Pomeroy et al., 2016).

Fragmentation in land-sea interaction governance remains a persistent problem (Tocco et al., 2024), compounded by insufficient transboundary cooperation in shared maritime spaces (Cruz & McLaughlin, 2008; García-Sanabria et al., 2021). Economic development pressures, coastal population growth, and marine industrial expansion exacerbate environmental degradation, requiring policies that balance growth with ecosystem sustainability (Van Tatenhove, 2016; Trouillet et al., 2011).

Finally, overlapping institutional mandates and fragmented policy frameworks weaken governance capacity (Gilek et al., 2016; Guénette & Alder, 2007). For maritime leadership in the Riau Islands Province to be effective, it must foster MSP-based integration, enhance multi-stakeholder engagement, strengthen cross-border collaboration, and consolidate institutional mandates into a coherent governance framework.

4.2. Conceptual Framework for Maritime Leadership in Maritime-Based Provinces

In the context of an island province, maritime leadership rests on three interrelated pillars: (1) a leadership concept aligned with a maritime vision and mission, (2) a robust maritime institutional structure, and (3) cross-sectoral maritime policies. Together, these pillars form the basis for adaptive, sustainable, and inclusive maritime governance that extends beyond port management and shipping to encompass the full spectrum of maritime affairs. As Szymańska (2021) notes, leadership is a decisive factor shaping the dynamics and objectives of maritime governance, functioning as the mechanism through which global maritime concepts are translated into operational practices tailored to local realities.

Maritime leadership operates within a wide governance network that includes domestic and international relations, formal and informal institutions, civil society, communities, markets, and individual citizens. Its scope is broader than maritime management, fostering reciprocal, sustainable, and results-oriented relationships while creating institutional frameworks that endure over time. Szymańska (2021) identifies three dimensions of maritime leadership: (1) Cognitive Leadership, which integrates leaders' knowledge and awareness into vision and mission; (2) Relational Leadership, which builds networks, relationships, and hierarchies; and (3) Structural Leadership, which shapes institutions, structures, and regulatory frameworks.

First, in terms of leadership concepts, four complementary approaches are particularly relevant. Transformational leadership inspires long-term change by uniting maritime stakeholders around an innovation-oriented vision (Bux et al., 2025). Servant leadership prioritizes the well-being of coastal communities, maritime workers, and marine ecosystems, embedding social and ethical responsibility at the core of policymaking (Roberts, 2021; Zhu, 2025). Collaborative leadership facilitates the shared management of marine resources, emphasizing active participation from local communities, governments, and the private sector (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Visionary leadership positions leaders to anticipate and respond to global shifts such as climate change and advancements in ocean technology (Sewell, 2024).

Second, effective maritime institutional structures must integrate diverse sectors such as shipping, fisheries, marine conservation, coastal tourism, and maritime security (Young, 2011). Regulatory frameworks should align with international standards like UNCLOS and IMO conventions while

being adapted to local conditions. Regional cooperation is crucial for addressing transboundary issues such as marine pollution and IUU fishing (Chircop et al., 2019). Maritime education and capacity-building institutions also play a strategic role in cultivating future leaders who are adaptive, ethically grounded, and capable of navigating complex governance environments (Rami et al., 2023).

Third, maritime policies serve as the operational expression of leadership vision and institutional capacity. Sustainable maritime development policies must integrate economic growth with environmental conservation, for example through marine protected

areas, community-based coastal management, and climate change mitigation (Agardy et al., 2011). Maritime security policies should strengthen surveillance, enforce laws against resource theft, and enhance inter-agency coordination. Innovation and technology policies can drive efficiency through automation, digital logistics systems, and eco-friendly marine technologies. Community engagement policies should embed the rights and voices of coastal populations in decision-making, particularly in marine spatial planning and resource protection (Rumeli et al., 2022; Mohd Zaini et al., 2021; Mohd Siraj et al., 2022).

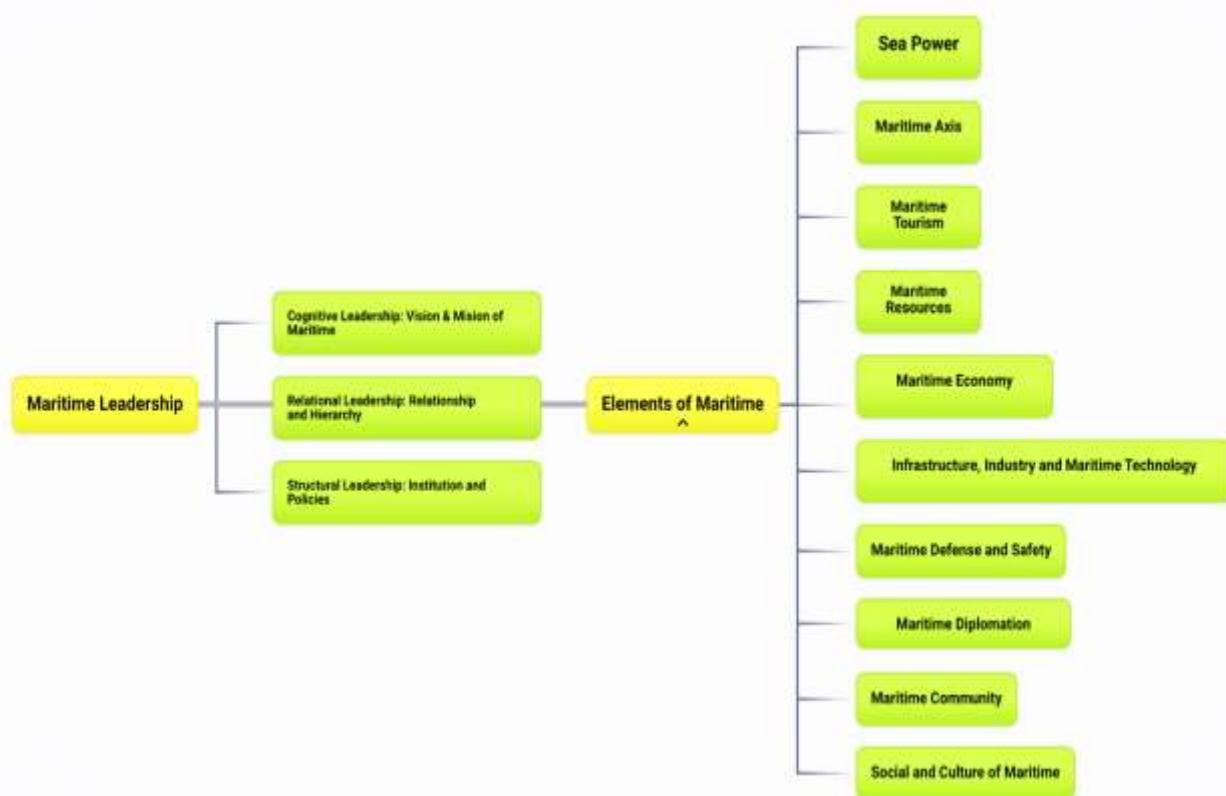


Figure 1: Innovation Conceptual Framework.

This tripartite framework reflects the view of Paridaens & Notteboom (2021) that maritime leadership is most effective when its vision harmonizes sustainable resource use with economic prosperity. Such vision is implemented through strategic plans that balance top-down direction with bottom-up participation. Institutional design, as Jentoft & Chuenpagdee (2016) and Bermúdez et al. (2020) emphasize, benefits from “blue governance” principles – cooperation among stakeholders at local, national, and international scales.

Examples from the European Union demonstrate how multi-layered institutional structures support

integrated governance. Agencies such as the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA), and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) facilitate coordination among governments, markets, and civil society within the EU’s Integrated Maritime Policy. Policy frameworks like the Maritime Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD) illustrate how governance can integrate environmental, economic, and social objectives (Markus et al., 2011; Leposa & Knutsson, 2024; Cavallo et al., 2017).

In sum, the conceptual framework for maritime

leadership in maritime-based provinces underscores that success is rarely the product of a single actor. Instead, it emerges from the synergy between adaptive leadership styles, inclusive institutional architectures, and responsive policy frameworks that address the socio-ecological complexities of ocean governance. This integrated approach is essential for confronting pressing challenges such as climate change, over-exploitation of marine resources, and geopolitical competition in maritime spaces.

The conceptual model offers practical guidance for policymakers, local maritime authorities, and regional planners. For policymakers, it provides a framework to align national maritime visions with local realities through clear leadership direction and integrated policy coordination across ministries. For local maritime authorities, it strengthens governance by fostering collaboration among agencies and communities, improving institutional capacity, and encouraging participatory decision-making that reflects local needs and culture. For regional planners, the model supports integrated and sustainable maritime development by linking key sectors including economy, defence, technology, and tourism into regional spatial and policy frameworks. Overall, it serves as a strategic tool to enhance maritime governance capacity, align leadership goals with development priorities, and promote sustainable blue economy growth in Indonesia's maritime regions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study underscores that maritime leadership

forms a fundamental pillar for establishing effective, adaptive, and sustainable maritime governance in archipelagic provinces such as the Riau Islands. The challenges identified—ranging from fragmented institutional frameworks, overlapping authorities, inadequate inter-sectoral coordination, and the erosion of maritime cultural values, to the persistent illegal exploitation of marine resources—necessitate a leadership model that is not only responsive to immediate issues but also visionary in anticipating future maritime challenges.

Grounded in a rigorous literature review and conceptual analysis, this research proposes a maritime leadership framework comprising three interrelated pillars: a leadership vision and mission that are explicitly maritime-oriented, an integrated and coherent institutional structure, and cross-sectoral policies firmly rooted in sustainability principles. Leadership approaches such as transformational, servant, collaborative, and visionary leadership emerge as particularly relevant for addressing the unique socio-geographical realities of maritime governance.

Beyond its academic contribution, the findings offer strategic value for policymakers, particularly in designing leadership and institutional models tailored to the geographic, socio-cultural, and economic characteristics of archipelagic regions. Strengthening maritime leadership in this way has the potential to enhance the strategic role of island provinces within Indonesia's national development agenda and reinforce the country's position in advancing its vision as the world's maritime axis.

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