

Exploring the Motivations Behind the Surge in Kindergarten Male Teachers in China

Xiyao LIANG

*Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University, Thailand
lxy19890829@gmail.com
ORCID:0000-0001-8638-0419*

Supinda LERTLIT* (Corresponding Author)

*Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University, Pathum Thani 12000, Thailand
email: supinda.l@rsu.ac.th. ORCID: 0000-0003-0028-9687*

ABSTRACT

In the global context, male participation in early childhood education is notably low, with only 3% of the workforce in mainland China comprising male professionals. This study delves into the intrinsic motivation of male kindergarten teachers, employing the framework of self-determination theory. Qualitative research, comprising face-to-face interviews with seven Chinese kindergarten teachers, aims to uncover the factors influencing their intrinsic motivation at work. By understanding their perspectives on intrinsic motivation, this research offers valuable insights to professionals in the field of early childhood education.

Keywords: Chinese, Male, Motivation, Self-determination, Kindergarten teachers

INTRODUCTION

In China, kindergarten male teachers (KMT) are also referred to as 'Xiong mao Gege' (Panda Brother), as male early childhood professionals constitute only 3% of this industry (Deng et al., 2023). However, various countries are making efforts to attract men to work in Early Childhood Education (ECE), challenging stereotypical views of male gender roles (Harris & Barnes, 2009; Yang & McNair, 2017; Zhang & Wang, 2018). KMT are seen as male role models for young children, especially boys, providing gender-diverse experiences in their early lives, which are believed to have a positive impact on children's gender formation and personality development (Chen & Rao, 2010; Davison & Nelson, 2011). Men working in the ECE field may encounter various challenges, including parental suspicions and accusations of child abuse (Børve, 2016; Christensen & Darling, 2019), low social status, being stereotyped as disciplinarians, potentially undertaking tasks involving physical labor or technical issues, and feeling discomfort in interactions with female colleagues (Yang & McNair, 2017). In China's ECE industry, with its relatively low entry barriers, it is perceived as having 'low social status,' 'low prestige,' 'low income,' and being a 'female job' (Liu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). This is attributed to professions like education, involving significant care and nurturing, considered atypical for males, as it traditionally falls under the social and cultural responsibilities of females. In this context, understanding why male teachers are motivated to become KMT and their commitment to this profession becomes crucial. Despite extensive research on teacher motivation in recent years, the motivation of KMT has received relatively little attention.

"Motivation" refers to the internal and external forces that propel, guide, and maintain an individual's behavior during a specific activity (Michaelson, 2005). It encompasses the process of pursuing goals, fulfilling desires, and meeting needs, serving as the driving force behind individuals' choices, efforts, and perseverance (Acquah et al., 2021). In the field of education, teacher motivation is essential for achieving professional goals, particularly amidst conflicts and challenges (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010).

Grounded in self-determination theory, this study explores kindergarten male teachers' (KMTs) perceptions of their roles in early childhood education (ECE) and their beliefs regarding career development. Prompted by the surge of KMTs post-pandemic and increased parental attention, the study focuses on seven KMTs in Changzhou, China, born in the 1990s. Examining their teaching motivation, the study uncovers the crucial role of the "actual self" in sustaining their motivation. Specifically, findings indicate that factors such as social media presence and high salaries stimulate the "actual self" of male teachers, influencing their decision to enter and remain in the profession.

Insights from this study offer valuable information for KMTs and communities interested in fostering greater male participation in the field. Several factors influence kindergarten male teachers' career choice, reflecting a complex interplay of personal, societal, and professional considerations, including interest in early childhood education, perceived need for male teachers, personal values and beliefs, community and family support, role models and influences, job satisfaction and fulfillment, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and financial considerations. This study contributes significantly by shedding light on the motivations of kindergarten male teachers (KMT), thereby

fostering a more supportive work environment and offering development opportunities to enhance job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Moreover, attracting and retaining male educators in educational institutions promotes diversity, creativity, and inclusivity within teams, contributing to gender equality and challenging societal stereotypes. This increased male involvement not only enriches the educational experience but also enhances overall educational quality, meeting diverse needs and fostering a comprehensive learning environment.

Additionally, understanding these motivations aids in devising effective recruitment strategies and offering attractive benefits, leading to higher participation and retention rates among male educators. By providing additional training and career advancement opportunities, institutions can elevate professionalism and offer better development prospects. Cultivating a supportive work environment further enhances employee satisfaction and boosts the reputation and attractiveness of educational institutions, ultimately promoting a more equitable and inclusive educational environment. This study's findings highlight positive impacts across multiple domains, including individuals, society, and educational institutions. Specifically, it contributes to fostering a more equal, diverse, and supportive early childhood education (ECE) environment.

THEROETICAL FRAMEWORK

Self-determination theory, a cornerstone in psychology, explains the motivation driving behavior by positing that individuals experience heightened self-determination when their basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are met. Intrinsic motivation, stemming from internal enjoyment and satisfaction from activities, is closely tied to autonomy and is categorized alongside extrinsic and amotivation. Notably, research indicates that teachers exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation than extrinsic motivation (Yıldız & Kılıç, 2021). By satisfying autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs, self-determination theory suggests that intrinsic motivation can be nurtured, providing a theoretical framework that guides practices in education and beyond.

Intrinsic motivation, the driving force behind spontaneous exploration and curiosity, plays a pivotal role in cognitive development, stemming from the inherent enjoyment of an activity (Oudeyer et al., 2016). Unlike external stimuli, intrinsic motivation propels individuals to action solely for the inherent enjoyment or challenge of the activity itself (Katz & Shahar, 2015). Fulfilling basic psychological needs influences intrinsic motivation and vocational self-efficacy, crucial for fostering innovative behavior (Klaeijnsen et al., 2017).

Teachers' intrinsic motivation reflects their developmental level, influenced by existing values, instructional practices, and interactions (Liu et al., 2018). Positive emotions evoked during teaching, coupled with progress and success in instructional practices, contribute to intrinsic motivation (Han & Yin, 2016). Understanding kindergarten male teachers' (KMTs) cognitions regarding their current status, idealized state, and societal expectations reveals profound motivations behind their career choices and dedication, shedding light on their aspirations and the societal expectations they navigate.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative case study approach, aiming to delve into phenomena within a real-life setting. Qualitative research seeks to explore phenomena using textual narratives and visual representations (Creswell, 2012). The selection of the research site is deliberate and aligned with the study's objectives. Focused on seven kindergarten male teachers (KMTs) from a pilot public kindergarten in Changzhou, the study investigates their motivations for teaching. The participants, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 5 years, were engaged through in-depth semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis.

Semi-structured interviews, documenting teachers' perceptions of their actual, ideal, and ought selves (Zhang & Wang, 2018), primarily explored their beliefs, cognitions, and motivations for pursuing kindergarten teaching. Furthermore, the study examines participants' decision-making processes regarding a career in education. Verbatim transcripts of interviews underwent thematic analysis, involving familiarization with data, code generation, theme identification, and refinement. Initial analysis provided an overview of the teaching motivations of the seven KMTs, followed by a detailed examination of their representations of self-concepts.

Participant recruitment involved a combination of standard and convenience sampling techniques, facilitated by the snowball method. Inclusion criteria mandated active teaching in public kindergartens and identification as male. Selection from public kindergartens ensured homogeneity in roles and salaries, supplemented by recommendations from participants through snowball sampling.

Guided by self-determination theory and prior research, the study posed three primary questions during interviews

to probe motivations, perceptions of ideal teaching, and traits of competent kindergarten male teachers (KMTs). Interviews, conducted face-to-face and lasting 30-60 minutes each, were audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification of common themes and motivational drivers, with participant feedback sought to validate interpretations.

Mandarin interviews were translated into English and cross-checked by a native speaker to ensure accuracy while preserving participant confidentiality throughout the process. The demographics of the teachers are in Table 1.

FINDINGS

Table 1: Summary of Teacher Demographics

Teachers' Nicknames	Marital Status	Birth Decade	Teaching Experience	Spouse' Occupation	Major
Lajiao	Married	1990s	4 years	Kindergarten teacher	Bachelor's degree in preschool education
Xigua	Married	1990s	5 years	Kindergarten teacher	Bachelor's degree in education management
HouGe	Married	1990s	4 years	Kindergarten teacher	Bachelor's degree in Education policy
Yumi	Married	1990s	3 years	Housewife	Bachelor's degree in Music
Daxiang	Single	1990s	1 years	Businesswoman	Bachelor's degree in Physical Education
Xiongmao	Single	1990s	3 years	Policewoman	Bachelor's degree in preschool education
QiuQiu	Single	1990s	2 years	Housewife	Master's degree in Subject Teaching

The data analysis reveals that the "actual self" plays a crucial role in driving the teaching motivation of seven male kindergarten teachers. It suggests that the "actual self" of kindergarten male teachers indicates their emphasis on individuality and authenticity, characteristics often prioritized by individuals born in the 1990s who tend to pursue a genuine self rather than a superficial facade. This emphasis may manifest in various aspects of their lives, including lifestyle choices, social media presentations, and career decisions. When there are minimal disparities between the actual self and the ought self, alignment ensures the coherence of their teaching motivation. This contrasts with prior research (Zhang & Wang, 2018), which posited that the "ideal self" leads to inconsistent motivation.

Changing Social Perceptions and Gender Roles

Data analysis indicates that initially, individuals choosing to become KMT received recognition and understanding from their families, friends, as well as parents of the children. Previous studies suggested that KMT faced challenges in gaining acceptance or understanding from friends, colleagues, or parents of the children, and they were often labeled as "male babysitters," "male aunts," or even "clowns," leading to marginalization in the workplace (Zhang & Wang, 2018). However, this situation seems to have changed; one respondent provided a different perspective:

"No one gave me uncomfortable nicknames, and at that time, my family strongly supported my choice to work in ECE. My family believes that being a male kindergarten teacher is a promising career for the future." (Xigua Gege)

Societal perceptions of gender roles and expectations are undergoing transformation. People are gradually accepting that men can succeed in traditionally considered female-dominated fields, including ECE. This shift helps break gender stereotypes, enabling more men to feel free to choose a career in ECE. Concurrently, changes in family values are observed. With the evolution of family values, an increasing number of parents recognize that men can play a crucial role in child education. This may lead to more support and encouragement for men to choose ECE as a profession.

Diversity in the Education Sector

The field of education is becoming increasingly diverse, encouraging individuals from different backgrounds and genders to participate. Schools and kindergartens are also recognizing that male teachers can offer children unique educational experiences and perspectives. Zhang and Wang (2018) mention that kindergarten male teachers were once forced into uncomfortable and unwilling roles, undertaking a significant amount of "female work," although not substantially internalizing these roles into their future selves. In practice, they were perceived as similar to female teachers. One respondent highlighted in the study may offer a different viewpoint:

"The biggest difference between male and female teachers lies in physical strength, but this doesn't mean that men cannot excel in traditionally considered female tasks. I am the homeroom teacher, and TA is a girl, but I can still braid beautiful braids for my girls." (Hou Ge)

Researchers observe that the disparities between the 'actual' and 'should' self-representations influence their career choices and serve as a driving force for motivation and pride in their profession.

Career Development Opportunities

The Chinese government has provided more career development opportunities and support, encouraging men to enter the field of ECE. This includes scholarships, training programs, and opportunities for professional advancement. The increased demand for male teachers is evident, and some schools may face challenges in recruiting a sufficient number of male teachers. Therefore, proactive recruitment strategies may be implemented to attract more male teachers. All participants acknowledge their professional competence and qualities as kindergarten teachers (ideal self). Among the seven male teachers interviewed, six mentioned scholarships and training programs, with the only graduate participant expressing:

"When I first became a kindergarten teacher, it was because my undergraduate major was in early childhood education. During my tenure, the school provided tuition subsidies and training time, allowing me to continue my education." (Qiuqiu)

The remaining participants established their self-concept as physical education teachers in kindergarten and gained a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. All six undergraduate teachers underwent training while on the job or pursued graduate education. They mentioned that male teachers can enjoy more rewards and advantages compared to female kindergarten teachers. Additionally, men may find it easier to obtain opportunities for career advancement over their female counterparts (Yang & McNair, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). These measures gradually challenge public perceptions of lower educational qualifications for early childhood teachers (Lan et al., 2021). Importantly, all participants expressed their commitment to continue working in the field of ECE in the future, as they are dedicated to being kindergarten teachers. Therefore, their firm self-concept and motivation are less susceptible to conflicts between ideal, actual, and should self, aligning with previous research findings (Zhang et al., 2022).

Social Recognition and Rewards through social media

All seven participants noted the significant impact of social media in garnering social recognition. They highlighted China's increasing internationalization and the growing emphasis on ECE, making the industry more appealing and promising. Additionally, they acknowledged the advantages of male kindergarten teachers' roles and expressed their dedication to honing their uniqueness. The participant with the longest tenure shared his experience as follows: *"At first, I thought Tik Tok was just for fun....through sharing, I discovered my strengths, as pointed out by my fans. They helped me accept different challenges and find my uniqueness in the ECE environment, also earn some extra income from TikTok."* (Xigua Gege)

The response from Daxiang Gege, who has been working for only a year, surprised the researchers:

"Do you know how I ended up on this path? It's quite unbelievable and somewhat funny. Watching TikTok sparked my desire to become a kindergarten teacher.... Being a kindergarten teacher has enriched my life, and on weekends, some institutions invite me to participate in activities where I can also earn some rewards." (Daxiang Gege)

Self-media platforms like TikTok provide male teachers with opportunities to showcase their teaching skills and interact with students, creating rich rewards and social recognition. Successful content on these platforms can bring widespread social approval and attention, as well as various rewards, including fan support, advertising collaborations, and invitations from educational institutions. This exposure may enhance the status of kindergarten male teachers in society.

Personal Interests and Sense of Mission

Some men may have a strong interest in interacting with and educating young children, viewing it as a meaningful career and hoping to make a positive contribution to the growth and development of children. This generation often emphasizes the pursuit of personality and interests. We found that men born in the 1990s are passionate about early childhood education and demonstrate excellent teaching abilities. They are more willing to accept and respect such career choices such as:

"I find early childhood education to be an extremely interesting profession. I can interact with carefree children, and when they call me 'brother,' it brings me immense satisfaction. Although the work is tough, I find joy in it." (Yumi Gege)

A KMT mentioned their reflection after dealing with a child injury issue, stating:

"We demonstrate a stronger ability to handle emergencies. It feels like having a sense of mission, similar to firefighters saving lives." (Daxiang Gege)

The data showed that men in their 90s who work in early childhood education aspire to pursue personal dreams and goals. They prioritize achieving self-worth through their work and lifestyle. They may pay more attention to the meaning of their work and personal sense of accomplishment. Additionally, they might emphasize the balance between work and life, striving to integrate personal interests and career, aiming for more comprehensive self-development.

Discussions

This study delves into the motivations behind the significant rise in male early childhood educators, a trend influenced by multiple factors. Firstly, shifting social perceptions and gender roles play a crucial role (Xu, 2019). Over recent years, increased societal recognition of men in early childhood education has highlighted their importance in this field, potentially inspiring more men to pursue careers in this domain (Zhang & Yu, 2016).

The evolving attitudes toward gender equality serve as a driving force behind the surge in male early childhood educators. As societal norms regarding gender roles evolve, more men are encouraged to challenge traditional stereotypes and opt for professions traditionally dominated by women (Yang & McNair, 2020), such as early childhood education, marking a notable departure from previous studies (Zhang & Wang, 2018; Zhang et al., 2022).

The contemporary openness and progressiveness in China have fostered greater acceptance of diverse ideas and cultures among the younger generation, born in the 1990s, who grew up in an environment emphasizing gender equality and inclusivity. Thus, they may view men engaging in early childhood education, traditionally seen as a female-dominated field, with a more egalitarian and inclusive perspective.

The influence of social media emerges as a significant factor driving this trend. Positive portrayals and endorsements of male early childhood educators on social media platforms can sway individuals' career choices, making them more inclined to enter this profession. The post-90s generation, having grown up with the rise of social media, places a strong emphasis on presenting authentic selves on these platforms while being influenced by external evaluations. Actively engaging with social media allows them to express support for males in early childhood education and serves as a vital source of information and perspectives. Through self-media platforms, male educators can showcase their professional skills, innovative teaching methods, and positive interactions with students (Szeto et al., 2015), thus reshaping societal perceptions of male educators in early childhood education and establishing a more professional image for them. However, potential drawbacks, such as an excessive focus on appearance and entertainment, warrant consideration, along with the need to maintain personal privacy and adhere to professional ethical standards when sharing teaching processes and student interactions on self-media platforms.

Additionally, researchers observed that male early childhood educators born in the 1990s prioritize achieving a work-life balance and integrating personal interests with their careers to achieve comprehensive self-development. This generation generally values pursuing personal interests and realizing self-worth (Yang, 2020), making it easier for them to understand and support a career choice that aligns with their passions. Finally, economic rewards and career advancement opportunities are crucial considerations (Lan et al., 2021).

Increased visibility on social media platforms and participation in social activities can enhance the social status and salary levels of male early childhood educators, serving as economic incentives. Additionally, some men may perceive greater career development prospects in early childhood education, including opportunities for

promotions to managerial positions or achieving higher social status in the sector. These motivations are likely intertwined, with individuals making decisions based on a combination of factors. It is important to note that this study was conducted in economically developed regions of China, and perceptions of the actual self may vary based on location and individual circumstances, particularly in less developed areas.

Conclusion

Kindergarten male teachers born in the 1990s prioritize achieving work-life balance and integrating personal interests with their careers for comprehensive self-development. Attention to economic rewards and career advancement opportunities is crucial, with social media platforms potentially enhancing visibility and elevating social status and salary levels.

Educational institutions should bolster the professional awareness of male educators, providing training and guiding them to recognize their capabilities. Encouraging participation in social media can showcase skills. Implementing incentive policies to raise social status and salaries can enhance attractiveness to the profession, alongside offering career development opportunities for professional growth.

REFERENCES

- Acquah, A., Nsiah, T. K., Antie, E. N. A., & Otoo, B. (2021). Literature Review on Theories of Motivation. *EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review*, 9(5), 25–29. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra6848>
- Børve, H. E. (2016). Men in kindergartens: work culture and gender. *Early Child Development and Care*, 187(7), 1083–1094. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1154853>
- Bruinsma, M., & Jansen, E. P. W. A. (2010). Is the motivation to become a teacher related to pre-service teachers' intentions to remain in the profession? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(2), 185–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760903512927>
- Chen, E. S. L., & Rao, N. (2010). Gender Socialization in Chinese Kindergartens: Teachers' Contributions. *Sex Roles*, 64(1-2), 103–116. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9873-4>
- Christensen, L. S., & Darling, A. J. (2019). Sexual abuse by educators: a comparison between male and female teachers who sexually abuse students. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 26(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2019.1616119>
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. pp.650.
- Davison, K. G., & Nelson, B. G. (2011). Men and Teaching: Good Intentions and Productive Tensions. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 19(2), 91–96. <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.1902.91>
- Deng, X., Tang, Y., Wang, L., & Zhou, F. (2023). Gender Stereotypes of Male Preschool Teachers: Taking the Investigation of Changsha International Kindergarten as an Example. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8, 541–548. <https://doi.org/10.54097/ehss.v8i.4303>
- Han, J., & Yin, H. (2016). Teacher motivation: Definition, research development and implications for teachers. *Cogent Education*, 3(1).
- Harris, K., & Barnes, S. (2009). Male teacher, female teacher: exploring children's perspectives of teachers' roles in kindergartens. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179(2), 167–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430802667005>
- Katz, I., & Shahar, B. H. (2015). What makes a motivating teacher? Teachers' motivation and beliefs as predictors of their autonomy-supportive style. *School Psychology International*, 36(6), 575–588. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034315609969>
- Klaeijns, A., Vermeulen, M., & Martens, R. (2017). Teachers' Innovative Behaviour: The Importance of Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction, Intrinsic Motivation, and Occupational Self-Efficacy. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 62(5), 769–782. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1306803>
- Lan, S., Jiang, Y., Di, H., Li, H., Zhou, J., & Li, F. (2021). Development and validation of the Chinese kindergarten teacher quality scale in Shanghai. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 131, 106272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2021.106272>
- Liu, W., Li, X.-W., & Zou, Y. (2018). The Formation of Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation in Professional Development. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 53(3), 418–430. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-018-9465-3>
- Liu, Y., Li, R., Jin, Z., Wu, X., & Wang, W. (2022). Psychological empowerment and professional well-being of Chinese kindergarten teachers: The mediating effect of professional pressure. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 32(1), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2021.2002034>
- Michaelson, C. (2005). Meaningful Motivation for Work Motivation Theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(2), 235–238. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2005.16387881>
- Oudeyer, P.-Y., Gottlieb, J., & Lopes, M. (2016). Intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and learning. *Motivation -*

- Theory, Neurobiology and Applications*, 257–284. <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.pbr.2016.05.005>
- Szeto, E., Cheng, A. Y.-N., & Hong, J.-C. (2015). Learning with Social Media: How do Preservice Teachers Integrate YouTube and social media in Teaching? *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 25(1), 35–44. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-015-0230-9>
- Xu, Y. (2019). Gender-diverse practitioners in early years education and care (EYEC): a cross-cultural study of Scotland, Hong Kong, and Mainland China. *Early Years*, 40(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2019.1683816>
- Yang, Y., & McNair, D. E. (2017). Male teachers in Shanghai public kindergartens: a phenomenological study. *Gender and Education*, 31(2), 274–291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1332339>
- Yang, Y., & McNair, D. E. (2020). Chinese male early childhood education teachers' perceptions of their roles and professional development. *Gender and Education*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2020.1786010>
- Yang, Z. (2020). Individual life of work, family relations in the eyes of the Post-90s generation in China. Thesis of Master's Programme in Asian Studies Spring semester 2020. <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/downloadfunc=downloadFile&recordOid=9032777&fileOid=9032778>
- Yıldız, V. A., & Kılıç, D. (2021). Motivation and motivational factors of primary school teachers from the Self-Determination Theory perspective. *Turkish Journal of Education*, 10(2), 76–96. <https://doi.org/10.19128/turje.832203>
- Zhang, L., & Wang, M. (2018). Understanding male kindergarten teachers' motivation for teaching in mainland China: a case study. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 44(4), 496–499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2018.1450950>
- Zhang, L., & Yu, S. (2016). “I am not a babysitter”: a case study of five Chinese mainland early childhood teachers' identity. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 43(1), 117–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2016.1182374>
- Zhang, Y., Chen, M., & Li, X. (2022). “Is it necessary to be male?”: A qualitative study of female kindergarten teachers' views on physical activity for young children in China. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2022.2130228>