

IMPACT OF FEDERAL CHARACTER PRINCIPLE ON RECRUITMENT EQUITY IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA SECURITY AND CIVIL DEFENCE CORPS (NSCDC)

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ABSTRACT

Federal character was adopted in Nigeria to ensure that no group or section suffers imbalance or marginalization of any kind. However, its implementation had been criticized by scholars and public servants who see it as an instrument of favoring some sections of the country against others through marginalization and nepotism in the area of employment contrary to the federal character principle. Federal institutions are accused of recruiting on the basis of nepotism and favoritism without minding the effect on fairness and equity. The study investigated the issues associated with recruitment procedures in relation to the extent to which federal character commission has promoted equity in its recruitment procedure. Descriptive statistics method (SPSS Version 2.0) was used to analyse data. Sources of data were primary and secondary sources. Study concluded that the recruitment of personnel into Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in line with federal character principle or quota system is to open door to nepotism and invariably indicates that federal character principle was not totally applicable in the recruitment of personnel into Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps. The paper recommended that Political office holders and other top government functionaries should minimize or stop constant interference with issues of recruitment and selection of staff in the public service.

Keywords: Federal Character, Recruitment, Equity, Marginalization, Nepotism

INTRODUCTION

Federal Character Principles (FCPs) constitute a set of policies designed by the Nigeria government to integrate the diverse ethnic groups in the country. The federal character principle which was enshrined in the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria seeks to ensure equitable representation of ethnic, religious and geographic diversities of the country in the public service. The introduction of federal character policies in Nigeria is to foster unity, peace, equal access to state

resources and promotion of the integration of the less advantaged states for better improvement and good conditions of living in the country (Bamidele and Ikulege, 2004). The Federal Character Commission (FEC) is a Federal Executive body established by Act No. 34 of 1996 to implement and enforce the Federal Character Principles of fairness and equity in the distribution of public posts, socio-economic amenities and infrastructural facilities among the federating units of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The provision of sections 14 and 153 of 1999 constitution further empowers the commissions to operate in a democratic setting.

Section 14(3) of the 1979 Constitution defines Federal Character as distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, language or religion as a desire to nourish and harness the diversification the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Section 14 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that:

The composition of the government of the Federation or any agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.

Section 217 (3) provides that the composition of the officer corps and other ranks of the Armed Forces of the Federation shall reflect the federal character of Nigeria. Various other provisions were made in the constitution to ensure that the federal character principle becomes operative in the political process (Nnoli, 1996 cited in Adeosun, 2011). Section 147 states that in the appointment of Ministers, the president shall reflect the federal character of Nigeria provided that in giving effects to the provision aforesaid, the president shall appoint at least one Minister from each state who shall be an indigene of such state (Nnoli, 1996 cited in Adeosun, 2011). Moreover, Section 171 provides that appointment by the President into the offices of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Head of Service of the Federation, Ambassadors, or the principal representatives abroad, Permanent Secretary or other Chief Executive in any Ministry or Department of the Federal Government, or any office on the personal staff of the President shall have regard to the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity. Section 153 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution establishes the Federal Character Commission, as a federal executive body, empowered in Section 8(1) of the Third Schedule of the Constitution to oversee and monitor the implementation of the federal character clauses. The primary mandate of the Commission is to work out an equitable formula subject to the approval of the National Assembly for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the public service of the

Federation and of the States, the armed forces of the Federation, the Nigerian Police Force and other security agencies, government-owned companies and parastatals of the States.

Nigeria is a federal society with 36 component states, with a population of over 160 million people segmented into over 250 ethnic groups which makes an arrangement that could accommodate the different segments of the country in the public bureaucracy without any segment feeling marginalized such as federal character a necessity (Gberevbie, 2012:11). Before the adoption of federal character, Nigeria had introduced quota system into the public service in 1958 with the aim of ensuring equitable representation of various groups in the country (Tonwe and Oghator, 2009).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Federal Character Principle has been introduced into the recruitment of personnel into the federal institutions to ensure fairness, justice and equities to different multi-ethnic state in Nigeria. There has been assumed gross misconduct in the area of employment contrary to the federal character principle because of nepotism by those in authority in the Ministries and Parastatals in Nigeria. Federal Ministry of Interior was accused of recruiting personnel in to the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) on the basis of nepotism and favourism without minding the effect on fairness and equity. That was why Senator Anyanwu for example, lamented that Igbos are not in leadership of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Nigerian Armed Forces, Nigeria Police. Senator Samuel Nnaemeka Anyanwu, Chairman, Senate Committee on Ethics and Privileges, representing Imo East has decried the absence of the federal character principle in President Buhari's appointments which has sidelined the Igbos in the scheme of things. (23rd April 2017; The Sun News Paper). Many sections in Nigeria have been complaining of being cheated in the appointment and recruitment process in the country at large, these sections pointed to a lot of mediocrity in the Nigeria federal civil/public services.

The above describes the challenges in the implementation of the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria in connection to fairness, justice and equity in Nigeria. The paper investigated how the Federal Character Principle has promoted equity in the recruitment procedures into Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and the issues associated with recruitment procedures in the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent has the Federal Character Principle has promoted equity in the recruitment procedures of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps? and

2. What are the issues associated with recruitment procedures in the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps?

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Recruitment

The concept of recruitment has been variously defined by several scholars and organizational managers alike. Biobele, R. B (2007) defines recruitment as “the analysis of a job and the features the organization will look for in a potential employee and attracting candidates to apply to the organization and the offering of various terms and conditions of employment to a chosen potential employee”. This definition views recruitment is encompassing the process of attracting qualified prospective candidates to apply for jobs as well as choosing the best for appointment to the organization. Recruitment is conceived here to include selection. Fatiregun (1992:24) cited in Onah (2003) opines that recruitment is the process of assessing a job, announcing the vacancy, arousing and stimulating people to apply. According to Ibrahim, Y (2004), the principal purpose of recruitment is to attract sufficient and suitable potential employees for vacancies in the organization. To Crawford, R.B (2004) recruitment is integral part of human resources and involves the process of identifying and attracting or encouraging potential applicants with needed skills to fill vacant positions in an organization. From the foregoing, recruitment is a fundamental personnel function that involves analysis of job openings, discovery of pools of suitable prospective candidates, encouraging as well as attracting them to apply to the organization. It is the process that provides an organization with as many qualified job applicants as possible from where the organization selects those that meet the job requirements of available positions. It is instructive to note that unless recruitment is soundly conceived, there can be little hope for securing and building a formidable first rate workforce.

Griffin (1997:13) defines recruitment to mean, “Securing the right people for particular jobs, and it may take the form of advertising for large groups of employees or tracking out a lightly skilled individual for specific work”. This means that not any person with paper qualification is eligible for recruitment. A choice has to be made on who is the right candidate for a particular post. This is very important due to the fact that it is through this process that the government or organization can achieve its sets of goals and objectives. According to Monday and Noe (2005) “recruitment is a process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications, developing their interest in an organization and encouraging them to apply for jobs within it”. This shows clearly that recruitment exercises are not conducted all year round but at a designated time when the need arises. The need arises as a result of vacant positions created by those who left the service as a result of their retirement, withdrawal from the

service or other reasons. During this process, efforts are made to inform the applicants fully about the selection criteria of the required competencies that will lead to effective performance, as well as career opportunities the organization can provide the employee. Clear knowledge of the job helps the potential employees to put in their best when employed because it is only when you know what you are going to do that you can understand not only how to do it but how to do it best (Yaro, 2014:12).

Federal Character Principle

The introduction of the federal character principles in Nigeria was aimed at fostering unity and peace as well as equal access to state resources and to promote the integration of disadvantaged states for better improvement of the living conditions of people living across the country (Ugo & Ukpere, 2012:28). The federal character principles at ensuring equity amongst the component units had as its very heart the eschewing of all forms of group imbalance in public institutions and affairs (Obiyan & Akindele, 2002:17). The principles it was to take care of complication in the diversity of the Nigerian designed including, ethnicity, the national question, minority problem, discrimination based on indignity, resources allocation and control, power sharing, employment and placement in public institutions, amongst others (Afigbo, 1989). Federal character principles involve a deliberate plan to construct means of ensuring the proper distribution of amenities and government projects in a country (Ezeibe, 2013:21).

The federal character principles as an integrative mechanism stand for fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's position of power, status and influence. It is to ensure a broad public participation in the nation's affairs while fostering development. However, the application of the principle had remained problematic because of the disparity in the standard of western education attained among the states in the federation (Mohammed, 2007). According to Gboyega, A. (1989) appointments and promotions in the public service in line with federal character principle or quota system is to open the door to nepotism and to promote unequal distribution of the employment opportunities among various geo-political zones in Nigeria which invariably treating the national integration.

METHODOLOGY

This paper, descriptive survey approach was adopted by drawing data from both primary and secondary sources. The target population of the study consists of the Federal Character Commission and Nigeria Security and Civil defence Corps in Abuja and Ilorin. The sample size for this work will be based on random-sampling method. Hence, the sample size that will be chosen will be determined by the Yaro Yamanisi (1976:240) techniques/methods; and this is expressed as thus:

$n = N$

$1 + N(e)^2$ where

N = Sample size

N = total population of Federal Character Commission and Nigeria Security and Civil defence Corps in Abuja and Ilorin.

e = Percentage of standard error = 0.05

n = 4030

$1 + 4030(0.05)^2 = 202$ Respondents

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Pilot Study

This work embarked on a pilot study of small-scale model of the actual data collection process of the study in order to discover the possible limitations, uncertainties and constraints that may arise in all aspects of the research process.

For pilot test, thirty (30) questionnaires were self-administered to and collected from employee of the Federal Character Commission and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in Abuja and Ilorin. The purpose of the pilot study was to identify potentially difficult, misinterpreted, ambiguous questions and also the time taken to answer the questions.

Reliability Test

Pilot Test of Reliability – Equity in the Recruitment Procedures in the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Research Questions
.774	4

Items Total Statistics

Measurement items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. Federal character commission has made it easy for various geopolitical zones to be fully represented in the recruitment into Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps.	8.6000	15.697	.475	.769
2. Federal Character Commission advocates sharing of employment and posts based on federal character principles.	8.1333	14.533	.540	.738
3. All tendencies of discrimination are eliminated in the recruitment into Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps.	8.4333	13.151	.688	.658
4. Federal character principle is applied in the recruitment of personnel into the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps.	8.5333	13.637	.609	.702

Source: Survey data collected from field work, 2017

The table shows the reliability test results of the independent variable, which is equity. The variable scored a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.774 using four (4) questions. The Therefore, since the result is above 0.6, it is considered acceptable in accordance to the standard. Also, the item total correlate also shows that the variables have high correlations with one another ranging from .4 to .6 in response to the Cronbach’s Alpha, the value is accepted and none is removed, thereby using it for the actual survey.

Pilot Test of Reliability – Issues Associated with Recruitment Procedures in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Research Questions
.776	6

Items Total Statistics

Measurement items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. Political affiliation is one of the major yardsticks in securing employment into the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.	13.7333	23.720	.491	.751
2. Employment is usually granted to some family members and friends within the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.	13.8000	21.200	.685	.697
3. Godfatherism has taken over merit in the recruitment procedures in the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps	13.9667	21.689	.638	.710
4. Certificate does not matter as criteria of getting federal character job.	14.1333	20.740	.731	.683
5. Those in authority have extorted Nigerians in securing employment into the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps	12.2000	33.683	-.155	.846
6. Selection interview is just a matter of formality in the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps.	14.3333	22.092	.655	.707

Source: Survey data collected from field work, 2017

Table shows the reliability test results of the independent variables, which are the issues associated with recruitment procedure. The variables scored a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.776 using six (6) questions. Therefore, since the result is above 0.6, it is considered acceptable in accordance to the standard. Also, the item total correlate also shows that the variables have high correlations with one another ranging from .4 to .7 No item was removed and therefore, the six (6) items are used for the actual survey.

Descriptive Analysis

Respondents Rate

	Items	Number	%
1	Number of sample	202	
2	Number of returned and dully filled	188	94%
3	Number of returned but wrongly filled	6	2.5%
4	Number of unreached respondents	8	3.5%
	Total	202	

Source: Survey data collected from field work, 2017

202 Questionnaires were administered into different area: staff of Federal Character Commission and officers in the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps. Only one hundred and eighty-eight (188) were completed filled, five (5) were wrongly filled and seven (7) respondents were unreachable.

Hence: the response rate is presented below: $\frac{Nr}{Ns-(a-b)} * 100$

Nr = Number of returned

Ns = Number of sample

a = Respondents that could not be reached

b = Wrongly filled questionnaire.

Percentage of responses $\frac{188}{202 - (8-6)} * 100 = 94\%$

Bio Data of Respondents**Bio Data**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	143	76.1%
Female	45	23.9%
Total	188	100%
Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	4	2.1%
31-40	98	52.1%
41-50	45	23.9%
51-60	25	13.3%
61-Above	16	8.5%
Total	188	100%
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE)	5	2.7%
National Diploma (ND)/ Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)	23	12.2%
HND/B.Sc.	120	63.8%
Master	38	20.2%
PhD	2	1.1%
Total	188	100%
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	133	70.7%
Single	47	25.0%
Divorced	8	4.3%
Total	188	100%

Source: Survey data collected from field work, 2017

In terms of the sex of the respondents, there is an overwhelming preponderance of males. The table shows seventeen-six point one (76.1%) in male while twenty-three point nine (23.9) in female.

The table also displays the age group of the respondents: the figure indicates that individuals between the ages of 31-40 years constitute most of the response in this survey with fifty-two point one (52.1%) percent. Individual between the age of 41-50 were also widely represent with a response of twenty- three point one (23.9%) percent. Two-one (2.1%) percent constitute

between ages of 20-30, thirteen point three (13.3%) constitute between ages of 51-60 while eight point five (8.5%) represents individuals between ages of 60 and above.

The able also displays educational qualification of the respondents; most of the respondents sixty-eighty (63.8%) percent have qualification up to the university and polytechnic level. This is followed by twenty (20.2%) percent of respondents, who hold Master; twelve point two (12.2%) respondents hold NCE/ND; two point seven (2.7%) percent respondents hold SSCE while one point one (1.1%) hold Ph.D. Therefore from indication, all educational levels were duly represented in this questionnaire.

Additionally, the table also displays marital status which seventy point seven (70.7%) percent respondent have married; twenty-five point zero (25.0%) percent respondent are yet to marry while four point three (4.3%) percent respondents recorded divorced rate.

Information on the Equity in the Recruitment Procedures in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

The variable in this section were designed to capture the opinion of respondents on the equity in the recruitment procedures in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.

Equity in the Recruitment Procedures in the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

Measurement items	Opinion	%	Means	SD	Remark	Total
1. Federal character commission has made it easy for various geo-political zones to be fully represented in the recruitment into Nigerian security and civil defence corps.	Strongly Agreed	28	2.4	1.4	Disagreed	188
	Agreed	13				
	Undecided	17				
	Disagreed	77				
	Strongly Disagreed	53				
2. Federal character commission advocates sharing of employment and posts based on federal character principles.	Strongly Agreed	24	2.2	1.3	Disagreed	188
	Agreed	16				
	Undecided	8				
	Disagreed	81				
	Strongly Disagreed	59				
3. All tendencies of discrimination are eliminated in the recruitment into Nigerian security and civil defence corps.	Strongly Agreed	18	2.0	1.3	Strongly Disagreed	188
	Agreed	21				
	Undecided	4				
	Disagreed	58				
	Strongly Disagreed	87				

4. Federal character principle is applied in the recruitment of personnel into the Nigerian security and civil defence corps.	Strongly Agreed	19				
	Agreed	14				
	Undecided	4				
	Disagreed	40				
	Strongly Disagreed	111	1.8	1.4	Strongly Disagreed	188

Source: Survey data collected from field work, 2017

Table above, it is observed that seventy-seven (77%) percent respondents disagreed with notion and fifty-three (53%) percent strongly disagreed. However, twenty-eight (28%) percent strongly agreed, thirteen (13%) percent agreed and seventeen (17%) percent undecided.

Indications from item 2 in the table also prove that eighty-one (81%) percent disagreed to the question and fifty-nine (59%) percent chose strongly agreed. However, twenty-four (24%) percent strongly agreed, sixteen (16%) percent agreed and eight (8%) percent undecided.

In item 3, eighty-seven (87%) percent strongly disagreed and fifty-eight (58%) percent disagreed while twenty-one (21%) percent agreed, eighteen (18%) percent chose strongly agreed while four (4%) percent chose undecided.

Also, results in item 4 shows that one hundred and eleven (111%) percent chose strongly disagreed while fourth (40%) percent disagreed, nineteen (19%) percent strongly agreed and fourteen (14%) percent agreed only four (4%) percent respondents undecided.

Information on the Issues Associated with Recruitment Procedures in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

Variables 1-6 in this section was tailoring to seek information regarding the respondents' opinion on the issues associated with recruitment in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps. The six (6) questions in this section capture issues associated with recruitment procedure in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps. Table 4.3.3 hereby provides a breakdown of responses.

Issues Associated with Recruitment Procedures in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

Measurement items	Opinion	%	Means	SD	Remark	Total
1. Political affiliation is one of the major yardsticks in securing employment in to the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.	Strongly Agreed	50	2.4	1.3	Agreed	188
	Agreed	80				
	Undecided	16				
	Disagreed	14				
	Strongly Disagreed	28				
2. Employment is usually granted to some family and friend members within the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.	Strongly Agreed	60	2.3	1.4	Agreed	188
	Agreed	72				
	Undecided	8				
	Disagreed	21				
	Strongly Disagreed	27				
3. Godfatherism has taking over merit in the recruitment procedures in the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps.	Strongly Agreed	91	2.1	1.4	Strongly Agreed	188
	Agreed	47				
	Undecided	4				
	Disagreed	23				
	Strongly Disagreed	23				
4. Certificate does not matter as criteria of getting federal character job	Strongly Agreed	110	2.0	1.5	Strongly Agreed	188
	Agreed	30				
	Undecided	6				
	Disagreed	18				
	Strongly Disagreed	24				
5. Those in authority have extorted Nigerians in securing employment into the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.	Strongly Agreed	4	2.2	0.9	Strongly Disagreed	188
	Agreed	10				
	Undecided	10				
	Disagreed	77				
	Strongly Disagreed	87				
6. Selection interview is just a matter of formality in the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps.	Strongly Agreed	124	1.6	1.0	Strongly Agreed	188
	Agreed	39				
	Undecided	7				
	Disagreed	11				
	Strongly Disagreed	7				

Source: Survey data collected from field work, 2017

Finding from the first statement demonstrates affirmation responses regarding the opinion. Eighty (80%) percent agreed with notion and fifty (50%) percent strongly agreed. However, twenty-eight (28%) percent out of one hundred eighty-eighty (188) respondents chose strongly disagreed while fourteen (14%) percent disagreed. Only sixteen (16%) percent of the total population is undecided on the issues.

In item 2, seventy-two (72%) percent agreed with the statement and sixty (60) percent strongly agreed. However, twenty-seven (27%) percent chose strongly disagreed while twenty-one (21%) percent disagreed, only eighty (8%) percent undecided.

Indications from item 3 in the table also prove that ninety-one (91%) percent of the respondents strongly agreed and fourth-seven (47%) respondents agreed with this notion while twenty-three (23%) percent strongly disagreed and twenty-three (23%) percent also disagreed, only four (4%) percent undecided.

In item 4, responses indicates that one hundred and ten (110%) percent respondents strongly agreed and thirty (30%) percent agreed while eighteen (18%) percent disagreed and twenty-four (24%) percent disagreed, only six (6%) undecided.

Also results in the item 5, eighty-seven (87%) percent of respondents strongly disagreed and seventy-seventy (77%) percent disagreed while ten (10%) percent undecided, ten (10%) percent agreed as well and only four (4%) percent strongly disagreed.

Furthermore in item 6, responses indicate that one hundred and twenty-four (124%) percent strongly agreed and thirty-nine (39%) percent agreed while eleven (11%) disagreed, seven (7%) percent strongly disagreed and only seven (7%) percent undecided.

CONCLUSION

Going by the results of the study, it's obviously and apparently clear that the research questions have been properly answered and it can be concluded that the recruitment of personnel into Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in line with federal character principle or quota system is to open door to nepotism and invariably indicates that federal character principle was not totally applicable in the recruitment of personnel into Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.

The results from this study make it clear that there is constraint in the distributions of employment among various ethnic groups in the Nigeria security and civil defence corps (NSCDC). It also concluded that there is no total equity in the recruitment exercise of the personnel in the Nigeria security and civil defence corps. Therefore, application of the federal character principle can only work if and only when there is compulsory and quality education for all Nigerians in order to improve the level of political, economic, social and cultural awareness of the citizenry, the method of recruitment could be free and fair for the most qualified candidates, and promotion of national unity through sustainable development of all the federating units in area of infrastructural facilities and general welfare of the citizenry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put forward for consideration.

- I. Political office holders and other top government functionaries should minimize or stop constant interference with recruitment and selection of staff in the public service.
- II. Staff recruitment and selection in the public service, should not be based on the skills of the applicants alone. Positive attitude should also be considered as well. The right attitude not only benefits the employee but also maintains workplace morale and improves overall performance that benefits both the employee as well as the organization as a whole.
- III. Public service employers should be cautious in choosing recruitment and selection methods as well as assessing the predictive value of the methods in order to maintain credibility among applicants.
- IV. The Nigerian Public Service Commission should endeavor to ensure that no unlawful discrimination occurs in the recruitment and selection process on the grounds of sex, ethnic origin and religion.

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