
PROJECT TEAM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF RURAL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECTS IN NORTH EASTERN, KENYA

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Abstract

This study aimed at studying the influence of project team management practices by focusing on four objectives, team identification, team building,]. The study was guided by project management competency theory, hierarchy of needs theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design and the target population will be the rural electrification projects in Northern Eastern. The unit of analysis was the rural electrification projects while the unit of observation was the projects managers. The study adopted stratified sampling technique of the 239 rural electrification projects to get a sample size of 150. Data was collected using semi- structured questionnaires. After the data collected, it was subjected to editing, handling blank responses, coding categorizing and keyed into statistical package for social science computer software for analysis version 24. The study adopted descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The data was presented using tables, charts and graphs. The study findings found that team identification, team building, had a positive and significant influence on performance of rural electrification projects. The study recommends that hiring process of project team members should be open and fair and it should be based on the skills requirement and qualifications this will ensure the right team members are selected. Further the study recommends that there should be a reward and recognition system, this will motivate the project team to work hard to achieve project milestone. A similar study should be carried out to assesses other factors that could influence project performance since the independent variables of this study explain only 56% variation in project performance meaning 44% variation in project performance can be explained by other factors that have not be covered in this study..

Keywords

Project team management practices, team building, team identifications

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INTRODUCTION

Rural electrification is a central cornerstone in poverty alleviation and is the first step of modernization (Chege & Kinoti, 2019). Rural electrification projects are formed to improve the living standards of communities. Its effectiveness is thus measured by the benefits the community accrues economically and socially. According to Chang et al., (2018) electrification is one of the reliable sources of energy proving to be a core input in the corporate world by facilitating major processes in the industrial and business environment. Besides lighting, electrification has improved business performance, thereby providing employment opportunities and subsequently contributing to poverty reduction and alleviation. It has the benefits of entertainment and information provision through various ways of mass media.

The performance of rural electrification projects is critical in global economic development and growth as projects that perform satisfy the needs of the beneficiaries and achieves the set objectives and goal (Serrador & Turner, 2015). Completing a project within the set time and within the approved budget is a major concern in electrification sector and it is expected good project team management practices will lead to the success of projects (Badewi, 2016). People are one of the most important resources to the success of any project. The success of any project largely depends on the people who participate in it. If the project lacks the right people or their roles are not clearly defined or understood then good management and a perfect organizational structure may be vain to project success (Newton, 2015). According to Maendo et al., 2018, rural electrification projects performance is affected by many factors which included; poor project team identification, inadequate skills of team members, poor team leadership and mismanagement of funds. Project Team management practices enhance team productivity and performance (Jayarathn & Weerakkody, 2016). Hence studying the influence of project management practices is essential in unlocking project success.

A study by Mwaura & Ngugi ,2014 on the factors affecting performance of community-based organizations projects in Kisii, Kenya established that poor management of teams and stakeholders is impetuous to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness prone to poor team and project. It is claimed that team development through selection, maintenance, motivation and effective communication increases individual's sense of determination in performing project tasks on project success.

Waweru, (2018) conducted a study on Influence of teamwork approach on project performance: a case of road construction in Kericho County, Kenya the study established that teamwork approach has proved to be an efficient way of achieving good performance in projects or within organization. The study established that team trust, team leadership, team spirit, recognition and reward had positive significant relationship with project performance.

Statement of the Problem

Rural electrification is a central cornerstone in poverty alleviation and is the first step of modernization. (Chege & Kinoti, 2019). Despite the measures taken by the government to address the performance of rural electrification projects, Kenya Power report of 2017, indicated that the Last Mile Connectivity project faced delay as first phase connected 123,822 which was half way of the targeted 225,131 new customers, second phase started in November 2017 and managed to connect 172816 new homes against 314 937 households and the last phase started in January 2018 and had connected 647 new households and the work was still going on.

The Kenya overall electrification rate in rural area is 14% which is far below the sub-Saharan Africa level of 23 % (Abdullah, 2017). The unsuccessful performance of rural electrification projects is due to conflicts among the team members, poor workmanship and inadequate

skills and knowledge by the contractor (Maendo et al., 2018). Poor project team management practices have led to budget and time overruns of rural electrification projects which have caused delays in electricity connection making the country to use other sources. According to KNBS, 2015 the country uses 68 percent of traditional biomass, 22 percent of fossil fuels, 9 percent of hydropower and the other sources 1 percent each.

Previous studies focused on performance of projects in other sectors and considered community involvement, group dynamics, team conflicts among other factors that affected performance (Dufe, 2015). Gicovi (2018) conducted a study on the influence of team management practices on performance of community-based projects in Embu County, Kenya and established that team motivation practices, team formation, team communication and team dispute resolution had a positive and significant effect on performance of community-based projects. There is scanty literature to address the core role or effect of team management practices on performance of rural electrification in projects in Kenya. Therefore, this study seeks to bridging the existing gap by studying the effect of project team management practices on performance of rural electrification projects in Kenya.

Objectives

- I. To examine the relationship between team identification and performance of rural electrification projects in Kenya.
- II. To determine the relationship between project team building and performance of rural electrification projects in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Project Management Competency Theory

The theory was established by McClelland & McBer in the 1980s. According to this theory competency as the underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation. The theory's objective and goal was to explain the roles of competency in project management and its effects on projects performance. Project management competency was necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes that had effect to the activity and was to be measured by comparing with the set standards (PMI, 2012).

According to Hilson & Murray, (2012), project implementers had to competent in their duties to enhance successful performance in projects. According to Garrish and Huemann (2014), project managers were needed to have ability to choose the project implementation tools, techniques and capabilities that facilitated the performance of the projects, the project team had to apply knowledge, skills and management techniques successfully to achieve the set goals of the projects (Gladder, 2010). It is critical for project managers to identify the key skills that are need by project team before they select them to work on a project. The theory is relevant on the association between competence of project team and performance of projects. This theory will be linked to the objective of project team identification since it emphasizes on the need to identifying the key competencies needed by project team to enhance project performance.

Hierarchy of Needs Theory

The theory of hierarchy of needs was established by Maslow in 1943. According to Maslow needs assume a pyramid shape whereby the basics occupy the bottom part of the pyramid then self – actualization needs accumulating the top part. The deficiency need that occupy the first four layers of the pyramid include; esteem, friendship and love, security and physical needs and if they not met, people will be anxious and tensed (Detzen et al., 2018). The

basic levels of needs must be met first before thinking of the secondary needs. The theory describe motivation as the catalyst that triggers the extra mile taken by people to achieve beyond the basics (Campbell & Bickle, 2017).

Team building is the process of gathering employees together to promote interaction and exchange of ideas hence motivating the employees. Managers ensure retention of rewards and recognizing the good work done by employees and complimenting them before the other employees (Sang & Jin, 2021). There are numerous practices and approaches to team motivating which includes but not limited to empowerment, rewards, recognition, facilitating support, diversifying tasks, encouragement, fair treatments, involvement (Kara and Kester, 2015). Team motivation reduces absenteeism while increasing satisfaction and desires to accomplish individual tasks hence increased organizational performance (Dobre, 2013).

This theory will be used to explain the influence of team building on performance of rural electrification projects in Kenya. Since when team workers feel valued in their area of work, they become motivated to work towards the achievement of the project goals. Motivated workforce is always willing to reinforce efforts and take action towards realization of project goals

Conceptual Framework

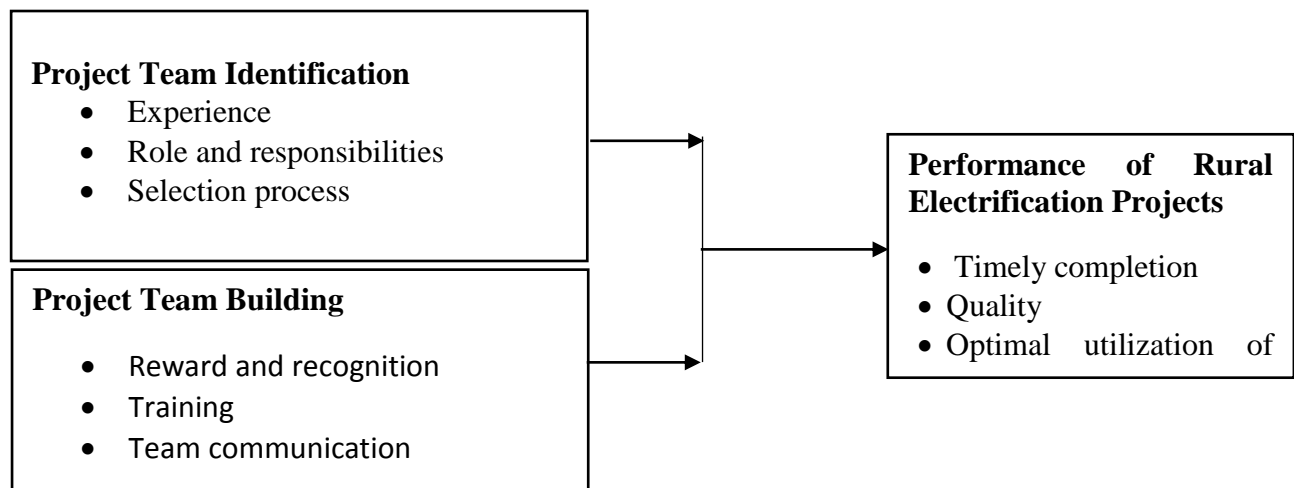


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Project Team Identification

Project teams are individuals who perform defined, specialized tasks within a definite time period, and disband after the project ends. They have varied knowledge, expertise and experience and they must acquire pool vast amount of information across boundaries (Chiocchio et al., 2015). A major concern in the recruitment and selection of project team members has been in relation to the process of identifying the relevant qualities required to enable an appropriate match between the person and the job. In order to attract the right people for the job and for enhanced project performance, Mathur, (2015) asserts that an organization must communicate the position in such a way that job seekers respond. To be cost-effective, the selection process should attract qualified applicants and provide enough information for unqualified persons to self-select themselves out. The management has to attract more candidates in order to increase the selection ratio so that most suitable candidate can be selected out of those available.

It is extremely important for project teams, regardless of their size, to maintain good performance for a project to be successfully completed. To maintain high performance team in projects, it is necessary to consider such imminent factors as: skills, interests, values, spirit

of collaborations, sound behaviors, good leadership and continual improvement (Ogbu & Olatunde, 2019).

Project Team Building

Project team building consists of all activities aimed to improve team members' problem solving ability through resolving both task and interpersonal issues that hampered the team's functionality (Fung & Cheng, 2015). Reward and recognition influence motivation of team players; it catalyzes individual member of a team to work hard to achieve a milestone, and earn sense of recognition and reward from the organization. It is important to reward and to appreciate the best performing teams in a project (Waweru, 2018). Communication is considered among the most critical factors for success in project management practice. It is also perceived as the fuel that significantly contributes to the project running smoothly as well as the glue that holds a project team together. There is a positive relationship between project team communication and project performance (Hewett et al., 2015). Training is the organized procedure by which people learn knowledge or skills for a definite purpose (Jones and George, 2005). The objective of training is to achieve a change in the behavior of those trained. This means that the trainees shall acquire new manipulative skills, technical knowledge and skills on the job in such a way as to aid in the achievement of organizational goals

Performance of Rural Electrification Projects

Performance is a critical indicator employed to evaluate the success of rural electrification projects. The common indicators of project performance can be categorized into three dimensions: the project's overall performance (time, cost and quality), the project's multiple goals (risk management, absence of conflicts, claim management) and stakeholder satisfaction (owner, end-user, contractor) (Zhu & Mostafavi, 2017). However according to Zuofa, (2014) projects may be completed within their targeted time, cost and scope criteria but still be classified as failures. Therefore, it becomes necessary to consider failure beyond these criteria and include targets such as the aspiration of stakeholders, the benefits accruing to society or project organization among criteria for determining project failure.

Empirical Literature Review

Alusa & Kariuki, (2015) examined Human Resource practices of high performance companies and found that attracting and selecting the right project team increases team productivity, boost organizational performance and contribute in reducing turnover. Aladwan et al., (2015) pointed out that an effective hiring process ensures the presence of project team with the right qualifications, leading to production of quality products and consequently in increase of economic performance. This practice can ensure the right people, with the desirable characteristics and knowledge, are in the right place so they fit in the culture and climate of the project environment.

Mathenge, (2020) conducted a study on the effect of project team competence on performance of public housing construction projects in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, fisher formula was used to select the study sample size of 116 from a target population of 164. The primary data for this study was collected using closed structured questionnaires. The collected data was examined and checked for completeness and comprehensibility and tabulated. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, spearman correlation and regression coefficient. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 was used to analyse the data. The study established that, most of the respondents agreed that the experience, leadership style of the project manager and team work determine level of success of the project as shown by a mean of 4.32. The study also concluded that the level of experience of the project team is paramount to the project

performance. and the level of education of the project team has a great impact to the project implementation. It was also noted that certification of previous or ongoing projects of the project team has a great impact to the project implementation.

Theresia & Antonio, (2022) conducted a study to establish the effectiveness of team building as deployed by manufacturing companies in Asia. The study findings established that effective team building result in a more cohesive workforce and improved communication between teams and across the management hierarchy. It also cultivates a united team with reduced incidences of in- fighting and better mean-time completion of tasks. The study concluded that effective team building also yields trust and dependability between employees and management alike.

Conducting a study on effective team building in the workplace, Fapohunda, (2013) defined team building as a collective term used to express diverse activities which are used by different organizations to deal with any interpersonal problems within different groups therein. In her study she argued that team building is a useful strategy that can help employees develop practical problem-solving skills and acquire key competencies that can enhance their productivity within the team.

Ding et al., (2014) conducted a study to investigate different strategic approaches organizations use to drive productivity. The study found that team building is still one of the most common strategies considered to be effective in promoting better workforce performance. The study found that team building increases organizational performance by 42% and to help reduce workplaces conflicts by 69% and promote team cohesion by 77% respectively. He also noted that effectiveness of team building largely depends on personal commitment. Otherwise, even the best planned team building programs can be less effective if they lack the desired level of personal commitment. For that reason, a number of employees have often considered team building as just another avenue of spending human recourse budget with little impact on team development of increased performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study adopted descriptive research design. In this study, the target population of this study consisted of rural electrification projects in Northern Eastern there are 239 rural electrification projects that are ongoing in Northern Eastern. The unit of analysis was rural electrification projects in Northern Eastern and unit of observation were the project managers. Three criteria were used to determine the appropriate sample size for a simple random sample design; the level of precision, the level of confidence or risk, and the degree of variability in the attribute being measured To compute the sample size the study adopted the Yamane formula (1967). The sample size was 150 respondents. This study utilized a semi-structured questionnaire to collect data. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean (a measure of dispersion), standard deviation, and percentages will be used. Inferential data analysis was conducted by use of Pearson correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis. The inferential statistic is used to make judgments about the probability that an observation is dependable or one that happened by chance in the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Project Team Identification

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to the relationship between project team identification and performance of Rural Electrification projects in Kenya using the scale of 1- 5 where Strongly agree -5, Agree -4, Don't know -3, Disagree -2, Strongly disagree -1. According to the findings majority of the respondents who represented of the respondents agreed that Skills requirement is considered

important in selection of team members (Mean 3.94, standard deviation 1.02), the respondents agreed that team members are required to possess specialized qualifications (Mean 3.80, standard deviation 1.10) the respondents further agreed that team members are selected based on they experience (Mean 3.97, standard deviation 1.37). This was agreement Chiochio et al., 2015 who established that project team members need to have varied knowledge, expertise and experience and they must acquire pool vast amount of information across boundaries. The findings also compare with those Ogbu & Olatunde, 2019 who stated that to maintain high performance team in projects, it is necessary to consider such imminent factors as: skills, interests, values, spirit of collaborations, sound behaviors and good leadership. The respondents strongly agreed that the roles and responsibilities are clearly stated to the project team members (Mean 3.69, standard deviation 1.24) and the selection process of the project team is open and fair (Mean 3.88, standard deviation 1.14). These findings compare with those of Aladwan et al., (2015) who pointed out that an effective hiring process ensures the presence of project team with the right qualifications, leading to production of quality products and consequently in increase of project performance. The respondents further agreed that the accuracy level of the project team selection has been a determinant on the success of the project (Mean 4.09, standard deviation 1.09) the findings were in agreement with that findings of Wu et al., (2019) who established that the identification of appropriate team members and skills to be used in a project is essential in ensuring that the project is implemented as per the plan and that the skills and competencies available match the specification of the project.

Table 1: Project Team Identification

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
Skills requirement is considered important in selection of team members	3.94	1.02
Team members are required to possess specialized qualifications	3.80	1.10
Team members are selected based on they experience	3.97	1.37
The roles and responsibilities are clearly stated to the project team members	3.69	1.24
The selection process of the project team is open and fair	3.88	1.14
The accuracy level of the project team selection has been a determinant on the success of the project	4.09	1.09

Project Team Building

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to the relationship between project team building and performance of Rural Electrification projects in Kenya using the scale of 1- 5 where Strongly agree -5, Agree -4, Don't know -3, Disagree -2, Strongly disagree -1. The findings established that majority of the respondents agreed reward and recognition structure in projects takes recognition of team effort and individual performance. (Mean 4.12 , Standard deviation 0.720). The respondents agreed that there is always a gratitude and appreciation to every team member after an achievement and project team member undergone training improve they skills. This was agreement with the findings of Waweru, (2018) who established that it is important to reward and to appreciate the best performing teams in a project. The finding also concurred with the findings of Fung & Cheng, (2015) who stated that reward and recognition influence motivation of team players; it catalyses individual member of a team to work hard to achieve a milestone, and earn sense of recognition and reward form the organization. The respondents further agreed that Being a team player gives leverage in promotion and future engagements, effective team communication led to improved performance and there are clear communication channels. These finding were in agreement with those of Hewett et al., (2015) who found that there is a positive relationship between project team communication and project performance.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Project Team Building

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
Reward and recognition structure in projects takes recognition of team effort and individual performance	4.12	0.720
There is always a gratitude and appreciation to every team member after an achievement.	3.86	1.3
Project team member undergone training improve they skills	4.24	0.780
Being a team player gives leverage in promotion and future engagements	3.61	1.40
Effective team communication led to improved performance	4.58	0.494
There are clear communication channels	3.79	1.33

Performance of Rural Electrification projects

The respondents were further asked to rate specific aspects of project performance based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 as the lowest and 5 as the highest. As the findings on Table 4.13 portray, the completion of the projects within the set timelines was rated at very low by 40% of the respondents and low by 28.5% of the respondents. The completion of the projects within the set budget was rated at very low and low by 35.3% and 33% of the respondents respectively. The quality of the projects was rated low by 19.7% of the respondents while 40.5% of the respondents rated it very low. Further, 36.6% of the respondents felt that their respective projects met very low optimal utilization of budget.

Table 3: Rating the Aspects of Project Performance

Aspects	Very Low	Low	Neutral	High	Very High
Completion within the set Timelines	40.0%	28.5%	15.2%	3.8%	12.5%
Completion within the set budget	35.3%	33.0%	7.0%	12.7%	12.0%
Quality of the project	40.5%	19.7%	4.5%	19.7%	15.6%
Optimal utilization of budget	36.6%	43.6%	1.7%	10.5%	7.6%

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

Table 4 revealed that there was a positive and a significant relationship between team identification and performance of rural electrification projects ($r=0.409$, $p=0.004$). The results indicated that there was a positive and a significant relationship between team building and rural electrification projects ($r=0.719$, $p=0.002$). The findings are in consistent with those of Muthoni, (2017) who established that team building had positive influence on improved performance of employees in telecommunications industry.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

		Project performance	Team identification	Team building
Project performance	Pearson Correlation	1		
		Sig. (2-tailed)		
Team identification	Pearson Correlation	0.409**	1	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		
Team Building	Pearson Correlation	0.719**	0.017	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)		

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was performed by using the composites of the key variables. The data was input to the SPSS software. The data was input to the SPSS software. Results were then presented in Tables 5, 6 and 7. Project team identification, team building, was found to be satisfactory variables in the performance of rural electrification projects. This was supported by the coefficient of determination also known as the R-square of 0.560. This means that. Project team identification, team building, team evaluation and team conflict management explain 56% of the variations in the dependent variable which is the performance of rural electrification. These results further mean that the model applied to link the relationship of the variables was satisfactory.

Table 5 Model Summary

Indicator	Coefficient
R	.748
R Square	.560
Adjusted R Square	.549
Standard Error	.1.774

Table 6 provides the results on the analysis of the variance (ANOVA). The results indicate that the model was statistically significant. Further, the results imply that the independent variables, team identification, team building, team evaluation and team conflict management were good predictor of performance of rural electrification projects. This was supported by F statistic of 51.187 the reported $p=0.001$ which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05 significance level.

Table 6 Analysis of Variance

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	644.174	4	161.043	51.187	0.001
Residual	506.531	116	3.146		
Total	1150.705	120			

Substituting the regression coefficients from table 7 into the regression equation

$$Y = 17.228 + 0.634X_1 + 0.801X_2 \text{ Where:}$$

Y = Performance of rural electrification projects

X_1 = Team identification

X_2 = Team building

From the table, the regression coefficient for team identification on performance was 0.634 which is statistically significant at p value of 0.002. This implies that an increase in team identification practices can lead to 0.634 units increase in performance. The risk team building had a regression coefficient of 0.801 which is statically significant at p value of 0.000. A unit increase in team building can therefore lead to 0.801 unit's improvement in performance.

Table 7 Regression Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient		
			Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	17.228	2.261		7.618	0.02
team identification	.634	.069	.919	9.235	0.00
Team building	.801	.064	1.242	12.58	0.00

Conclusions

The study concluded that project team identification was one of the essential project team management aspects which significantly and positively influenced the performance of the rural electrification projects. The study concluded that to maintain high performance team in projects, it is necessary to consider such imminent factors as: skills, interests, values, spirit of collaborations, sound behaviours and good leadership and effective hiring process ensures the presence of project team with the right qualifications, leading to production of quality products and consequently in increase of project performance.

The study concluded that team building was an essential project team management aspect which significantly and positively influenced the performance of rural electrification projects. The study concluded that reward and recognition improved team performance which in turn improve project performance. The study also established that the project team members undergo training to improve their skills. The study also concluded that there are clear communication channels that enhance team communication which lead to improved project performance.

Recommendations

The study recommends the hiring process of project team members should be open and fair and it should be based on the skills requirement and qualifications this will ensure the right team members are selected. The roles and responsibilities of the team members should be well articulated and the should be timely selection of the project team. This will give the team adequate time to familiarize themselves with the plan of the project, thus making it easier to performance their mandates and responsibilities.

The study recommends that there should be a reward and recognition system, this will motivate the project team to work hard to achieve a milestone, and earn sense of recognition and reward form the organization. The study also recommend that project team should undergo training to enhance they knowledge and skills.

Areas for Further studies

The general objective of the study was to establish the relationship between project team management practices and performance of rural electrification projects in Northern Region, Kenya Thus, area for further studies could consider other regions for the purpose of making a comparison of the findings with those of the current study. Other variables aside from team identification, team evaluation, team building and team conflict management could also be study since these variables only explain 56% variation in project performance meaning 44% variation in performance would be explained by other factors not covered in this study. Future research should be carried out to focus on other categories of projects, which are also essential in economic growth and development

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