



## Sufism and Spiritual Education: The Role of Tasawwuf in Moral Development

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### Abstract

*This article examines the role of Tasawwuf in spiritual education and its contribution to moral development within contemporary Muslim societies. Employing a normative and qualitative literature-based approach, the study analyzes scholarly works on Sufism, Islamic education, and moral formation to explore how Tasawwuf functions as an ethical and pedagogical framework. The findings reveal that Tasawwuf emphasizes inner spiritual purification, moral self-discipline, and the cultivation of virtues such as sincerity, compassion, and humility, which are essential for holistic moral development. Beyond individual character formation, Tasawwuf also strengthens collective ethics by fostering social responsibility, moderation, and moral resilience through communal spiritual practices and moral leadership. In educational settings, the integration of Tasawwuf contributes to value internalization by aligning spiritual consciousness with ethical behavior. The study concludes that Tasawwuf remains a relevant and adaptive moral resource capable of responding to modern social challenges, including digitalization and moral disorientation. Its integration into spiritual education provides a balanced approach that connects inner spirituality with ethical engagement in social life.*

**Keywords :** *Tasawwuf, Spiritual Education, Moral Development, Islamic Ethics, Sufism.*



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## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary crisis of moral values in modern education has raised serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of cognitive-oriented learning models that often neglect the spiritual and ethical dimensions of human development. In many educational systems, moral education is reduced to normative instruction without sufficient internalization of values that shape character and inner discipline. Tasawwuf, as the spiritual dimension of Islam, offers a holistic framework that integrates ethical conduct, inner purification, and moral awareness rooted in transcendental consciousness (Meerasahibu, 2024). This spiritual orientation positions Sufism as a vital component in addressing moral degradation within educational contexts across Muslim societies.

Tasawwuf historically emerged as a response to spiritual emptiness and moral rigidity, emphasizing sincerity, self-discipline, and the purification of the soul as central elements of human perfection. Its ethical foundations are deeply embedded in Qur'anic teachings on tazkiyah al-nafs, which frame moral development as a continuous inner struggle rather than a mere compliance with external norms (Fathan et al., 2025). Classical and contemporary Sufi thought demonstrates that moral education must begin from the heart, cultivating virtues such as humility, compassion, and self-restraint as lived practices (Mannopov et al., 2025). This ethical orientation situates Tasawwuf as an embodied moral science capable of shaping personal conduct and social responsibility.

In the context of Islamic education, Tasawwuf has increasingly been recognized as a strategic foundation for character education that transcends doctrinal instruction. Studies indicate that integrating Sufi values into educational curricula contributes to the formation of tolerant, reflective, and morally resilient learners (Astuti et al., 2023). This integration emphasizes experiential learning, spiritual mentoring, and ethical habituation rather than purely formal knowledge transmission (Farhan, 2025). As a result, Tasawwuf functions as a pedagogical approach that aligns intellectual development with moral consciousness.

The relevance of Tasawwuf in moral education becomes more pronounced amid the challenges posed by digital culture, individualism, and value relativism. Spiritual education rooted in Sufi teachings offers a counterbalance to the fragmenting effects of digital disruption by fostering inner awareness and ethical self-regulation (Mas'ud & Fauzan, 2025). Contemporary Muslim scholars argue that Tasawwuf provides moral stability by reconnecting learners with spiritual meaning and social responsibility in rapidly changing environments (Nasruddin et al., 2025). This perspective underscores the urgency of re-centering spiritual education within modern educational discourse.

Recent scholarship also highlights the role of Tasawwuf in promoting moderation, social harmony, and inclusive moral values within plural societies. Sufi-based moral education has been shown to strengthen religious moderation by encouraging empathy, balance, and openness toward diversity (Aniqotul'Athiyah & Mashabi, 2025). The emphasis on inner ethics rather than rigid formalism allows Tasawwuf to function as a unifying moral framework in multicultural educational settings (Purwanto et al., 2023). This characteristic positions Tasawwuf as a relevant moral resource in contemporary global education.

In institutional contexts such as pesantren and formal Islamic schools, Tasawwuf has significantly shaped educational practices and moral formation. The influence of Al-Ghazali's Sufi thought, for instance, continues to inform pedagogical approaches that prioritize sincerity, discipline, and ethical reflection in learning processes (Mahdany & Toriqularif, 2025). Empirical findings suggest that Sufi-based education strengthens students' moral reasoning and emotional maturity through continuous spiritual practice (Muhlison, 2025). These practices demonstrate the practical applicability of Tasawwuf in structured educational environments.

Furthermore, Tasawwuf has expanded its pedagogical relevance by addressing contemporary ethical concerns such as environmental awareness and social responsibility. The integration of eco-Sufism into Islamic education reflects an ethical extension of spiritual consciousness toward nature and sustainability (Junaidi & Anwar, 2025). This approach frames moral development as a relational process involving God, humanity, and the environment, reinforcing holistic ethical awareness (Nafsiyah et al., 2025). Such developments illustrate the adaptability of Tasawwuf in responding to emerging moral challenges.

Despite its significant potential, the role of Tasawwuf in moral development remains underexplored within mainstream educational theory, particularly in international academic discourse. Existing studies often treat Sufism as a supplementary or historical dimension rather than a core framework for moral education (Baharuddin et al., 2024). Contemporary reinterpretations of Sufi thought in education highlight the need for systematic analysis of its pedagogical implications in shaping moral character (Basith et al., 2024; Fadilah, 2025). Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the academic discussion by examining Tasawwuf as a foundational element of spiritual education and its transformative role in moral development within modern educational contexts.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative normative research design focusing on the analysis of Tasawwuf as a framework for spiritual education and moral development within Muslim societies. The research population consists of classical and contemporary scholarly works on Sufism, Islamic education, and moral philosophy, with selected texts, peer-reviewed journal articles, and authoritative books serving as the primary research materials. Data collection is conducted through systematic literature review and doctrinal analysis, emphasizing key Sufi concepts such as *tazkiyah al-nafs*, *akhlaq*, and spiritual pedagogy as articulated by prominent scholars. The data are analyzed using content analysis and conceptual interpretation to identify patterns, educational principles, and ethical implications of Tasawwuf for moral development, while previously established analytical procedures are adopted from existing studies and cited accordingly in the references.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Conceptual Foundations of Tasawwuf in Moral and Spiritual Education**

Tasawwuf has historically functioned as an ethical and spiritual discipline aimed at refining human character through inner purification and moral awareness. Classical and contemporary scholars describe Tasawwuf not merely as ascetic practice but as a structured process of cultivating virtues such as sincerity, humility, patience, and social responsibility within daily life (Meerasahibu, 2024;

Mannopov et al., 2025). In educational discourse, Tasawwuf offers a moral epistemology that integrates cognition, emotion, and spiritual consciousness as inseparable dimensions of human development (Basith et al., 2024). This holistic orientation positions Tasawwuf as a foundational framework for moral education that addresses internal transformation rather than behavioral compliance alone (Baharuddin et al., 2024).

The conceptual core of Tasawwuf in education is closely linked to the doctrine of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, which emphasizes the gradual purification of the soul as the basis of ethical conduct. Qur'anic interpretations of spiritual discipline reveal that moral excellence emerges through sustained inner struggle, reflection, and spiritual training rather than formal instruction alone (Fathan et al., 2025). Educational theorists argue that this inward-oriented approach creates moral resilience by fostering self-regulation and spiritual awareness among learners (Fadilah, 2025). As a result, Tasawwuf provides an ethical pedagogy that aligns moral knowledge with lived spiritual experience (Suseno et al., 2025).

Modern educational challenges, particularly moral fragmentation and spiritual disorientation, have renewed scholarly interest in Tasawwuf as a response to ethical crises. Studies indicate that conventional moral education often fails to shape enduring character because it prioritizes external norms over internal meaning formation (Mas'ud & Fauzan, 2025). Tasawwuf-based education addresses this limitation by grounding moral values in spiritual consciousness, enabling learners to internalize ethical principles as part of personal identity (Sudin & Zailani, 2025). This internalization process strengthens moral agency and supports ethical consistency across social contexts (Yakubov, 2025).

Empirical and conceptual research demonstrates that Tasawwuf contributes significantly to character education by integrating spiritual intelligence with moral reasoning. Educational institutions that incorporate Sufi values report stronger outcomes in empathy, self-discipline, and social harmony among students (Purwanto et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2024). Tasawwuf's emphasis on inner awareness encourages learners to perceive moral behavior as spiritual responsibility rather than institutional obligation (Ramadhani et al., 2024). This orientation redefines morality as a continuous spiritual practice embedded in everyday interactions (Muhlison, 2025).

The ethical framework of Tasawwuf also supports religious moderation by promoting tolerance, compassion, and respect for diversity. Interpretive studies in Islamic education reveal that Sufi teachings nurture inclusive attitudes by prioritizing spiritual depth over rigid formalism (Astuti et al., 2023; Aniqotul'Athiyyah & Mashabi, 2025). Such values are increasingly relevant in plural societies where moral education must balance religious identity with social coexistence (Syam et al., 2025). Tasawwuf's moral philosophy thus functions as a bridge between personal piety and communal harmony (Nasruddin et al., 2025).

The pedagogical relevance of Tasawwuf is evident in its adaptability across educational levels and cultural settings. Research on pesantren and formal schools highlights that Sufi-based instruction fosters disciplined character while maintaining emotional sensitivity and ethical awareness (Mahdany & Toriqularif, 2025; Rofiah, 2025). This adaptability allows Tasawwuf to operate as a moral compass within diverse institutional frameworks without losing its spiritual essence (Farhan, 2025). Consequently, Tasawwuf emerges as a flexible yet principled foundation for moral education (Nafsiyah et al., 2025).

Comparative studies further indicate that Tasawwuf complements contemporary educational theories emphasizing reflective learning and embodied ethics. The integration of spiritual practices such as self-examination, remembrance, and ethical modeling reinforces moral learning through experiential processes rather than abstract moralization (Mannopov et al., 2025). Such embodied pedagogy enhances emotional intelligence and moral sensitivity among learners (Junaidi & Anwar, 2025). Tasawwuf therefore enriches educational praxis by aligning ethical learning with spiritual experience (Sudin & Zailani, 2025).

Quantitative summaries from recent studies illustrate the growing incorporation of Tasawwuf principles in moral and spiritual education across Muslim educational institutions.

**Table 1. Contributions of Tasawwuf to Moral Development in Islamic Education**

Educational Aspect	Tasawwuf Contribution	Observed Impact
Moral awareness	Tazkiyah al-nafs	Increased self-regulation

Spiritual intelligence	Inner reflection	Enhanced ethical reasoning
Social ethics	Compassion and humility	Improved social harmony

Source: Synthesized from Purwanto et al. (2023), Baharuddin et al. (2024), Mas'ud & Fauzan (2025), Wulandari et al. (2024).

The data demonstrate that Tasawwuf-based education consistently strengthens moral development through internalized spiritual values rather than external enforcement mechanisms. Scholars argue that this internal orientation produces sustainable moral behavior because ethical actions are perceived as expressions of spiritual identity (Baharuddin et al., 2024; Muhlison, 2025). Such findings reinforce the position of Tasawwuf as a transformative moral framework capable of addressing contemporary ethical challenges (Basith et al., 2024). The integration of Tasawwuf thus aligns moral education with long-term character formation (Purwanto et al., 2023).

Tasawwuf provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for moral and spiritual education by harmonizing inner transformation with ethical action. Its emphasis on spiritual discipline, emotional refinement, and moral responsibility offers an alternative paradigm to purely cognitive or normative moral instruction (Meerasahibu, 2024; Suseno et al., 2025). As educational systems confront moral complexity and cultural diversity, Tasawwuf presents a resilient ethical model rooted in spiritual depth and social awareness (Astuti et al., 2023; Yakubov, 2025).

### Pedagogical Integration of Tasawwuf in Contemporary Educational Settings

The integration of Tasawwuf into contemporary educational practices reflects a growing awareness that moral development requires sustained spiritual cultivation rather than cognitive instruction alone. Educational institutions in Muslim societies increasingly position Sufi-based values such as sincerity, humility, self-discipline, and inner awareness as pedagogical foundations that shape learners' ethical orientation over time (Baharuddin et al., 2024; Fadilah, 2025). This approach reframes education as a transformative process that nurtures both outward conduct and inward consciousness, aligning moral behavior with spiritual intentionality (Muhlison, 2025). Empirical discussions indicate that Tasawwuf-oriented pedagogy strengthens character education by addressing moral crises intensified by technological acceleration and social fragmentation (Mas'ud & Fauzan, 2025).

At the curricular level, Tasawwuf is integrated through reflective learning models, spiritual mentoring, and value-based classroom interaction that prioritize personal transformation alongside academic achievement. Studies show that embedding Sufi ethics within religious education subjects fosters emotional regulation, empathy, and moral responsibility among students across different educational stages (Astuti et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2024). This pedagogical shift moves beyond doctrinal transmission toward experiential learning that encourages self-evaluation and moral accountability (Farhan, 2025). As a result, Tasawwuf functions as a living pedagogy rather than a purely theoretical discourse within Islamic education systems (Basith et al., 2024).

Several educational institutions adopt structured Tasawwuf-based programs to operationalize moral education through daily practices, communal rituals, and guided self-reflection. These programs emphasize tazkiyah al-nafs as a continuous educational process that aligns spiritual discipline with ethical conduct (Fathan et al., 2025). Research conducted in pesantren and formal schools demonstrates that such integration positively influences students' moral consistency and social sensitivity (Mahdany & Toriqularif, 2025). The institutionalization of Tasawwuf pedagogy illustrates how spiritual values can be systematically embedded within modern educational governance (Purwanto et al., 2023).

**Table 2. Models of Tasawwuf Integration in Contemporary Islamic Education**

Educational Level	Pedagogical Strategy	Core Sufi Values Emphasized	Observed Moral Outcomes
Elementary School	Habitual spiritual practices	Sincerity, gratitude	Improved empathy and discipline
Secondary School	Reflective learning modules	Self-control, humility	Enhanced moral reasoning

Higher Education	Critical-spiritual discourse	Ethical awareness, responsibility	Strengthened social ethics
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Source: compiled from Astuti et al. (2023), Farhan (2025), Purwanto et al. (2023), Muhlison (2025).

The data indicate that Tasawwuf-based pedagogy adapts effectively across educational levels while maintaining its ethical core. Moral outcomes vary according to learners' developmental stages, yet consistently demonstrate strengthened internal motivation for ethical conduct (Sudin & Zailani, 2025). This confirms that Tasawwuf provides a flexible yet principled framework capable of responding to diverse educational contexts (Nafsiyah et al., 2025). The adaptability of Tasawwuf reinforces its relevance within pluralistic and dynamic learning environments (Yakubov, 2025).

Pedagogical integration of Tasawwuf also contributes to fostering religious moderation and social harmony within educational spaces. By emphasizing inner purification and ethical restraint, Tasawwuf-based education counters exclusivist tendencies and promotes inclusive moral attitudes (Aniqotul' Athiyyah & Mashabi, 2025). Learners exposed to Sufi ethics demonstrate greater tolerance and openness toward difference, reflecting the social dimensions of spiritual education (Astuti et al., 2023). This aspect positions Tasawwuf as a moral resource for strengthening civic responsibility in multicultural societies (Nasruddin et al., 2025).

In addition, Tasawwuf-informed pedagogy supports the cultivation of spiritual intelligence as a distinct educational outcome. Spiritual intelligence enables learners to navigate moral dilemmas through self-awareness, transcendental meaning, and ethical judgment grounded in spiritual values (Sudin & Zailani, 2025). Educational research highlights that students trained under Sufi-oriented frameworks exhibit resilience against moral disorientation caused by digital culture (Mas'ud & Fauzan, 2025). This underscores the role of Tasawwuf as a stabilizing force within contemporary moral education (Basith et al., 2024).

The role of teachers remains central in translating Tasawwuf principles into lived educational practice. Educators act not merely as knowledge transmitters but as moral exemplars whose conduct reflects Sufi ethics in daily interaction (Muhlison, 2025). Teacher-centered spiritual modeling reinforces moral internalization among students more effectively than abstract moral instruction (Suseno et al., 2025). This relational dimension strengthens the pedagogical impact of Tasawwuf within formal learning environments (Ramadhani et al., 2024).

Institutional challenges emerge in balancing Tasawwuf pedagogy with standardized educational demands and performance metrics. Despite these constraints, studies indicate that integrating spiritual values does not undermine academic outcomes, but rather enhances learners' motivation and ethical engagement (Baharuddin et al., 2024). Educational institutions that successfully integrate Tasawwuf demonstrate coherence between moral objectives and institutional vision (Purwanto et al., 2023). This alignment highlights the feasibility of harmonizing spiritual education with modern educational systems (Syam et al., 2025).

The integration of Tasawwuf also reshapes assessment practices by emphasizing qualitative indicators of moral growth alongside cognitive evaluation. Reflective journals, behavioral observation, and communal engagement are increasingly used to assess ethical development within Tasawwuf-based programs (Farhan, 2025). Such assessment models capture dimensions of moral learning often overlooked in conventional evaluation systems (Wulandari et al., 2024). This shift reinforces the holistic orientation of Tasawwuf pedagogy toward character formation (Fadilah, 2025).

Tasawwuf serves as a viable pedagogical framework for moral education within contemporary Islamic schooling. Its integration supports ethical consistency, spiritual depth, and social responsibility without compromising educational professionalism (Nafsiyah et al., 2025). The pedagogical application of Tasawwuf affirms its capacity to respond to modern educational challenges while preserving its spiritual essence (Mahdany & Toriqularif, 2025). This positions Tasawwuf as a strategic foundation for sustainable moral development in Muslim educational contexts (Yakubov, 2025).

### **Tasawwuf, Social Ethics, and Collective Moral Resilience**

Tasawwuf contributes to moral development not only at the individual level but also through its capacity to shape collective ethics within society. Sufi teachings emphasize the inseparability of personal spiritual refinement and social responsibility, framing morality as a relational practice embedded in communal life (Yakubov, 2025; Mannopov et al., 2025). This perspective positions

Tasawwuf as a moral force that nurtures social harmony, compassion, and ethical solidarity beyond formal educational spaces (Nasruddin et al., 2025). In contemporary Muslim societies, such social ethics become increasingly relevant as communities confront moral fragmentation driven by modernization and digital disruption (Mas'ud & Fauzan, 2025).

Historically, Sufi traditions have functioned as moral communities where ethical values are transmitted through shared rituals, mentorship, and collective spiritual practices. Tariqa-based education illustrates how moral discipline is cultivated through sustained social interaction rather than isolated moral instruction (Rofiah, 2025). These communal structures reinforce ethical behavior by embedding moral norms into daily social relations and spiritual routines (Meerasahibu, 2024). As a result, Tasawwuf generates moral resilience by aligning individual conduct with collective ethical expectations (Muhlison, 2025).

Contemporary adaptations of Tasawwuf demonstrate its capacity to address modern social challenges while preserving its ethical core. Sufi-inspired movements increasingly engage issues such as social justice, environmental ethics, and interreligious coexistence through spiritually grounded moral discourse (Junaidi & Anwar, 2025; Astuti et al., 2023). This engagement reflects a shift from inward-oriented spirituality toward socially responsive ethics rooted in compassion and moral accountability (Basith et al., 2024). Tasawwuf thereby functions as a bridge between spiritual cultivation and ethical citizenship in plural societies (Aniqotul' Athiyyah & Mashabi, 2025).

**Table 3. Social Dimensions of Tasawwuf in Moral Development**

Social Sphere	Sufi Ethical Principle	Mode of Transmission	Social Moral Impact
Community Life	Brotherhood (ukhuwah)	Communal rituals and guidance	Strengthened social cohesion
Education	Moral exemplarity	Teacher–student interaction	Ethical consistency
Public Ethics	Compassion and justice	Social engagement initiatives	Inclusive moral awareness

Source: synthesized from Rofiah (2025), Junaidi & Anwar (2025), Muhlison (2025), Yakubov (2025).

The table illustrates how Tasawwuf operates across multiple social spheres to cultivate collective morality. Ethical values are transmitted not merely through instruction but through lived experience and shared responsibility (Purwanto et al., 2023). This multidimensional transmission strengthens moral internalization by situating ethics within meaningful social relationships (Baharuddin et al., 2024). Such an approach enhances moral durability amid changing social conditions (Sudin & Zailani, 2025).

Tasawwuf also contributes to moral moderation by discouraging extremism and ethical rigidity. Sufi ethics emphasize balance, humility, and self-critique, fostering moral attitudes that resist absolutism and intolerance (Astuti et al., 2023). Research highlights that communities influenced by Sufi teachings exhibit higher levels of tolerance and dialogical engagement (Aniqotul' Athiyyah & Mashabi, 2025). This moderation reinforces Tasawwuf's relevance as a moral framework for pluralistic societies (Syam et al., 2025).

In educational communities, Tasawwuf strengthens collective moral culture by aligning institutional values with spiritual ethics. Schools and pesantren that integrate Sufi traditions cultivate environments where moral behavior is reinforced through shared norms and communal accountability (Mahdany & Toriqularif, 2025). Such environments encourage ethical consistency across personal and social domains (Wulandari et al., 2024). The collective dimension of morality becomes a lived reality rather than an abstract ideal (Fadilah, 2025).

The role of spiritual leadership remains central in sustaining Tasawwuf-based social ethics. Murshid figures and moral leaders function as ethical reference points whose conduct embodies Sufi values in social life (Rofiah, 2025). Their presence reinforces moral credibility and continuity within communities (Nasruddin et al., 2025). This relational authority strengthens the transmission of ethical norms across generations (Mannopov et al., 2025).

Tasawwuf also shapes moral responses to contemporary crises by grounding ethical action in spiritual awareness. Studies show that Sufi-oriented communities demonstrate resilience in addressing

moral disorientation caused by digital culture and consumerism (Mas'ud & Fauzan, 2025). Spiritual practices such as self-reflection and remembrance cultivate moral self-regulation amid social pressure (Fathan et al., 2025). This resilience underscores Tasawwuf's adaptive ethical capacity in modern contexts (Basith et al., 2024).

At the societal level, Tasawwuf encourages ethical engagement that transcends formal religious boundaries. Its emphasis on universal values such as compassion, sincerity, and justice allows Sufi ethics to resonate across diverse social groups (Yakubov, 2025). This inclusivity strengthens moral dialogue and mutual understanding in multicultural environments (Astuti et al., 2023). Tasawwuf thereby contributes to a shared moral language grounded in spiritual humanism (Purwanto et al., 2023).

The integration of Tasawwuf into social ethics also supports sustainable moral development by linking spirituality with long-term communal well-being. Ethical behavior rooted in spiritual consciousness fosters trust, cooperation, and moral responsibility within society (Baharuddin et al., 2024). Such outcomes reinforce the social significance of Tasawwuf beyond individual piety (Sudin & Zailani, 2025). Moral development becomes a collective project sustained through shared spiritual values (Muhlison, 2025).

Tasawwuf plays a critical role in cultivating collective moral resilience within Muslim societies. Its ethical framework integrates personal spirituality with social responsibility, generating moral coherence amid social change (Nasruddin et al., 2025). By embedding ethics within communal life, Tasawwuf offers a sustainable model of moral development responsive to contemporary challenges (Syam et al., 2025). This positions Tasawwuf as a vital moral resource for strengthening both individual character and social integrity (Yakubov, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Tasawwuf plays a significant role in moral development by integrating spiritual refinement, ethical consciousness, and social responsibility within Islamic education. Through practices such as tazkiyah al-nafs, moral exemplarity, and communal spiritual engagement, Tasawwuf fosters inner discipline that is consistently translated into ethical behavior in both personal and social contexts. The findings indicate that Tasawwuf-based spiritual education not only strengthens individual character traits such as humility, sincerity, and self-control, but also contributes to collective moral resilience, tolerance, and social harmony in Muslim societies. In the face of contemporary challenges including digital disruption, moral fragmentation, and weakening communal bonds, Tasawwuf offers a sustainable moral framework that aligns spiritual depth with ethical action. Therefore, Tasawwuf remains highly relevant as a foundation for moral education that supports holistic human development and reinforces the ethical integrity of society.

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