

## **NEXUS BETWEEN INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND EMPLOYEES' JOB SATISFACTION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE: THE NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE**

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### **Abstract**

*Many employers in the Nigerian public service do not realise the extent to which their employees are not satisfied with their jobs, nor the extent to which that makes or mars the success of their organizations. Motivation is what energises the employees to be satisfied towards improved performance. However, employees' job satisfaction is thwarted because of lack of adequate motivation especially intrinsic ones such as regular training, career progression and recognition among others. The paper is entitled Nexus between Intrinsic Motivation and Employees' Job Satisfaction in the Public Service: The Nigeria's Experience. Therefore, this study specifically focuses on the nature and manifestations of employees' motivation in the public service, it determines the implications or link between the intrinsic motivators such as recognition, promotion or advancement and growth or training and job satisfaction in the Nigeria's public service. Data were collected from secondary source which include published and unpublished texts. The data were presented and analysed qualitatively. The study revealed among others that intrinsic motivators such as recognition, growth and advancement have positive relationship with employees' job satisfaction in the Nigeria's public service. However, it is also revealed that employees in the Nigerian public service have been striving to be satisfied with improved salaries or pay and adequate provision and utilisation of intrinsic factors as emphasised by Herzberg. It is concluded that most public organisations use different measures in relation to the intrinsic motivators and even the extrinsic ones. It is recommended among others on the need to ensure employees' favourable policies that encourage reward for hardworking, regular training and development, smooth promotion, clearly defined tasks and responsibilities that are challenging and job enrichment.*

**Keywords:** Intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, public service, Nigeria

### **1.0 Introduction**

Generally, human resources in every organisation are essentials in the accomplishment of the predetermined goals and objectives. Therefore, no organisation should undermine the need to cater for the welfare of the employees towards job satisfaction, improved performance and as well job retention. Thus, motivation is that inner instinct that energises the employees to work hard (Lodikero, & Akeredolu, 2024). These motivational factors can be tangible or intangible, extrinsic or intrinsic. The intrinsic motivational factors are paramount in making a particular job interesting. Despite the variation in what makes an individual satisfied, some factors are however inevitable. What will make someone satisfied with his job may not necessarily



be the same with what motivates another person, however, everyone needs job security, a good environment in addition to some intrinsic factors.

According to Baba (2020), most Nigerian workers associate job satisfaction with monetary reward, It can easily be manipulated as a measure of value that can be transformed into several things to satisfy, physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization. Thus, motivational patterns differ significantly for employees working in public and private sectors consisting more of intrinsic factors than salary or other extrinsic rewards. As a result, the job satisfaction of intrinsically motivated employees is a much vast and problematic concept. In other words, employees who are satisfied with their job are more likely to be motivated to perform well and achieve their goals, resulting in higher productivity (Lodikero, & Akeredolu, 2024).

According to Nneji (2024) employee job satisfaction measures how staff are happy with their jobs. It is an essential evaluation of an individuals' attitude and how is affect their work productivity and deliverables. It is the evaluation of their feelings towards their jobs, which can be positive or negative.

However, the public sector especially in Nigeria, comprising governmental organizations and agencies, faces unique challenges in motivating its workforce due to bureaucratic structures, hierarchical management, and often limited resources (Adeyemi & Olugbade, 2019). However, understanding and applying motivation theories and the various types motivation can improve employee commitment and ultimately lead to a more productive and satisfied workforce. In the Nigerian public sector, applying motivation theories can be particularly relevant to improving employee productivity and satisfaction. Factors such as poor working conditions, and lack of career development opportunities can lead to job dissatisfaction and reduced productivity (Akinnusi, 2020). Since the 1970s, intrinsic motivation has been a subject of study and involves seeking new challenges, self-assessment, and a desire for knowledge. This is contrary to the extrinsic motivation that originates from external factors and involves performing tasks to attain specific outcomes or rewards (Makki & Abid, 2017 cited in Nneji, 2024).

Therefore, this study is unique as it focuses on what the intrinsic motivational factors in the public service are and the nexus between the intrinsic motivation and employees' job satisfaction in the service. The study unlike others that are empirically reviewed, dwells on intrinsic motivators with reference to recognition, promotion or advancement and training or growth. Also, this study in relation to the public service in Nigeria especially in the area of motivation (intrinsic) is timely as it identifies the best ways to motivating the employees towards job satisfaction and by extension improved performance. Thus, this study is significance as well because other studies concentrated more on motivation in broader perspective with reference to the performance of the public service.

## **2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Conceptual Review**

Attempt is made in this section to review the concepts of intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and public service.



## **Intrinsic Motivation**

Motivation as a word is etymologically Latin, “mover” connoting “to move” (Machara & Jain, 2016). Motivation is a complex concept that has been defined and studied extensively in various disciplines, including psychology, management, and organizational behaviour. According to Robbins and Judge (2019), motivation refers to the "processes that account for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal. In other words, motivation is what drives an individual to take action and put forth effort to achieve a desired outcome. It refers to the internal drive that compels an individual to engage in an activity simply because they find it interesting, enjoyable, or fulfilling (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

It is the readiness to use higher levels of effort toward organizational goals, and at the same time achieving individual needs. The concept of motivation is focused on energizing, propelling, stimulating individuals towards behavioural change to achieve fulfillment of goals and objectives of an organization, so as to achieve higher productivity and satisfaction of employees (Amaanda, 2011; Saka & Salman, 2014). It is essential for inspiring and engaging employees to work in a way that aligns with the organization's objectives. It involves providing the measures to encourage employees effectively (Nneji, 2024). However, motivation can be tangible or intangible and the intangible ones are mainly intrinsic. Though, Herzberg in his two-Factor Theory regarded the hygiene factor as extrinsic and the motivational factors as intrinsic, some are of the belief that the hygiene factors can sometimes become motivators especially in developing countries like Nigeria where salaries are not regular. By the way, the emphasis for this study is on intrinsic motivational factors.

According to Yaya (2018) Motivation could be intrinsic or extrinsic. These include; positive recognition, personal skills and experiences, higher degrees acquired to enhance effective service delivery, among others. Extrinsic motivation are those factors or facilities provided by the employer that enable workers in the organization to exert their energy in performance of a given task. These include, job security, training and career development, job status, job enrichment, fair treatment, reasonable salaries and wages, conducive work environment, good leadership style, good working condition, among others.

Intrinsic motivation is the use factors such as recognition, responsibility, advancement and growth among others to motivate the employees in the organisation. The intrinsic motivation is associated with increased creativity, higher job performance, and overall job satisfaction (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). This is because intrinsically motivated individuals tend to be more engaged in their work, willingly take on challenges, and derive pleasure from their performance rather than just the outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Furthermore, intrinsic motivation can be fostered by providing employees with opportunities for autonomy, mastery, and purpose in their work (Pink, 2009). This means encouraging employees to take ownership of their work, develop their skills and expertise, and connect their work to a larger mission or goal. By doing so, employers can tap into employees' intrinsic motivation and create a work environment that promotes well-being and job satisfaction.

## **Job Satisfaction**

Job Satisfaction is defined as the attitudes and feelings people have about their work. Positive and favorable attitudes towards the job signify job satisfaction, while negative and unfavourable attitudes indicate dissatisfaction. As rightly pointed out by Armstrong and Taylor (2012), the human relations movement was based on the belief that productivity could be

increased by making workers more satisfied, primarily through pleasant and supportive supervision and by meeting social needs.

Job satisfaction is connected with how our personal expectations of work are in congruence with the actual outcomes. Since job satisfaction is merely an employees' attitude towards their jobs, previously discussed theories regarding attitudes are applicable to job satisfaction (Ene, Ekwochi & Ugwu, 2017). Armstrong and Taylor (2012) further argued that job satisfaction or dissatisfaction could be determined through three main factors one of which is the intrinsic motivation factors. These factors relate to job contents such as skill variety task identity task significance, autonomy, and feedback.

Therefore, job satisfaction is seen as a complex phenomenon with multi-facets and influenced by factors such as pay and promotion, working environment, communication, autonomy, and organizational loyalty (Parvin & Kabir, 2011). Similarly, Nabi et al. (2017) recognised that employees' job satisfaction is not influenced by a single factor, but there are hosts of factors such as pay, promotion, training and development, working conditions, leadership styles, relationship with superior authority, job security, relationship with the group members, fairness, nature of the job itself. Together, these factors suggest a set of workplace norms and practices that might be taken as inviting employees' job satisfaction and therefore staff retention.

## **Public Service**

Public service is the main machinery of government for the implementation of public policies and decisions. It therefore follows that the primary responsibility of government is to deliver, promptly and efficiently, quality services to its citizens at affordable prices. Indeed, service delivery is the "raison d'être" of the public service. The public service of any country performs certain distinct and crucial functions. It provides a number of social services to the people of a country.

The public service is a body or department in the executive arm of government with the responsibility of assisting in the planning and implementation of government policies. It is not profit-oriented but an institution established to deliver essential services to the people (Arowolo, 2012). The public service consists of the civil service – career staff whose appointment, promotion and discipline are under the exclusive control of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), at federal, state and local government levels, the national assembly service, the Judiciary, public officers in the military, police and paramilitary services, employees of parastatals, educational and health institutions.

The civil service is the operational arm of government charged with the analysis, implementation and administration of public policy. It is the executive arm of public administration. The public service manages the day-to-day affairs of the state by administering public services and back stopping government operations (Kyarinpa 1996 cited in Oyedele, 2015).

From the above, it could be said that the public service and the civil service are clearly different in concept. The public service as use in this study is a broader concept that encompasses the civil service together with the Armed Forces, the Judiciary, the Police, Government Institutions, Parastatals; Government owned Companies and Statutory Agencies (Shimawua, 2020).



## Empirical Review

Ogbonna, Anugwom and Ufoma (2019) conducted a study on Expectancy Theory in the Nigerian public sector. The study found that employee motivation was influenced by the perceived connection between individual effort and performance, and the perceived relationship between performance and rewards. These findings suggest that a combination of different motivational theories can be useful in motivating public sector workers in Nigeria, depending on the specific circumstances and needs of the workforce. Likewise, Baba (2020) examined the Influence of Public Service Motivation, Job Satisfaction, and Continual Commitment on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour of Public sector employees. It confirmed that workers with strong public service motivation, workers who are well satisfied, and workers who hold strong continual commitment are the ones that exhibit organizational citizenship behaviours. Thus, the two studies revealed that motivation is a tool to enhance employees' performance.

Nneji (2024) wrote on Echoes of Intrinsic Measures to Motivation in Service Organizations: A Look at Employees' Recognition in Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF). The findings revealed that motivation has a positive effect on employees' performance. Likewise, Mustapha (2020) carried out a study on the impact of motivation on employee's performance in some public and private schools in Talata Mafara, Zamfara State, Nigeria, the study revealed that there is positive and significant relationship between employee motivation and employee performance; it also showed that promotion and intrinsic reward has positive impact on employee performance.

## Theoretical Framework

Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory is adopted as the underpinning theory for the study. The theory suggests that both hygiene factors (Dissatisfiers) and motivators (Satisfiers) play a crucial role in influencing employee motivation and job satisfaction. Employers should not only focus on meeting the basic needs of employees but should also invest in providing opportunities for personal and professional growth to foster a motivated workforce.

According to Herzberg et al. (1959), the presence of hygiene factors alone cannot motivate employees to perform at their best. However, the absence or deficiency of hygiene factors can result in dissatisfaction and even demotivation. This means that employers need to ensure that basic salary, safe working conditions, and job security are met in order to avoid unnecessary and avoidable dissatisfaction among employees. On the other hand, motivators, as described by Herzberg et al. (1959) can directly impact employee motivation and job satisfaction. For instance, providing opportunities for growth and development, challenging work, and recognition can lead to greater job satisfaction and improved performance among employees. Thus, the intrinsic factors include the following:

- i. **Achievement:** This requires helping and placing employees in position that use their talents and not to set up for failure. It is achieved by setting clear, achievable goals and standards for each position, and making sure employees know what those goals and strategies are.
- ii. **Recognition:** Refers to the honour, favourable note or attention given to an employee for a 'job well done' or an outstanding behaviour. Individuals at all levels in the organization want to be recognized for their achievement on the job.



- iii. **Responsibility:** Responsibility is taken action for one's actions. Granting additional authority to employees in their activity, giving them enough job freedom and power so that they feel they 'own' the results are ways of giving them responsibility.
- iv. **Opportunity for advancement or promotion:** This involves elevating employees from the present job or position to a higher one or level in the organization. If possible, permit and support them to acquire higher certificates so that they could become experts themselves and make them more valuable to the practice and more fulfilled individuals

Numerous studies have supported Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and its applicability in the workplace. For instance, research has shown that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to have high levels of motivation, commitment, and productivity (Islam et al., 2019). In addition, studies have suggested that organizations especially in the Nigerian public service can use Herzberg's theory to design job roles and work environments that promote employee satisfaction and motivation (Munene & Wachira, 2015).

Despite the widespread acceptance of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, some scholars have questioned its validity and applicability in contemporary workplaces especially as it applies to the Nigerian public service (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008).

### 3.0 Methodology

This study is on the Nexus between Intrinsic Motivation and Job Satisfaction in the Public Service: The Nigerian Experience. The target population is the Nigerian public service which is the machinery through which government policies and programmes are implemented. The public service in the case of this study covers the federal, state and local government. However, the emphasis is on the core workers that serve as the sample, hence, it excluded the political office holders that come and go.

Data for the paper were gathered from secondary sources. These include articles in journals and other internet materials using google scholar, research gate, academia and other related sources of online database. The data were analysed qualitatively and thematically based on the key issues of the study. These issues include the intrinsic motivation in the public service and its influence on job satisfaction. In terms of ethical consideration, all materials or sources cited in the main work were duly acknowledged in the list of references and American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition is adopted.

### 4.0 Results and Discussions

The main theme of the study is to determine the nexus between intrinsic motivation and employees' job satisfaction in the Nigerian public service. However, attempt would be made first to describe the public service, the issue of intrinsic motivation in the service and the link between the motivators and employees' job satisfaction.



## **Intrinsic Motivation in the Nigerian Public Service**

The Nigerian public service is the engine room for the formulation and implementation of government policies. The service is made up of all government employees that are mainly concerned with the implementation of policies at all levels—federal, state and local government. The satisfaction of these government employees is imperative in order to improve their level of job satisfaction, productivity and overall performance.

Several factors could motivate employees to press or push harder to achieve individual or organizational goals. Studies have shown that factors such as good and competitive salary, good working condition, recognition for work done, regular promotion, regular incentives, participation in decision making, feedback, cohesive work teams among others are factors that enhance motivation of employees in the service (Saka & Salman, 2014). Likewise, in discussing the factors that increase the level of motivation in the Nigerian public service, Kolawole et al. (2015) enumerated work arrangements, training and other professional growth opportunities, competitive salary and opportunities for promotion among others as determinants of employees' motivation in organizations. These are described by Herzberg as the intrinsic factors or the satisfiers. They are inbuilt or inner motivators that influence the individual employee to perform better with high morale.

Motivation should not be based solely on financial rewards, fulfilling demands. Meeting staff needs means they seek job satisfaction, appreciation, a positive work environment, and opportunities for personal development. Ultimately, individuals work to lead a meaningful life and leave a legacy for their loved ones (Iswari & Pradhanawati, 2018). Inner motivation is key because it drives a person to work with enthusiasm, based on personal factors. Combining inner motivation with external motivation individuals can become professional and productive employees who meet company expectations (Da Cruz Carvalho et al., 2020).

An average individual is usually hungry for recognition, but unfortunately managers are yet to take advantage of this cheap strategy to motivate their employees and enhance productivity. Over the years, the public service has applied strategies such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to encourage employees to increase performance, but they are uncertain about the type of motivation that increases employees' performance more.

Therefore, intrinsic motivation is about desire to be recognized, valued, responsible, be in charge, career growth and development, achieving goals and independent. Non-financial compensation motivates people by doing things to or for them, such as benefits, salary raise, recognition, or upward promotion, as well as discipline staff, salary delay, or criticism. The effect may not last in the long term but effective in the short term. Employee benefits are non-financial compensation in addition to cash salary that enrich workers' lives. The intrinsic factors or satisfiers that are discussed by Herzberg and used for the purpose of this study (with reference to the Nigerian public service) include recognition, promotion and training.

### ***Recognition***

Employee recognition evaluates staff inputs towards organizational development and advancement. A culture of recognition is created by recognizing each worker's unique contribution and emphasizing their professional expertise and experience, leading to increased employee engagement. Engaged employees are happier, more loyal, and more productive. There are many ways to recognize employees without spending a lot of money, such as informal rewards like verbal appreciation, extra time off, or writing their names in the company



newsletter (Hussain, et. al., 2019). Employee recognition programmes could involve several levels of recognition, ranging from a simple Certificate of Appreciation to Employee of the month to awards given on the division and company-wide level, recognition should be accorded to those who exceed expectations and earn the award (Steers & Porter, 2011 cited in Nwazufu & Ndukwe (2022). According to Ude and Coker (2012) cited in Nwazufu and Ndukwe (2022), this recognition could be done by holding annual dinners, luncheons, banquets etc, at which high achievers or performers are celebrated. This will reinforce others to work hard or harder as well. However, recognition is mainly used in the private sectors, although a public organisation like Ahmadu Bello University has recently (for the past three years) introduce the use of awards (annual) to recognise those that excel across the entire university.

### ***Promotion/Advancement***

Promotion, on the other hand, involves moving an employee to a job involving higher pay; more responsibility, authority, and independence; and higher status. Rewarding hardworking individuals through promotion will more likely contribute to their satisfaction. However, promotional opportunities accompanied with increase in financial rewards usually have more force or determine the amount of satisfaction to the employee. The following points may be considered under this category. The Nigerian public service is operating based on the principle of career orientation as emphasised by Weber. Employees are promoted based on work experience, qualification, seniority and other criteria.

### ***Training and Development/Growth***

Training and development policy is a prerequisite for employees' improved performance in the Nigerian public service. These training comes in different forms, either on-the-job or off-the-job. The respective public organisations are expected to conduct training need assessment to find out the training needs of the organisation, the can as well be detected through the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER). Also, the policy highlighted the selection criteria for the training in order to ensure fairness. These as well as the proper implementation of the training leads to improve performance.

Therefore, employees in the Nigerian public service are expected to be participating in career development programmes in order to improve their skills. According to Bateman and Snell (2011), training involves educating lower-level workers how to perform their present jobs, while development involves teaching managers and professional employees' broader skills needed for their present and future jobs. Nabi et al. (2017) described training and development as "an educational process which involves the sharpening of skills, concepts, changing of attitude and gaining more knowledge to enhance the performance of employees". A study of public and private sector organizations in South Africa denoted training and development as motivational variables for employee's retention. The result delivered strong indication of a relationship between training and development and employee retention (Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). Kabungaide, Matilatshana and Ngirande (2013) found a significant friendly relationship between job satisfaction based on training and employee retention.



## **Influence of Intrinsic Motivation on Job Satisfaction**

The relationship between the intrinsic motivation and employees' job satisfaction cannot be over-emphasised. However, Nnubia (2020) discloses that monetary incentives provide employee with the means to enhance the well-being of their families, as well as expenses for leisure activities with friends and colleagues, thereby helping satisfy the higher-level need.

Empirical evidence indicates that satisfaction in the public service is closely linked to the perception of social impact and the recognition of the work performed by civil servants. The perception of autonomy and participation in organizational decisions as emphasised by Herzberg also proved to be a critical factor for motivation, especially in contexts where administrative centralization is strong in the public sector. The analysis of the reviewed case studies, such as the one by Ventorini et al. (2019) and Sousa (2014), reinforces the importance of people management policies that not only ensure material working conditions, such as salaries and infrastructure, but also promote the continuous development of civil servants, with clear opportunities for career progression and recognition. These boost their morale and level of satisfaction.

Motivation and job satisfaction and performance are inextricably connected because every worker has to have some degree of motivation just to go to work in the first place. Many people believed that the most highly motivated employees are the employees who will reach the highest level of job satisfaction and performance (Amaeshi, 2019). Consequently, many large organizations train supervisors and manage to motivate their workers or develop methods that will enable them to understand the factors that motivate individual workers.

Some workers or individuals are motivated by the opportunity to gain promotions or move into more prestigious roles, while other workers are motivated by a fear of failure. In some instances, workers are motivated to work hard if they believe that failure to do so will result in them losing their jobs. Most organizations expect department managers to motivate workers, and managers sometimes set about trying to achieve this by offering financial incentives to workers as well as promotion or additional paid-time off. Many organizations especially in the Nigerian public service use approaches that are based upon research by psychologists, such as Herzberg. Applying Herzberg's list of motivators, managers attempt to match the person abilities or needs of their clients with the needs identified by psychologists, and motivate workers by linking with their needs with job performances.

An effective recognition programme can lead to innovation, higher productivity and greater job satisfaction for the workers (Beer & Walton, 2014). In the words of Armstrong (2007), recognition is one of the strong motivation factors; employees feel comfortable when they are praised and recognized. Employees do not only want a good salary and benefit package, they also want to be valued and appreciated for their work (Wiese & Coetzee, 2013 cited in Nwazufu & Ndukwe (2022).

Terera and Ngirande (2014) also found that there is positive correlation between job satisfaction and training which in turn helps in retaining employees. The following points may be considered under this category: access to training and development programmes, equal chance for growth despite being female or male and changing of attitudes and gaining more knowledge.

Workers perform poorly at work because they lack motivation, No matter what is tried, managers or bosses cannot raise their level of job satisfaction and performance by attempting



to use rewards or punitive action as motivators. According to Banjoko (2006), most organizations through the use of incentives seek out ways to motivate their workforce. These incentives could be in form of good working conditions, work environment, and promotions and others. Others are compensation, wages, salaries, allowances, commission, bonuses. Incentives are regarded as any resources or means that seek to persuade, stimulate or drive workers to work harder, improve and sustain high levels of performance on the job (Ayandele & Etim, 2020).

In contradiction, Nwazufu and Ndukwe (2022) stated that most workers are motivated by money because people generally work in order to earn money to cover the day-to-day living expenses. Many people work harder if they are offered financial rewards, such as commission checks, and bonuses for reaching performance levels beyond the basic level that their bosses required (Amaeshi, 2019).

## 5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, understanding the different types or forms of motivation can help the public service to create an environment that fosters and sustains employees' motivation, ultimately leading to improved job satisfaction and performance. However, intrinsic motivation as developed by Herzberg in his Two-Factor Theory plays a crucial role in determining the job satisfaction and performance of public servants across various public institutions in Nigeria.

Thus, intrinsic motivation serves as an indicator of job satisfaction and performance, particularly within the public service setups. Also, it is concluded that the extrinsic factors such as salary, favourable working conditions and the likes if not properly handled along with the intrinsic motivational factors such as recognition, regular promotion, training and development and responsibility among others will affect employees' job satisfaction.

Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommends that there is the need to ensure employees' friendly inclined policies that encourage reward for hardworking, regular training and development, smooth promotion, clearly defined tasks and responsibilities that are challenging. The management should develop mutual trust with the employees or subordinate to enhance interpersonal relationships.

There should be improved and regular payment of salaries to motivate the Nigerian employees who see it as a motivator. Government should have the political will to raise employees' salary based on the economic reality or cost of living. Workers need not to protest or to go on strike before the salaries are increased. The government should be responsible in that regard.

Also, it is recommended the need to implement a variety of awards such as team awards, individual recognition based on extraordinary performance, and rewards for all employees for their achieved goals. In order to strengthen teamwork, praise employees for performance that benefits the team. Awarding only a few people with rewards might be counterproductive.

Public organizations need to invest in training programs, recognition and promotion of the autonomy of the public servants. The development of an environment that values the active participation of employees in organizational decisions and publicly recognizes their efforts is crucial to ensure high levels of motivation and satisfaction.

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