

The Effects of Principal Leadership Style and Teacher Competence on Instructional Quality in Public Elementary Schools across Suak Tapeh District, Banyuasin Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the effects of principal leadership style and teacher competence on instructional quality in public elementary schools across Suak Tapeh District, Banyuasin Regency. A quantitative ex post facto design was employed. The population comprised 175 teachers, and 120 respondents were selected using the Slovin formula at a 5% margin of error and proportional probability sampling. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires, documentation, and observation. The instruments were valid and reliable, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.901 for principal leadership style, 0.831 for teacher competence, and 0.926 for instructional quality. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, prerequisite tests, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression using SPSS version 26. Principal leadership style had a positive and significant effect on instructional quality ($B = 0.523$; $t = 6.834$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 28.4\%$). Teacher competence also had a positive and significant effect ($B = 0.731$; $t = 8.377$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 37.3\%$). Simultaneously, both variables significantly predicted instructional quality ($F = 49.617$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 45.9\%$), with the regression equation $Y = 10.679 + 0.321X_1 + 0.559X_2$. The findings demonstrate that sustainable improvement in instructional quality requires effective, learning-oriented principal leadership and continuous development of teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence.

Keywords: Principal Leadership Style; Teacher Competence; Instructional Quality; Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

Instructional quality is a central determinant of educational success because the quality of teaching and learning shapes the extent to which students obtain meaningful learning experiences. High-quality instruction is not assessed solely through final achievement; it is also reflected in the way learning is planned, implemented, evaluated, and continuously improved. In elementary education,

quality instruction should encourage students to participate actively, think critically, ask questions, reason, and construct understanding in accordance with their developmental stages (Nurstalis et al., 2021; Sallis, 2017).

Instructional quality results from the interaction of teachers, students, learning objectives, curriculum content, teaching strategies, media, assessment, and the school environment. It therefore cannot be separated from the organizational conditions that support classroom practice. Teachers are the direct implementers of instruction, while principals establish direction, organize resources, supervise educational work, and build the professional climate in which teachers perform. The quality of leadership and the competence of teachers are consequently two important predictors of instructional quality.

Principal leadership style is reflected in the ways principals make decisions, communicate expectations, motivate teachers, manage conflict, supervise instruction, delegate responsibility, and respond to organizational problems. A participatory, communicative, supportive, and learning-oriented principal can strengthen cooperation, professional commitment, innovation, and collective responsibility. In contrast, leadership that is excessively administrative, unresponsive, or weakly connected to classroom needs may limit teachers' initiative and reduce the consistency of instructional improvement (Kartono, 2018; Mulyasa, 2017; Wahjosumidjo, 2019).

Teacher competence is equally fundamental. Competent teachers understand student characteristics, master subject matter, design coherent lessons, select appropriate methods and media, manage classrooms, communicate effectively, and use assessment to improve learning. Indonesian Law Number 14 of 2005 identifies pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence as the core dimensions of teacher professionalism. These competencies provide the knowledge, skills, judgment, and ethical orientation needed to implement effective and student-centered instruction (Mulyasa, 2019; König, 2022).

Ideally, elementary schools should provide active, creative, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate instruction. Principals should act not only as administrative managers but also as instructional leaders who conduct formative supervision, facilitate professional learning, support innovation, and build a culture of quality. Teachers should continually strengthen their competence so that they can adapt strategies, use learning media, integrate technology, and provide appropriate feedback. When effective leadership and strong teacher competence operate together, instructional quality is more likely to improve consistently.

These ideal conditions have not been fully realized in public elementary schools across Suak Tapeh District, Banyuasin Regency. Preliminary observations indicated that some teachers continued to rely on conventional methods, limiting opportunities for students to reason, draw conclusions, ask questions, and participate actively. The use of varied learning media and instructional strategies

was also not yet optimal. Several schools experienced limitations in supporting facilities, including libraries, laboratories, and learning resources that could foster student creativity.

The observed challenges were also associated with leadership and competence. Some teacher-development programs had not been implemented optimally, principals' support for competence development required strengthening, and cooperation with external partners had not been fully utilized. Teachers still needed improvement in pedagogical decision-making, subject-matter mastery, media use, and educational technology. These conditions indicate that raising instructional quality requires simultaneous attention to the organizational role of principals and the professional capacity of teachers.

International and Indonesian studies have documented the importance of both factors. Grissom et al. (2021) concluded that principals influence schools through teacher-capacity development, school-climate management, and organizational improvement. Li et al. (2023) found that instructional leadership and school support were associated with teacher expertise through professional-development agency. Indonesian studies have likewise linked principal leadership and teacher competence with instructional quality, teacher performance, and school quality culture (Septa et al., 2022; Rosyada et al., 2021; Robisah et al., 2024; Vitasari et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, limited research has simultaneously tested principal leadership style and teacher competence as predictors of instructional quality in public elementary schools throughout Suak Tapeh District. Many previous studies focused on leadership and teacher performance, pedagogical competence and learning outcomes, or school quality culture in other educational levels and regions. Context-specific evidence is therefore needed to guide improvement in this district. The novelty of this study lies in positioning instructional quality as the principal outcome of two interrelated dimensions: the organizational influence of principal leadership style and the professional capacity of teachers. The study estimates the partial contribution of each variable and their simultaneous contribution, thereby providing evidence about their relative predictive strength. Accordingly, this study aimed to analyze the effect of principal leadership style on instructional quality, the effect of teacher competence on instructional quality, and the simultaneous effect of both variables on instructional quality in public elementary schools across Suak Tapeh District, Banyuasin Regency. The findings are expected to inform leadership development, teacher professional learning, academic supervision, and data-based instructional-quality programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Studies

Grissom et al. (2021), through a systematic synthesis of two decades of research, reported that effective principals affect students and schools by focusing on instruction, developing teacher capacity, building productive climates, and managing people and organizational processes strategically. Their synthesis supports the view that principal behavior shapes the conditions under which teaching quality develops. Li et al. (2023) examined the relationship among instructional leadership, school support, professional-development agency, and teacher expertise. Their findings indicated that leadership and organizational support were associated with teacher expertise partly through teachers' active engagement in professional learning. This suggests that leadership improves instruction not only through direct supervision but also by creating opportunities and motivation for teachers to learn. Rosyada et al. (2021) found that teachers' pedagogical competence significantly affected instructional quality. The study emphasized teachers' ability to understand learners, organize instruction, implement suitable learning activities, and evaluate learning as essential elements of quality teaching. Pricilia et al. (2024) similarly concluded that strengthening pedagogical competence can improve students' learning quality.

Septa et al. (2022) demonstrated that principals' instructional leadership and teacher professionalism influenced instructional quality. Robisah et al. (2024) reported that democratic principal leadership affected teachers' motivation and pedagogical competence, while Vitasari et al. (2024) associated principal leadership and competence development with school quality culture. These studies collectively indicate that leadership and teacher capacity are complementary rather than isolated components. Although the studies provide a strong empirical foundation, they differ in educational level, location, outcome variables, and the dimensions of leadership or competence examined. The present study extends this literature by testing principal leadership style and four-dimensional teacher competence simultaneously against instructional quality in public elementary schools across Suak Tapeh District.

Principal Leadership Style

Leadership is a process of influencing individuals and groups to pursue shared organizational goals. In a school, principal leadership includes setting direction, making decisions, communicating, motivating, coordinating work, resolving problems, supervising instruction, and developing staff. Leadership style refers to the relatively consistent pattern through which these functions are enacted and perceived by organizational members (Northouse, 2021; Rivai, 2019). The leadership-style variable in this study was operationalized through six dimensions: decision-making ability, motivational ability, communication ability, control of subordinates, responsibility, and emotional control. Decision making concerns the

principal's capacity to identify problems, consider alternatives, involve relevant participants, and select appropriate action. Motivation concerns recognition, encouragement, support, and the creation of meaningful professional goals. Communication concerns clarity, openness, listening, feedback, and coordination.

Control of subordinates does not merely mean command; in educational settings it includes role clarification, monitoring, coaching, and corrective assistance. Responsibility reflects the principal's willingness to account for decisions and ensure that school programs are completed. Emotional control enables the principal to respond calmly and fairly to pressure, disagreement, and uncertainty. Together, these dimensions influence trust, work climate, teacher commitment, and the consistency of instructional programs (Kartono, 2018; Wahjosumidjo, 2019). A learning-oriented leadership style connects managerial work with classroom improvement. It uses supervision as professional assistance, supports teacher collaboration, protects time for instructional planning, and bases decisions on evidence of student and teacher needs. Leadership therefore influences instructional quality indirectly through school systems and directly through expectations, feedback, support, and professional-development opportunities.

Teacher Competence

Teacher competence is the integrated capacity to perform educational duties through appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and professional judgment. Indonesian professional standards organize teacher competence into pedagogical, personal, social, and professional dimensions. These dimensions are interdependent and become visible in teachers' planning, classroom interactions, assessment, collaboration, and continuous development. Pedagogical competence includes understanding student characteristics, applying learning theory, developing curriculum and lesson plans, organizing educational learning, using technology, facilitating student potential, communicating with students, and conducting assessment. Professional competence involves deep and coherent mastery of subject matter, curriculum content, relevant concepts, and continuous professional learning. These two dimensions most directly shape the technical quality of classroom instruction (Mulyasa, 2019; König, 2022).

Personal competence concerns integrity, emotional stability, maturity, responsibility, work ethic, and exemplary conduct. Social competence concerns effective and respectful communication with students, colleagues, parents, and communities without discrimination. These dimensions establish the relational and ethical conditions needed for a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment. Teacher competence is dynamic rather than permanently completed. Curriculum change, technological development, increasingly diverse learners, and new assessment expectations require continuous learning. Professional learning communities, teacher working groups, workshops, coaching, academic supervision, peer observation, action research, and reflective practice are therefore important mechanisms for sustaining competence.

Instructional Quality

Instructional quality refers to the degree to which teaching and learning are coherently planned, effectively implemented, responsive to student needs, engaging, assessable, and oriented toward meaningful learning goals. It includes the quality of instructional planning, classroom implementation, methods and media, student involvement, assessment, feedback, follow-up, and achievement of learning objectives. Quality planning aligns objectives, content, activities, media, and assessment. Quality implementation organizes time and classroom interaction, connects prior knowledge with new concepts, uses varied and developmentally appropriate strategies, and provides opportunities for active participation. Quality assessment gathers valid evidence, gives constructive feedback, identifies learning difficulties, and informs remedial or enrichment activities. Instructional quality is not the product of teacher competence alone. It is supported by leadership expectations, supervision, collaboration, facilities, school culture, and organizational learning. In the present conceptual model, principal leadership style creates enabling organizational conditions, whereas teacher competence transforms those conditions into pedagogical action. Their simultaneous operation is expected to produce stronger instructional quality than either factor in isolation.

METHOD

Design and Samples

The study used a quantitative approach with an ex post facto design. No experimental treatment was administered; instead, the study examined predictive statistical relationships among variables that had already developed in the school context. The independent variables were principal leadership style (X1) and teacher competence (X2), while instructional quality (Y) was the dependent variable. The research was conducted in public elementary schools across Suak Tapeh District, Banyuasin Regency, from October 2025 to March 2026. The population consisted of 175 teachers. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 120 respondents. Proportional probability sampling was used so that participating schools were represented according to their teacher populations.

Instrument and Procedure

Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires, documentation, and observation. The principal-leadership-style questionnaire measured decision making, motivation, communication, subordinate control, responsibility, and emotional control. The teacher-competence questionnaire measured pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence. The instructional-quality questionnaire measured planning, implementation, methods and media, student participation, assessment, and achievement of learning objectives. The instruments were pilot-tested with 30 teachers outside the main sample. Each variable retained

20 valid items for primary data collection. Reliability testing produced Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.901 for principal leadership style, 0.831 for teacher competence, and 0.926 for instructional quality, indicating satisfactory to very high internal consistency. Documentation and observation were used to support the contextual interpretation of questionnaire responses. Data collection was conducted after coordination with participating schools. Respondents received information regarding the research purpose and completed the questionnaires based on their professional experience. The responses were coded, checked for completeness, and entered into SPSS version 26 for analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, and dominant category of each variable. Prerequisite analysis included the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, tests of linearity using Deviation from Linearity, and multicollinearity tests using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Simple linear regression tested the partial effect of principal leadership style on instructional quality and the partial effect of teacher competence on instructional quality. Multiple linear regression tested their simultaneous effect. Hypotheses were evaluated at a significance level of 0.05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was interpreted as the percentage of variance in instructional quality explained by the predictor or predictors.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Results

Descriptive analysis indicated that principal leadership style, teacher competence, and instructional quality were all perceived at a predominantly high level. The detailed results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Categorization of the Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Dominant category
Principal leadership style (X1)	120	56	85	74.28	6.45	High: 97 respondents (80.83%)
Teacher competence (X2)	120	64	85	74.78	5.29	High: 101 respondents (84.17%)
Instructional quality (Y)	120	59	88	76.30	6.33	High: 99 respondents (82.50%)

Principal leadership style ranged from 56 to 85, with a mean of 74.28 and a standard deviation of 6.45. A total of 97 respondents (80.83%) placed the variable in the high category. These results suggest that principals were generally perceived as capable of making decisions, motivating and communicating with teachers, exercising

responsibility, and maintaining a conducive work climate. Nevertheless, the variation in scores indicates that leadership practices were not identical across schools and could still be strengthened.

Teacher competence ranged from 64 to 85, with a mean of 74.78 and a standard deviation of 5.29. The high category included 101 respondents (84.17%), the largest proportion among the three variables. The result indicates that teachers generally demonstrated favorable pedagogical, professional, social, and personal capacity. The comparatively smaller standard deviation also suggests more concentrated perceptions, although continuous development remains necessary in response to curriculum, technology, and learner diversity.

Instructional quality ranged from 59 to 88, with a mean of 76.30 and a standard deviation of 6.33. Ninety-nine respondents (82.50%) assessed it in the high category. The result indicates that instructional planning, classroom implementation, media and methods, student participation, assessment, and goal achievement were generally perceived positively. However, the preliminary observations concerning conventional methods, limited media variation, and uneven facilities show that a high aggregate category should not be interpreted as the absence of improvement needs.

Prerequisite-Test Results

Before regression analysis, the data were tested for normality, linearity, and multicollinearity. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2. Summary of Regression Prerequisite Tests

Test	Indicator	Value	Criterion	Decision
Normality	Residual Asymp. Sig.	0.820	> 0.05	Normal
Linearity X1-Y	Deviation from Linearity	0.496	> 0.05	Linear
Linearity X2-Y	Deviation from Linearity	0.714	> 0.05	Linear
Multicollinearity X1	Tolerance / VIF	0.806 / 1.241	Tolerance > 0.10 ; VIF < 10	No multicollinearity
Multicollinearity X2	Tolerance / VIF	0.806 / 1.241	Tolerance > 0.10 ; VIF < 10	No multicollinearity

The residual normality test produced an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.820, which exceeded 0.05. The residuals were therefore considered normally distributed. The linearity tests produced Deviation from Linearity values of 0.496 for the

relationship between principal leadership style and instructional quality and 0.714 for the relationship between teacher competence and instructional quality. Both values exceeded 0.05, indicating linear relationships. The two independent variables each had a tolerance value of 0.806 and a VIF of 1.241. Because tolerance exceeded 0.10 and VIF was below 10, no problematic multicollinearity was detected. The data consequently satisfied the principal assumptions required for simple and multiple linear regression.

Hypothesis-Test Results

Simple and multiple regression were used to test the three research hypotheses. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Regression Results

Model	R	R ²	Coefficient B	Test value	Sig.	Regression equation
X1 -> Y	0.532	0.284	0.523	t = 6.834	0.000	$Y = 37.436 + 0.523X_1$
X2 -> Y	0.611	0.373	0.731	t = 8.377	0.000	$Y = 21.627 + 0.731X_2$
X1 and X2 -> Y	0.677	0.459	X1 = 0.321; X2 = 0.559	F = 49.617	0.000	$Y = 10.679 + 0.321X_1 + 0.559X_2$

The first simple-regression model showed that principal leadership style had a positive and significant effect on instructional quality. The coefficient was 0.523, the t value was 6.834, and the significance value was below 0.001. The regression equation $Y = 37.436 + 0.523X_1$ indicates that a one-unit increase in principal leadership style was associated with a 0.523-unit increase in instructional quality. The R² value of 0.284 means that principal leadership style explained 28.4% of the variance in instructional quality. The second simple-regression model showed that teacher competence had a positive and significant effect on instructional quality. The coefficient was 0.731, the t value was 8.377, and the significance value was below 0.001. The equation $Y = 21.627 + 0.731X_2$ indicates that a one-unit increase in teacher competence was associated with a 0.731-unit increase in instructional quality. Teacher competence explained 37.3% of the variance, indicating a stronger partial predictive contribution than principal leadership style.

The multiple-regression model showed that principal leadership style and teacher competence simultaneously had a positive and significant effect on instructional quality. The F value was 49.617 with $p < 0.001$. The equation $Y = 10.679 + 0.321X_1 + 0.559X_2$ indicates that both predictors retained positive coefficients when entered together. The R² value of 0.459 means that the two variables jointly explained 45.9% of instructional-quality variance, while 54.1% was associated with other factors outside the model.

The Effect of Principal Leadership Style on Instructional Quality

The positive and significant effect of principal leadership style indicates that instructional quality improves when principals lead effectively. Principals who make appropriate decisions, communicate openly, motivate teachers, clarify responsibilities, regulate organizational processes, and respond calmly to problems create a more supportive environment for instructional work. Such leadership strengthens teachers' confidence, coordination, commitment, and willingness to improve practice. The contribution of 28.4% is substantial for an organizational variable that often operates indirectly. Principals do not conduct every classroom lesson, but their expectations, supervision, resource decisions, professional-development priorities, and responses to innovation influence how teachers prepare, teach, assess, and collaborate. The finding supports Mulyasa (2017), Wahjosumidjo (2019), and Northouse (2021), who describe leadership as a process of influencing and mobilizing organizational members toward shared goals.

The result is also consistent with Grissom et al. (2021), whose synthesis identified teacher development, productive climate, strategic personnel management, and instructional focus as principal pathways to school improvement. Lumban Gaol (2017), Septa et al. (2022), and Robisah et al. (2024) likewise emphasized the educational value of leadership styles that encourage participation, motivation, and competence development. For schools in Suak Tapeh District, the practical implication is that principals should strengthen their role as instructional leaders. Academic supervision should move beyond checking documents and provide feedback on learning objectives, student participation, media use, assessment, and follow-up. Principals should facilitate teacher working groups, protect time for collaborative planning, recognize effective practice, and use learning data to establish school priorities.

The Effect of Teacher Competence on Instructional Quality

Teacher competence had the strongest partial effect, explaining 37.3% of instructional-quality variance. This result is theoretically reasonable because teachers interact directly with students and make the immediate pedagogical decisions that determine classroom quality. They translate curriculum into objectives, explanations, tasks, media, interaction, assessment, and feedback. Pedagogical competence enables teachers to understand learner characteristics, sequence activities, differentiate support, manage classrooms, and use assessment formatively. Professional competence supports accurate and meaningful content representation. Social competence strengthens respectful communication and cooperation, while personal competence contributes integrity, consistency, emotional stability, and exemplary conduct. The four competencies therefore operate together in quality instruction.

The finding is consistent with the professional standards established in Indonesian Law Number 14 of 2005 and with the theoretical arguments of Mulyasa (2019),

König (2022), and Kyriacou (2021). Empirically, Rosyada et al. (2021) found a significant effect of pedagogical competence on instructional quality, while Pricilia et al. (2024) emphasized its contribution to improved student learning. Zubaidah et al. (2021) also linked principal leadership and teacher competence with teacher performance. The result implies that teacher-development programs should be continuous, specific, collaborative, and connected to classroom problems. Priority areas identified in the study context include active-learning strategies, development and use of instructional media, educational technology, assessment literacy, subject-matter understanding, and reflective practice. Training should be followed by coaching, peer discussion, classroom application, and evaluation rather than ending with attendance certificates.

The Simultaneous Effect of Principal Leadership Style and Teacher Competence on Instructional Quality

The simultaneous contribution of 45.9% demonstrates that instructional quality is a systemic product of organizational leadership and professional competence. Principal leadership establishes direction, support, accountability, supervision, and a culture of improvement. Teacher competence converts these organizational conditions into concrete instructional practice. Neither dimension can fully substitute for the other. In the multiple model, teacher competence retained the larger coefficient (0.559) compared with principal leadership style (0.321), confirming its closer connection with classroom practice. Nevertheless, the significance of both variables shows that competence is more likely to develop and be used effectively when principals create supportive structures. Leadership can increase access to professional learning, encourage experimentation, provide feedback, coordinate resources, and institutionalize successful practices.

The result aligns with Li et al. (2023), who connected instructional leadership and school support with teacher expertise through professional-development agency. It is also consistent with Palupi et al. (2025) and Zubaidah et al. (2021), who found that teacher capacity and organizational factors jointly influenced educational outcomes. The present findings reinforce the principle that instructional improvement requires alignment between school-level management and classroom-level expertise. A practical integrated strategy would begin with data on student learning and teacher needs. Principals and teachers could then establish improvement goals, select professional-learning activities, implement new practices, conduct supervision or peer observation, examine assessment evidence, and revise the program. This cycle makes leadership and competence development mutually reinforcing rather than separate administrative programs.

Practical Implications and Research Limitations

Principals should employ communicative, participatory, supportive, responsible, and learning-oriented leadership. They should establish transparent decision processes, provide constructive motivation, strengthen academic supervision,

facilitate teacher working groups, support innovation, and build partnerships that expand professional-development opportunities and instructional resources. Teachers should develop pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence through workshops, teacher working groups, professional learning communities, peer observation, lesson study, media development, classroom action research, reflective journals, and responsible use of technology. School and district programs should be differentiated according to evidence of teacher and student needs.

The district education office should align principal development with teacher-development policy. Leadership training should include instructional supervision, professional-learning design, data use, communication, and change management. Teacher training should include follow-up mentoring and evidence of classroom application. Evaluation should examine changes in teaching practice and student participation, not only completion of activities. This study has several limitations. The primary data were obtained from teachers' perceptions and may contain social-desirability or common-method bias. The ex post facto design supports predictive statistical interpretation but does not establish definitive causality. The study did not include other relevant variables, such as academic supervision, school culture, infrastructure, teacher work motivation, school climate, parental support, or student motivation. Future research should use mixed methods, classroom observations, principal and student data, and longitudinal designs to develop a more comprehensive explanation of instructional quality.

CONCLUSION

Principal leadership style had a positive and significant effect on instructional quality in public elementary schools across Suak Tapeh District, Banyuasin Regency, explaining 28.4% of the variance. Teacher competence also had a positive and significant effect and explained 37.3% of the variance. Simultaneously, both variables explained 45.9% of instructional quality, with the multiple-regression equation $Y = 10.679 + 0.321X_1 + 0.559X_2$. Teacher competence was the stronger partial and simultaneous predictor, but principal leadership remained an essential organizational influence. Principals should strengthen communicative, participatory, supportive, and instructional leadership through formative academic supervision, teacher coaching, collaborative planning, and support for innovation. Teachers should continuously develop pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence through teacher working groups, workshops, reflective practice, media development, technology integration, and professional collaboration. Schools and the district education office should implement integrated, data-based programs that connect principal development, teacher learning, classroom practice, and evaluation of instructional quality.

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