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Mental Health Status of UPSC CSE Aspirants: A Survey-Based Study

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Abstract: ***The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) conducts one of the most challenging and competitive exams in India. Preparing for the UPSC exam requires immense hard work, dedication, and perseverance, which often puts a significant amount of stress on the aspirants' mental health. In this study, we conducted an online survey to assess the mental health status of UPSC aspirants. The survey was conducted on 203 participants, who were either preparing for the UPSC exam or had attempted it multiple times. The survey included questions on their attempts, coaching institutes, physical and mental health, emotional problems, sleep hours, and preparation status. The results indicate that while the majority of the participants rated their physical health as good, their mental health status was somewhat poor or poor. A significant number of participants reported facing emotional problems, feeling low or down, and sleep disturbances. The study highlights the need for mental health support for UPSC aspirants, including counselling services and awareness programs.***
Keywords: Mental Health, UPSC aspirants, Emotional problems, UPSC Exam.

I. INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as- 'a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community' [1]. The definition of mental health can be more elaborate as- Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium [2]. These definition show the importance of mental health of an individual and when it comes to aspirants of civil services exams in India who will administrate the country in future, it becomes more important. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Civil services exam (CSE) is known to be one of the toughest and most competitive exams in India. Every year, thousands of aspirants appear for the exam with a dream of securing a position in government services [3]. Preparing for the exam requires extensive dedication and hard work, which can take a toll on the mental health of the aspirants. The pressure to succeed and the fear of failure with its vast syllabus can cause emotional distress, leading to mental health problems. As mental health is a crucial aspect of an individual's overall well-being, this study aims to evaluate the mental health status of UPSC aspirants. In this survey-based study, an online survey was conducted to assess the mental health status of UPSC CSE aspirants. The study was done on a total of 203 participants from June 2022 to September 2022 through social media platforms and Whatsapp groups. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions and the data were collected through a Google form. The survey included questions on the participants' demographics, attempts made for the exam, coaching institute, physical and mental health status, emotional problems faced, sleep hours, and preparation status. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the collected data.

II. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

1) To study the mental health status of UPSC CSE aspirants.
2) To know the status of their physical health.
3) To study the impact of coaching institutes on mental health of aspirants.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional online survey design. A total of 203 participants were recruited for the study through social media platforms and Whatsapp groups. The survey was conducted using Google Forms, and the participants provided their consent before proceeding with the survey.

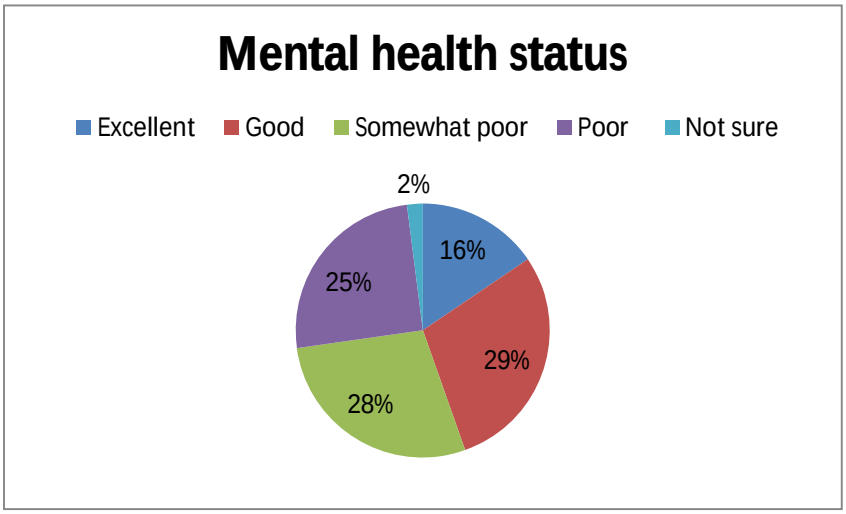
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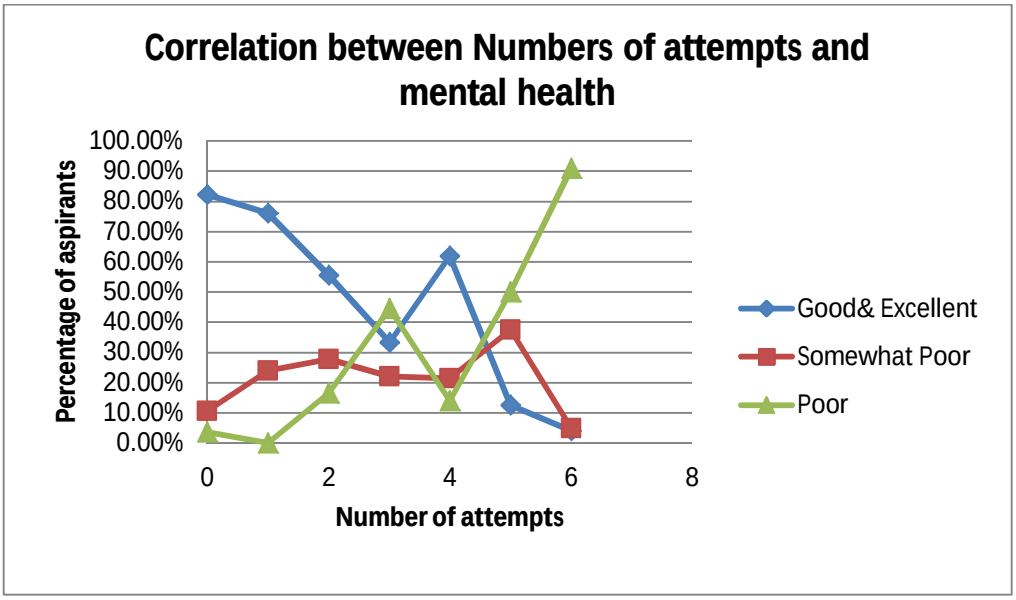
IV. FIDINGS

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the mental health of UPSC aspirants and the various factors that contribute to their mental well-being. The data collected through the survey has been analyzed and presented in the form of charts and tables to provide a clear understanding of the findings. Age group of the aspirants in this study is 19 years to 33 years.

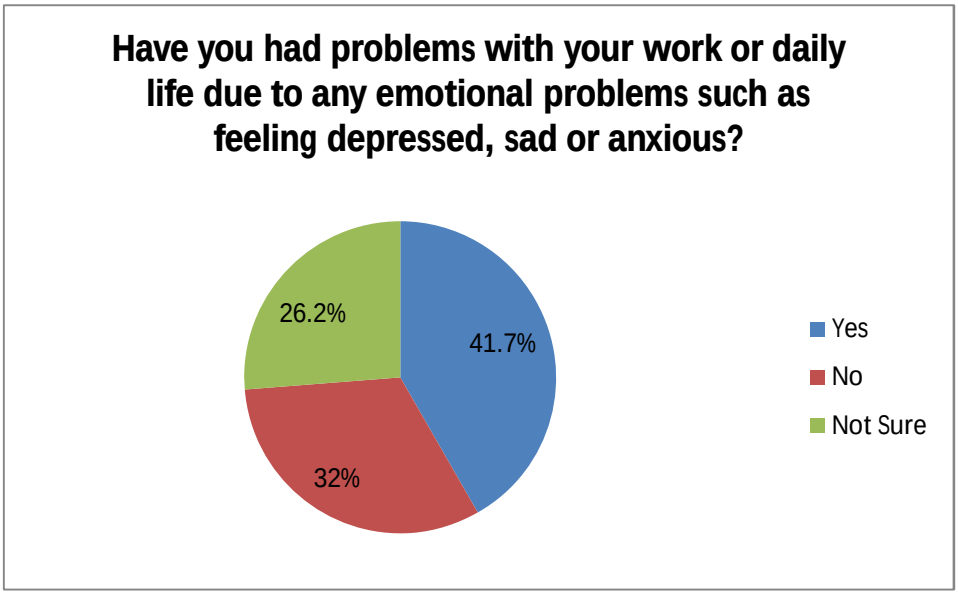
One of the key findings of this study is that UPSC aspirants experience a significant amount of stress and anxiety during the preparation process. When asked about their mental health, 53.3% of respondents rated their mental health as poor or somewhat poor. This indicates that UPSC aspirants are at risk of developing mental health problems due to the pressure of the exam.



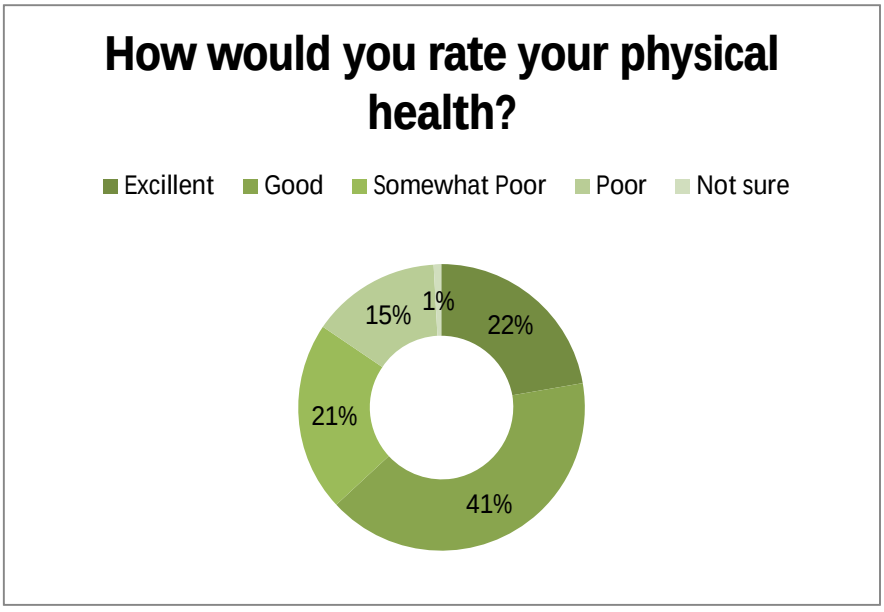
Another significant finding of the study is that there is a correlation between the number of attempts at the UPSC exam and mental health. Those who have attempted the exam multiple times (4 or more attempts) reported poorer mental health than those who have attempted the exam fewer times or not at all. This suggests that the stress and pressure of repeated attempts can take a toll on the mental health of UPSC aspirants.



The study also found that a significant proportion of UPSC aspirants have problems with their work or daily life due to emotional problems such as feeling depressed, sad or anxious. 41.7% of respondents reported having problems with their work or daily life due to emotional problems, indicating that these emotional problems are a significant issue for UPSC aspirants. The ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions is also regarded as an important component of mental health [4].

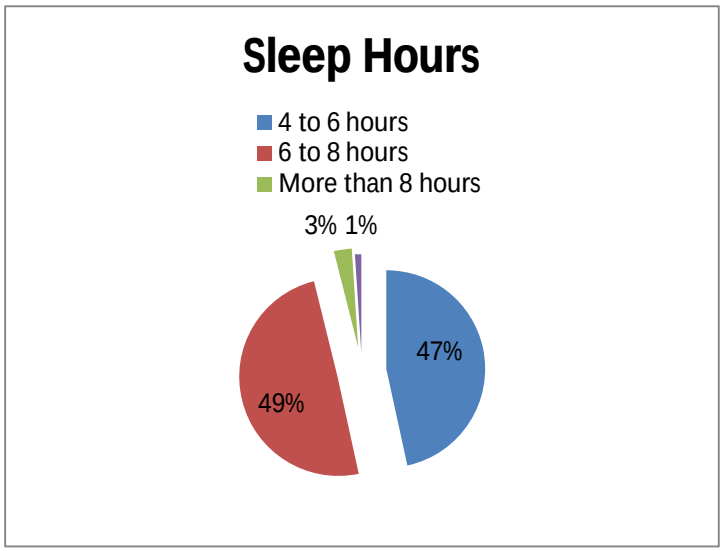


In terms of physical health, 36% of respondents rated their physical health as somewhat poor or poor. This indicates that the pressure of the UPSC exam may have a negative impact on the physical health of aspirants. Mental illness may have a direct or indirect impact on physical health [5].

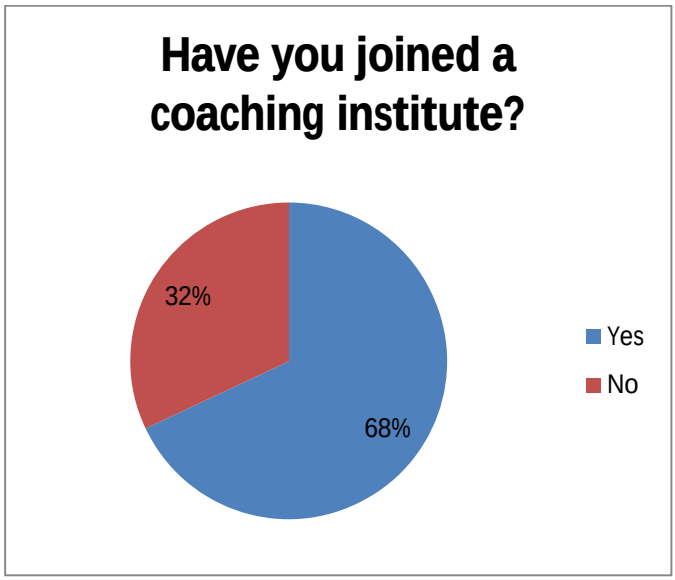


When it comes to sleep patterns, the survey study found that a majority of UPSC aspirants get 6-8 hours of sleep per day. However, 46.6% of respondents reported getting only 4-6 hours of sleep per day, indicating that sleep patterns may be a significant issue for mental health of the aspirants. Improving sleep quality leads to better mental health [6].

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The research also found that coaching institutes are widely used by UPSC aspirants, with 68% of respondents reporting that they had joined a coaching institute. However, there was no significant difference in the mental health of those who had joined coaching institutes and those who had not.



The findings revealed that a significant proportion of respondents (87.40%) reported that they had never been diagnosed with mental health problems, while only a minority (12.60%) acknowledged having received such a diagnosis. These results highlight a potential underreporting or lack of awareness regarding mental health issues within the aspirant population.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that UPSC aspirants are at risk of developing mental health problems due to the pressure of the exam. Repeated attempts at the exam can exacerbate these problems, and emotional problems are a significant issue for UPSC aspirants. Additionally, physical health and sleep patterns may be negatively impacted by the pressure of the UPSC exam.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the survey data, it can be concluded that the majority of UPSC aspirants experience emotional problems such as feeling depressed, sad, or anxious, which negatively impact their work and daily life. A significant percentage of respondents also reported feeling particularly low or down for more than two weeks in a row. These findings indicate a need for more focus on mental health awareness and support for UPSC aspirants.

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The study also revealed that the majority of UPSC aspirants join coaching institutes to prepare for the exam, and a significant percentage of them have attempted the exam multiple times. Despite this, only a small percentage of respondents reported excellent mental health, while a significant percentage reported poor or somewhat poor mental health.

The study also found that a significant percentage of respondents reported sleeping less than six hours a night, which may contribute to poor mental health. This finding indicates a need for more emphasis on the importance of sleep and its impact on mental health.

Overall, the findings suggest that there is a need for greater awareness and support for mental health among UPSC aspirants, particularly regarding the emotional challenges associated with exam preparation and the importance of mental well being.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are proposed:

1) There is a need for greater awareness and support for mental health among UPSC aspirants. This can include providing access to counseling services, mental health resources, and support groups.

2) Coaching institutes should take a more holistic approach to UPSC exam preparation, including providing guidance on mental health and stress management.

3) More emphasis should be placed on the importance of sleep and its impact on mental health. This can include providing education on healthy sleep habits and encouraging aspirants to prioritize sleep.

4) Further research is needed to explore the underlying causes of poor mental health among UPSC aspirants and to identify effective interventions to address these challenges.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide important insights into the mental health of UPSC aspirants and highlight the need for greater awareness and support for mental health during exam preparation. By addressing these issues, we can help to ensure that UPSC aspirants are better equipped to manage the emotional challenges of exam preparation and achieve success in their pursuits.

VII. LIMITATIONS

Despite the important findings of this study, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. One limitation is the small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies. Finally, the study was limited to a specific population of UPSC aspirants, and may not be representative of other populations.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have important implications for the mental health and well-being of UPSC aspirants. The high prevalence of emotional problems and low mood suggests a need for mental health support and resources for this population. Additionally, the finding that a large proportion of aspirants are not getting enough sleep highlights the need for interventions to improve sleep hygiene and promote healthy sleep habits [7]. The findings also suggest that coaching institutes may play an important role in the preparation process, by monitoring mental health and well-being of aspirants.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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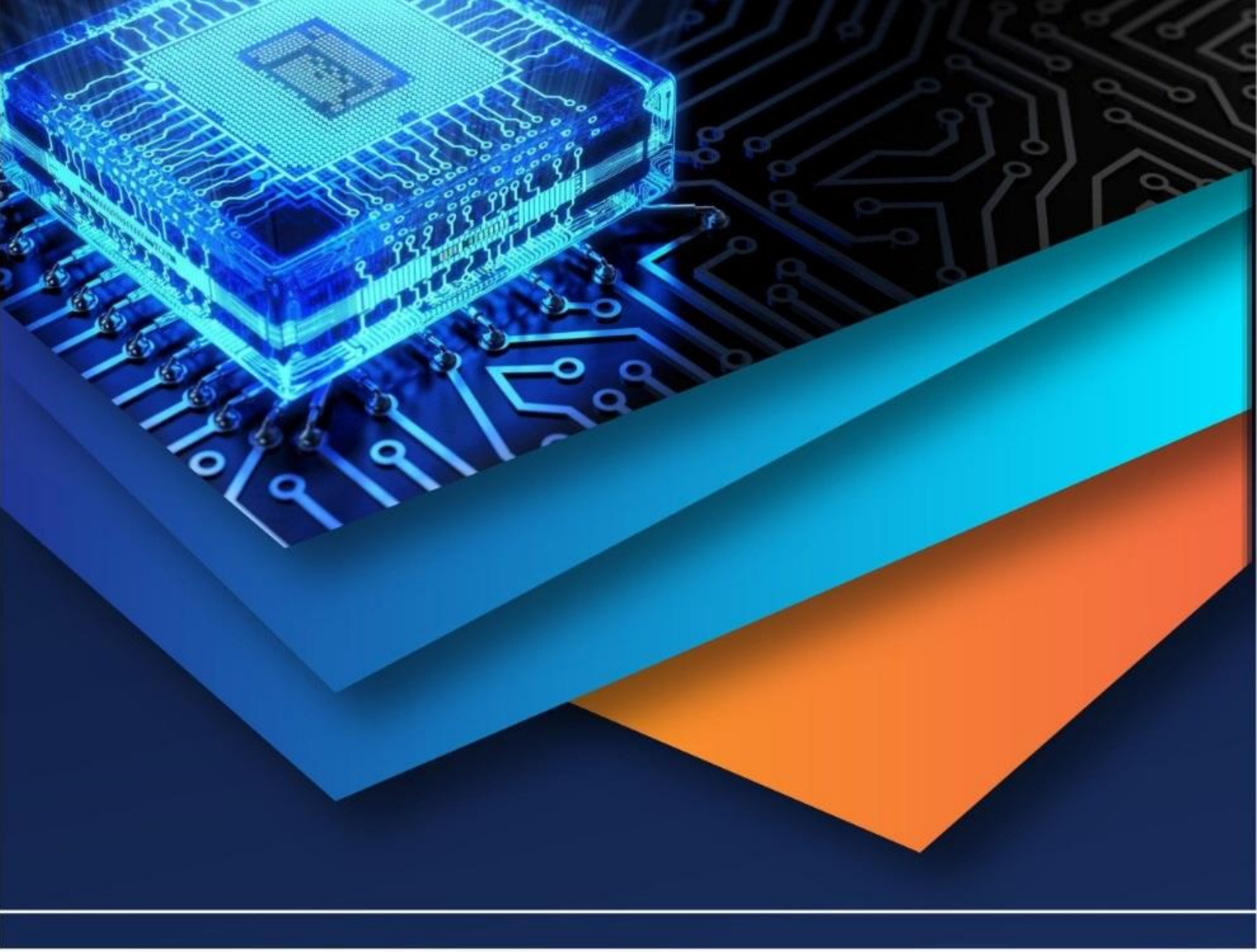
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