



Strengthening Students' Religious Character through REMAS Organizations: Synergistic School Culture and Education Strategies

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Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the synergistic strategies between Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and school culture in shaping students' religious character through the Remaja Masjid (Remas) organization. The research is grounded in the challenges of globalization and modernization that continue to erode students' spiritual values, requiring a contextual and collaborative approach to character development. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of religious activities including istighosah, Qur'anic recitation, fiqh discussions, and social service. The findings show that the effectiveness of Remas as a medium for religious character formation relies heavily on the strategic involvement of PAI teachers as facilitators, mentors, and spiritual role models, combined with active student participation in managing the programs. Additionally, a supportive school culture, including leadership support, cross-subject teacher engagement, and adequate facilities, strengthens the internalization of Islamic values across the school environment. The study concludes that Remas, when supported by aligned educational strategies and a positive organizational culture, becomes more than an extracurricular activity. It represents a comprehensive model for integrated and sustainable religious character education that can be adapted by other educational institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Strengthening the religious character of students is one of the main challenges in the contemporary Indonesian education world, especially in the midst of globalization, modernization, and digital cultural penetration that tends to erode spiritual values (Maulidy et al., 2025; Supriyanto, 2022; Syam et al., 2024). Schools as formal educational institutions have a strategic role in shaping students' personalities based on Islamic values (Islamic et al., 2024; Mujahid, 2021; Nasir & Rijal, 2021). One of the approaches that has begun to be widely adopted is the involvement of students in school-based religious organizations, such as Remaja Masjid (Remas). This activity is an effective means to build worship habits, strengthen social solidarity, and instill moral values in a contextually relevant manner. However, the effectiveness of this program is highly dependent on the involvement of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in designing, accompanying, and evaluating its implementation (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Taja et al., 2021; Teslo et al., 2023). This research focuses on SMAN 1 Lumajang, where Remas serves as a forum for religious character development, facilitated directly by PAI teachers through spiritual, social, and organizational approaches that are integrated.

Research on the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering students' religious character shows that teachers have a strategic function as spiritual role models, facilitators of religious activities, and shaping the religious atmosphere of schools. Cahyanto et al. (2024) emphasized that PAI teachers act as inspirers and motivators in instilling the values of honesty and responsibility through habituation of values and social interaction in elementary schools. Meanwhile, Saepudin et al. (2023) found that PAI teachers in secondary schools play a key role in instilling a moderate and tolerant attitude by engaging students in religious dialogue and inclusive worship practices. Rahman et al. (2024). It also shows that the integration of non-formal religious activities, such as habituation of recitation and istighosah, is effective in forming religious character through direct spiritual experience. Although these studies have identified the important role of teachers, not many have specifically examined how PAI teacher mentoring strategies in the context of Mosque Youth organizations can shape religious character in a sustainable and structured manner.

Although various studies have shown the importance of the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the formation of students' religious character, most still focus on learning approaches in the classroom or general religious programs. The involvement of teachers in assisting students' religious organizations, such as Mosque Youth (Remas), is still rarely studied in depth as a structured and sustainable strategy for fostering religious character. In fact, in practice, the effectiveness of Remas activities is highly dependent on mentoring strategies, the intensity of involvement, and the capacity of teachers in facilitating the spiritual development process. At SMAN 1 Lumajang, although Remas activities have been carried out regularly, there has been no study that has systematically identified how PAI teachers build educational relationships and facilitate the internalization of religious values through these activities. Therefore, qualitative research is needed that explores in depth the strategy and dynamics of the role of PAI teachers in optimizing Remas as a medium for the formation of students' religious character in the secondary school environment.

This research offers a new contribution to the study of religious character education by highlighting specifically the assistance strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the context of the Mosque Youth organization (Remas) in secondary schools. In contrast to previous studies that focused more on intracurricular learning or theoretical approaches, this study explores the concrete practices of teachers in fostering students' religious character through structured religious activities, based on active participation. Another novelty lies in a holistic approach that links three dimensions of coaching: spiritual (religious ritual), social (collective action), and organizational (the role of students in activity management). This research also emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students as a determining factor for the success of internalizing values. Thus, this research not only fills the literary gap but also provides a model of mentoring practices that can be replicated by other schools in developing students' religious character sustainably and contextually.

This study aims to examine the strategies implemented by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering students' religious character through the Mosque Youth Organization (Remas) organization at SMAN 1 Lumajang. Specifically, the research focuses on the teachers' strategic roles in planning and facilitating religious programs, the forms of Remas activities conducted, and their impact on students' spiritual, social, and moral development. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the study explores the

interactive dynamics between teachers and students within a framework of participatory and experiential religious coaching. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of school-based religious character education models and offer practical recommendations for educators and school leaders in designing effective, sustainable, and contextually grounded religious development strategies for secondary education

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach (Cole, 2024; Janis, 2022; Renjith et al., 2021). This design was chosen to allow an in-depth exploration of the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering students' religious character through the Mosque Youth Organization (Remas) at SMAN 1 Lumajang. Case studies are relevant because they provide space to understand phenomena contextually and thoroughly in real-life settings (Cleland et al., 2021; Ferris-Day et al., 2025; Welch et al., 2022). The focus of the research is on the coaching strategies carried out by PAI teachers, the form of Remas activities carried out, and their impact on the formation of students' character. This approach also pays attention to the dynamics of social relations and interactions between the actors involved, so that the results of the research are not only descriptive (Andersen & Geels, 2023; Boccoli et al., 2023; Capilla Garrido et al., 2021), but also reflective of the practice of religious formation in the school environment.

Data collection in this study was carried out through in-depth interviews and direct observation. Interviews were aimed at PAI teachers and students who were active in Mosque Youth activities to obtain information about coaching strategies, teacher involvement, and the impact of activities on students' religious attitudes. Observations were carried out in various religious activities such as istighosah, fiqh studies, and socio-religious actions, in order to capture the dynamics of the implementation of the program directly. The researcher acts as an observer who is also present in the activity, but is not actively involved. The location of the research is SMAN 1 Lumajang, and the data collection process lasted for three months in the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year. To maintain the credibility of the data, the source triangulation and member checking techniques were used with key informants (Loyola González-Salgado et al., 2024; Enworo, 2023; Motulsky, 2021).

The data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model which consisted of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Motulsky, 2021; Ray et al., 2021; Vila-Henninger et al., 2024). Data reduction was carried out by selecting important information from the results of interviews and observation notes based on the focus of the research. Data presentation is carried out in the form of descriptive narratives and analytical tables to clarify the thematic patterns that emerge. Furthermore, conclusions are drawn through a reflective and interpretive process of the relationship between the categories of findings. To ensure consistency and accuracy of interpretation, a re-check was carried out on informants and cross-comparison between interview data and observation results. This analysis process aims to produce a deep understanding of how PAI teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' religious character through structured and sustainable Remas activities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Strategic Role of PAI Teachers in Fostering Mosque Youth in Schools

The strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers refers to the active and directed function of teachers in developing students' religious character through the management and coaching of religious activities in the school environment. In this context, PAI teachers are not only teachers of religious materials in the classroom, but also facilitators, mentors, and supervisors of religious extracurricular activities such as the Mosque Youth Organization (Remas). The direct involvement of teachers in designing and overseeing the Remas program is part of a character education strategy that emphasizes contextual learning and habituation of Islamic values in students' real lives. This strategy is critical in the midst of modernization challenges and the influence of a social environment that does not support the development of religious values. Therefore, the strategic role of PAI teachers is a key factor in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of Remas activities as a forum for the formation of students' religious character as a whole.

One of the PAI teachers said that he consistently accompanies Remas activities every week, especially in the istighosah agenda which is held every Friday morning. He explained in detail how the activity became a medium for fostering students' religious character, "Every Friday morning, before the class hours start, we hold a joint istighosah guided by PAI teachers. I am usually the one who leads. The children were invited to dhikr, read prayers together, then we continued with short tausiah that were relevant to their daily lives, for example about the importance of praying on time or maintaining a good relationship with parents. This has become a routine that I feel is very helpful in instilling religious values consistently. At first maybe they came out of obligation, but over time they seemed more enthusiastic, some even volunteered to help with the preparation of the event". This is reinforced by the explanation of other PAI teachers who emphasized the importance of active involvement of teachers in maintaining the continuity of Remas activities so as not to lose direction:

"If Rema's activities are left to their own way without direction from the teacher, it will usually not stall for long. Children still need guidance; they need to be accompanied in compiling programs, determining the theme of the study, and even in technical matters such as arranging events. My PAI teachers and I usually meet with them first, and we give input, as well as encouragement. If they know that we really care and accompany them, they will be more enthusiastic and more confident too. I think our role as teachers is not only to teach in the classroom, but also to nurture them outside the classroom, especially in activities like this."

From the results of the interview above, the PAI teacher's strategy is very structured and sustainable. The active involvement of teachers in istighosah activities and the role of the primary supervisor show that the success of Remas is highly dependent on the initiative and presence of teachers. This approach shows that the development of religious character cannot be separated from the role of authoritative figures who can direct and motivate students. Through this strategy, PAI teachers are not only as transmitters of knowledge, but also as spiritual role models who build closeness with students through religious activities. This indicates that the effective formation of religious character demands integration between formal and informal activities that are systemically mutually supportive. Where one of the activities carried out by mosque teenagers at SMAN 1 Lumajang is as shown in figure 1.



Figure 1. Istighosah activities carried out by Mosque Youth (REMAS)

Listening to the findings of this study, it can be seen that the sustainability of Remas activities cannot be separated from the active role of PAI teachers who are present not only as supervisors, but as facilitators who accompany each process. The involvement includes mentoring from the activity planning stage to implementation, so that students feel a clear direction as well as an opportunity to participate. This strategic pattern can be seen in three main aspects, namely the continuity of religious activities such as routine istighosah, the involvement of teachers in accompanying the program, and the establishment of open communication between teachers and students. These three aspects synergistically create an atmosphere conducive to the gradual and structured internalization of religious values. From the perspective of education public relations management, this pattern shows that the development of religious character in schools becomes more effective if there is a consistent, active supervisor, and provides a collaborative space for students to develop their religious potential.

The Form of Religious Activities of Mosque Youth and Their Influence on the Religious Character of Students

The form of religious activities of Mosque Youth (Remas) is a series of Islamic activities that are facilitated in the school environment and organized by students with the assistance of teachers. This activity includes istighosah, Qur'an sermons, fiqh studies, religious lectures, and various social actions, such as compensation for orphans. Each activity is designed not only to increase religious insight but also to form religious character through direct experience and habituation of Islamic values in students' daily lives. The relevance of this theme is particularly evident in the context of strengthening character education, because involvement in structured religious activities enables the internalization of msuch asners, discipline, responsibility, and social concern. This focus shows that the form and quality of Remas activities directly affect how deeply religious values are embedded and reflected in students' daily behavior.

One of Remas' active students said that activities such as Qur'an sermons and religious lectures really helped him understand Islamic teachings in depth and changed his daily habits, "I used to rarely read the Qur'an except during religious lessons, but since participating in Qur'an sermons in Remas, I am used to reading every morning, even if it is only one page. Through these studies, I gained a deeper understanding of various aspects, including the etiquette of speaking and the significance of worship intentions. Now I think more before I speak, more polite to teachers and parents as well" (I_Siswa1_2025).

Another student highlighted the importance of social activities in forming a sense of empathy and responsibility, "When Remas made an orphan compensation event, I joined the committee. I went to the grocery store, bought a house, and went to the grocery store. It feels very different, so I am more grateful, and think that we have a responsibility to help others".

Based on the results of the interview above, religious activities in Remas function as a transformative medium that actually shapes students' religious behavior. Routine activities such as Qur'an sermons build sustainable worship habits, while lectures and fiqh studies become a forum for internalizing the value of adab and strengthening the intention in worship. Furthermore, social activities such as compensation present a collective experience that fosters empathy and social awareness among students. This variety of activities provides ample opportunities for students to experience and live Islamic values firsthand, resulting in changes in their religious attitudes, behaviors, and responsibilities. The transformation takes place gradually, not instantaneously, but in line with the intensity and quality of student involvement in each religious program. Thus, Remas has proven to play a strategic role in building a foundation of sustainable religious character in the school environment. Departing from this, the forms of religious activities carried out by Mosque Youth are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of Religious Activities for Mosque Youth

Forms of Religious Activities	Impact on Students' Religious Character
Istighosah and Dhikr Together	Forming discipline and familiarizing oneself with collective prayer
Qur'an sermons and recitations	Increase commitment to worship and love for the Qur'an
Fiqh Studies and Lectures	Instilling the values of manners, order, and deep understanding of worship
Social Action and Compensation	Cultivate a sense of empathy, social care, and gratitude
Meeting and Activity Management	Practice responsibility, cooperation, and leadership in the community

Table 1 explains that the variety of religious activities carried out by mosque youth has a real contribution to the formation of students' religious character. Istighosah and dhikr activities together, for example, emphasize the importance of spiritual discipline while getting used to prayer collectively. Meanwhile, Qur'an sermons and recitations encourage the birth of a deep love for the Qur'an and strengthen commitment to worship. The study of fiqh and lectures provides space for the internalization of the values of manners and a more directed understanding of worship. On the other hand, social action and compensation teach empathy and social concern, so that the value of religiosity does not stop at the realm of ritual, but is also manifested in genuine concern for others. Meetings and activity management help develop the responsibilities, organizational skills, and leadership needed in social life. Overall, this table shows that varied religious activities can form religious character holistically, both in spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects.

Departing from the findings above, the diversity of forms of religious activities in Remas, ranging from istighosah, Qur'an sermons, Islamic studies, to social action, makes a real contribution to the formation of students' religious character. Spiritual activities such as dhikr and recitation train discipline while building a consistent worship routine. Meanwhile, study and lecture activities are an important means in instilling the values of manners, responsibility, and the orientation of the right intentions in worship. On the

other hand, social programs such as compensation form empathy and care, which strengthens the socio-religious dimension of students. The participation of students as committees and implementers of activities also shows that the internalization of values does not stop at the theoretical level, but is realized through collective experience and direct practice. Thus, this pattern emphasizes that active involvement in Remas is a transformative medium that can strengthen the spiritual, social, and moral aspects of students in an integrated and sustainable manner.

School Organizational Culture That Supports the Strengthening of Religious Values Through Mosque Youth

School organizational culture refers to the value system, norms, habits, and interaction patterns that prevail in the school environment, which collectively shape the educational climate. In this context, an organizational culture that supports the strengthening of religious values is demonstrated through policies, support, and institutional habits that integrate religious values into daily school life. This includes the principal's support for religious programs, the allocation of special time for religious activities, and the involvement of all elements of the school in creating a religious atmosphere. Mosque Youth (Remas), as one of the implementing organs of religious activities in schools, is greatly influenced by this cultural ecosystem. A conducive organizational culture allows Remas to run its programs in a sustainable and meaningful manner, with the full support of teachers, school management, and peers. Thus, this theme highlights how the structural and cultural environment of the school is an important foundation in shaping the success of programs to strengthen students' religious character through religious forums such as Remas.

One of the PAI teachers explained that the sustainability of Mosque Youth activities is highly dependent on the support of school leaders and the school culture as a whole, "Alhamdulillah, the principal is very supportive of religious activities. Not only permitting, but also providing facilities, such as special rooms, sound systems, and operational funds. Even every time there is a big event such as the anniversary of Maulid, he is present and gives a speech. This makes students feel that their activities are appreciated". An active member of Remas also revealed that the school atmosphere is very supportive of the development of religious values because almost all teachers are involved in the habituation of Islamic values. "In this school, almost all teachers support religious activities. Even if we Remas make an event, other teachers also help, for example as resource persons or technical assistance. We are also often asked to lead prayers at ceremonies or other school activities. So the school atmosphere is indeed very supportive for us to develop religiously".

Both interview results show that the culture of the school organization has an important role in supporting the sustainability and success of Remas activities. When principals, teachers, and other institutional structures provide adequate space and facilities, students feel valued and supported. This support fosters a sense of ownership of religious activities, forming an ecosystem that encourages collective growth in religious awareness. In addition, cross-element involvement of schools expands the influence of Islamic values not only in the religious space, but also in general school activities. Thus, the formation of religious character is no longer sectoral, but becomes part of the school culture as a whole.

Departing from this, the form of cultural support of school organizations for religious activities is presented in Figure 1.

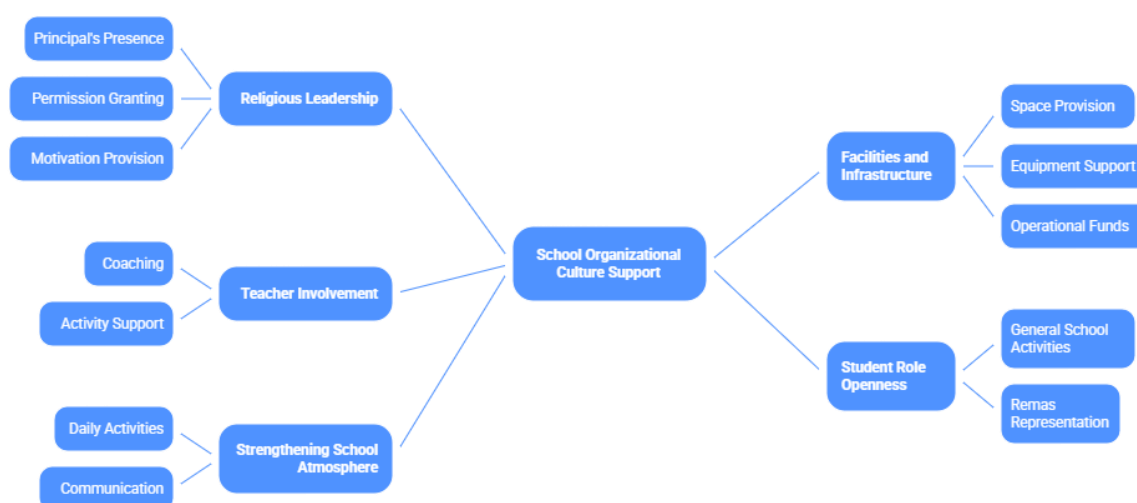


Figure 1. School Organizational Culture Support for Religious Values

Departing from the exposure of Figure 1, the cultural support of school organizations for religious values is formed through several important dimensions. First, religious leadership is shown through the presence of the principal, the granting of permission, and motivation that directly encourages spiritually nuanced activities. Second, teacher involvement is not only limited to companions, but also includes coaching and support for student activities, so that religious values are easier to internalize. Third, the aspects of facilities and infrastructure are supporting factors with the provision of space, equipment, and operational funds that ensure the sustainability of activities. Furthermore, the openness of students' roles in public school activities, as well as the involvement of mosque youth, as representatives, strengthens active participation and a sense of belonging. Finally, strengthening the school atmosphere through daily activities and effective communication fosters a consistent religious atmosphere. Thus, this image confirms that the support of a comprehensive school organization can create a sustainable religious education ecosystem and shape the character of students holistically.

Based on the results of the research, it can be understood that the school organizational culture that is oriented towards religious values is an important foundation for the success of students' religious programs through the Mosque Youth forum. Leadership support that provides exemplary, school policies that open spiritual development spaces, and the active involvement of all elements of the school community create a conducive climate for the growth of students' religiosity. The religious culture that is built not only strengthens the sustainability of religious programs, but also internalizes Islamic values in daily routines, both in the teaching and learning process and in social interactions in the school environment. Thus, religious values are not partially present, but are integrated into the overall practice of school life. This pattern shows that the internalization of religious character will be more effective if a consistent, comprehensive, and sustainable organizational culture supports it.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the development of students' religious character through Mosque Youth (Remas) activities is a process influenced by three main aspects: the strategic role of PAI teachers, the variety of forms of religious activities, and the supportive culture of school organizations. These findings are in line with character education theory, which emphasizes the dimensions of knowing the good, feeling the good, and acting the good (Lukman et al., 2021; Muhajir, 2022; Tohri et al., 2022). PAI teachers play a role not only as material presenters, but also as spiritual role models (qudwah) who provide direction, motivation, and continuous assistance. This role has proven to be effective in maintaining the consistency and sustainability of the Remas program, as well as showing that the formation of religious character requires authoritative figures who are present in the lives of students.

A variety of religious activities, such as istighosah, Qur'an sermons, fiqh studies, and social action, have been proven to have a transformative impact on student behavior. This confirms the experiential learning theory, in which the internalization of religious values occurs through direct practice and collective experience, rather than just through verbal instruction (Conner, 2022; Fromm et al., 2021; Tembrevilla et al., 2024). Spiritual activities shape discipline and worship routines, while social activities strengthen students' empathy and social awareness. The involvement of students not only as participants, but also as committees and implementers of activities, shows that there is a participatory process that deepens the internalization of values. These findings enrich the results of previous research, which each emphasized the effectiveness of religious routines, social activities, and Qur'anic habituation, but did not strongly highlight the aspect of student active participation as a motor for internalizing values (Jenuri et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2024; Saepudin et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the success of Remas activities is also inseparable from the culture of religious school organizations. The support of the principal, adequate facilities, and cross-teacher involvement create an ecosystem conducive to strengthening religious values. These findings are consistent with the theory of educational ecology (Anderson et al., 2021; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022; Luo & Chan, 2022), which emphasizes the influence of the macro environment on the development of individual character. Research Rahman et al. (2024) It also shows that religious leadership, the integration of Islamic values in school policies, and the religious climate contribute significantly to shaping the character of students. However, this study adds a new perspective by showing that there is a synergy between PAI teachers, principals, and cross-maple teachers that collectively form a comprehensive religious atmosphere in schools.

This research makes an important contribution to the development of educational institutions as well as enriching the study of education management. Practically, the findings confirm that the strategy of PAI teachers who act as facilitators, mentors, and spiritual role models in Mosque Youth activities can be a model for religious character development that other schools can adopt. A variety of religious activities such as istighosah, Qur'an sermons, thematic studies, and social action have proven effective in contextually shaping students' religious habits, while the cultural support of school organizations through principal's leadership, availability of facilities, and cross-teacher involvement suggests that strengthening religious character requires integrated educational governance. From the perspective of education management, the results of this study show the importance of synergy between actors (teachers, students, and

school leaders) in creating a conducive religious climate, thereby expanding the understanding of value-based management.

Departing from the above explanation, this study emphasizes that the development of students' religious character through Mosque Youth activities is the result of the integration of the strategic role of PAI teachers, variations in the form of religious activities, and the supportive culture of school organizations. PAI teachers not only play the role of teachers, but also as spiritual guides and role models who maintain the sustainability of religious programs. Remas' diverse activities have proven to be transformative media that foster discipline in worship, responsibility, social empathy, and love for Islamic values. Meanwhile, the school's religious organizational culture and educational management support create an ecosystem conducive to the overall internalization of values. Thus, this study emphasizes that religious character education is not a sectoral program, but an integrative practice that involves all elements of the school.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes that the development of students' religious character through Mosque Youth activities in schools is the result of the integration of the strategic role of PAI teachers, the diversity of forms of religious activities, and the supportive culture of school organizations. PAI teachers play the role not only as teachers, but also as facilitators and spiritual role models who guide students in istighosah activities, Qur'an sermons, fiqh studies, and social and religious actions. This activity is an effective transformative medium in instilling the values of manners, worship discipline, social empathy, and religious responsibility. In addition, structural and cultural support from schools, such as the participation of principals and teacher involvement across subjects, creates a conducive religious education ecosystem. These findings suggest that strengthening students' religious character demands a collaborative and contextual approach that integrates intra- and extracurricular activities in the school culture comprehensively and sustainably.

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