

A CLASS OF EIGENVALUE PROBLEMS FOR THE (p, q) -LAPLACIAN IN \mathbb{R}^N

Nawel Benouhiba¹§, Zahia Belyacine²

^{1,2}Department of Mathematics

LAM, Badji Mokhtar-Annaba University

P.O. Box 12, El Hadjar, 23000, Annaba, ALGERIA

Abstract: This paper concerns the study of a nonlinear eigenvalue problem for the (p, q) -Laplacian with a positive weight

$$-\Delta_p u - \Delta_q u = \lambda g(x)|u|^{p-2}u \text{ in } \mathbb{R}^N.$$

Using the Mountain-Pass Theorem, we show the existence of a continuous set of positive eigenvalues.

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1. Introduction

In recent years much attention was given to the study of stationary solutions of the reaction-diffusion equation

$$u_t = \operatorname{div} ((|\nabla u|^{p-2} + |\nabla u|^{q-2}) \nabla u) + c(x, u) \quad (1.1)$$

that appears in physics and related sciences such as biophysics, plasma physics and chemical reaction design.

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§Correspondence author

When $q = p$ and $c(x, u) = \lambda g(x)|u|^{p-2}u$, stationary problem associated to 1.1 becomes an eigenvalue p -Laplacian problem of the form

$$-\Delta_p u = \lambda g(x)|u|^{p-2}u \tag{1.2}$$

which has been widely studied both in bounded domains and \mathbb{R}^N . By means Ljusternik-Schnirelmann theory, it was established the existence of a non decreasing positive sequence of eigenvalues $0 < \lambda_1 < \dots < \lambda_n < \dots$ (see [4] and [8]). A characterization of the first eigenvalue was given by

$$\lambda_1 = \inf_{\substack{u \in W^{1,p} \\ u \neq 0}} \frac{\|u\|_{1,p}^p}{\int g|u|^p dx} \tag{1.3}$$

It was also shown (see [1]) that λ_1 is simple, principle and isolated.

For the case $q \neq p$, few studies appeared for special cases of $c(x, u)$. For example in [6], the author gives an existence result of a non trivial solution of the problem $-div((|\nabla u|^{p-2} + |\nabla u|^{q-2}) \nabla u) = m|u|^{p-2}u + n|u|^{q-2}u + f(x, u)$ on \mathbb{R}^N , under suitable conditions on the coefficients and the exponents. In [9], a result of the existence of an infinitely many weak solutions of a similar problem with a concave-convex nonlinearity in bounded domain is given. In [5], the authors established a multiplicity existence result for the (p, q) -Laplacian problem with critical exponent on a bounded domain.

In this paper, we are interested in finding eigenvalues of the problem

$$-div((|\nabla u|^{p-2} + |\nabla u|^{q-2}) \nabla u) = \lambda g(x)|u|^{p-2}u \text{ in } \mathbb{R}^N. \tag{1.4}$$

under the hypotheses:

$$1 < q < p < q^* \tag{1.5}$$

and

$$0 \leq g \in L^{(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})'}(\mathbb{R}^N) \cap L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N) \tag{1.6}$$

where $\alpha = \frac{p(1-t)}{1-\frac{pt}{p^*}}$ for some $t \in (0, 1)$ (so $0 < \alpha < p$).

We will look for weak solutions of 1.4 in the framework of the reflexive Banach space $W = W^{1,p}(\mathbb{R}^N) \cap W^{1,q}(\mathbb{R}^N)$, defined as the completion of $C_0^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)$ with respect to the norm $\|u\| = \|u\|_{1,p} + \|u\|_{1,q}$.

As we will see, the energy functional associated to problem 1.4 is given by

$$I(u) = \frac{1}{p} \|u\|_{1,p}^p + \frac{1}{q} \|u\|_{1,q}^q - \frac{\lambda}{p} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} g(x)|u|^p dx. \tag{1.7}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \langle I'(u), v \rangle &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^{p-2} \nabla u \nabla v dx \\ &\quad + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^{q-2} \nabla u \nabla v dx - \lambda \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} g(x) |u|^{p-2} u v dx, \end{aligned}$$

for all $v \in W$.

Notice that critical points of the functional I are precisely weak solutions of 1.4. To get critical points of I we will apply the Mountain-Pass Theorem. Establishing the Palais-Smale condition is the most difficulty in studying such problems. First, there is a lack of compactness for the Sobolev embedding. So the boundedness of the Palais-Smale sequence is not evident. Another difficulty, as it was mentioned in [5, 9] becomes from the fact that the Banach space framework does not ensure that

$$|\nabla u_n|^{p-2} \nabla u_n \rightharpoonup |\nabla u|^{p-2} \nabla u \text{ in } L^{\frac{p}{p-1}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$$

for a Palais-Smale sequence $\{u_n\}$. That is why in both works the authors used the Concentration-Compactness principal.

In our case, the use of the weight g in an appropriate Lebesgue space overcomes these difficulties.

The principal result of this paper is the following theorem.

Theorem 1. *If p, q , and g fulfill 1.5 and 1.6, then there exists $\lambda^* > 0$ such that any $\lambda > \lambda^*$ is an eigenvalue of problem 1.4.*

In what follows, the letter C will be indiscriminately used to denote various constants when the exact values are irrelevant. The symbol \int will denote $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}$.

2. Proof of the Results

We say that $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$ is an eigenvalue of Problem 1.4 if there exists $u \in W, u \neq 0$ such that

$$\begin{aligned} \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} \nabla u \cdot \nabla v dx + \int |\nabla u|^{q-2} \nabla u \cdot \nabla v dx &= \lambda \int g(x) |u|^{p-2} u v dx, \\ &\forall v \in W. \end{aligned} \tag{2.1}$$

This is equivalent to

$$I'(u) = 0 \text{ in } W'.$$

Standard argument shows that $I \in C^1(W, \mathbb{R})$. Since the functional I is not bounded from below, we will look for local minimizers by means of the Mountain-Pass Theorem [7].

We begin this section by establishing some results required in the proof of Theorem 1.

Lemma 2. *For all $u \in W$ we have*

$$\int g|u|^p dx \leq C\|g\|_\infty \|g\|_{(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})'}^{p(1-t)} \|u\|_{1,p}^{pt} \|u\|_{1,q}^{p(1-t)}. \tag{2.2}$$

Proof. For any $u \in W$, we have by the Hölder inequality

$$\int g|u|^p dx \leq A_1 A_2.$$

Where $A_1 = (\int g|u|^\alpha dx)^{\frac{p(1-t)}{\alpha}}$ and $A_2 = (\int g|u|^{p^*} dx)^{\frac{pt}{p^*}}$. By Sobolev injection it yields

$$A_2 \leq C\|g\|_\infty \|u\|_{1,p}^{pt}.$$

To estimate A_1 we apply the Hölder inequality to get

$$A_1^{\frac{\alpha}{p(1-t)}} \leq \left(\int g(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})' dx \right)^{\frac{1}{(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})'}} \left(\int |u|^{q^*} \right)^{\frac{\alpha}{q^*}}.$$

By Sobolev embedding we can conclude that

$$A_1 \leq C\|g\|_{(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})'}^{p(1-t)} \|u\|_{1,q}^{p(1-t)}$$

and Lemma 2 follows. □

Lemma 3. *The functional I satisfies the Palais-Smale condition $(PS)_c$ for any $c \in \mathbb{R}$.*

Proof. Let $(u_n) \subset W$ be a Palais-Smale sequence at a level $c \in \mathbb{R}$. This means that

$$I(u_n) \rightarrow c \text{ and } I'(u_n) \rightarrow 0 \text{ in } W'.$$

We will show that u_n is a bounded sequence. Since $I(u_n)$ is a real convergent sequence then there exists $M > 0$ such that

$$I(u_n) = \frac{1}{p}\|u_n\|_{1,p}^p + \frac{1}{q}\|u_n\|_{1,q}^q - \frac{\lambda}{p} \int g|u_n|^p dx < M$$

$$\frac{1}{p} \left(\|u_n\|_{1,p}^p + \|u_n\|_{1,q}^q \right) \leq \frac{1}{p}\|u_n\|_{1,p}^p + \frac{1}{q}\|u_n\|_{1,q}^q \leq M + \frac{\lambda}{p} \int g|u_n|^p dx.$$

We entail that

$$\langle I'(u_n), u_n \rangle = \|u_n\|_{1,p}^p + \|u_n\|_{1,q}^q - \lambda \int g|u_n|^p dx \leq pM.$$

This means that $\langle I'(u_n), u_n \rangle$ is bounded. We conclude that $(\frac{1}{q} - \frac{1}{p})\|u_n\|_{1,q}^q = I(u_n) - \frac{1}{p}\langle I'(u_n), u_n \rangle$ is a bounded real sequence i.e. (u_n) is bounded in $W^{1,q}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Put

$$J(u_n) = \int |\nabla u_n|^p dx - \lambda \int g|u_n|^p dx.$$

By the above considerations, $J(u_n)$ is a real convergent sequence. So, there exists $C > 0$ such that

$$\int |\nabla u_n|^p dx \leq C + \lambda \int g|u_n|^p dx.$$

By Lemma 2 and the boundedness of u_n in $W^{1,q}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ we can find a positive constant, still denoted C , such that

$$\|u_n\|_{1,p}^p \leq C(1 + \|u_n\|_{1,p}^{pt}). \tag{2.3}$$

If u_n is not bounded in $W^{1,p}(\mathbb{R}^N)$, we can suppose that $\|u_n\|_{1,p} \rightarrow \infty$. By relation 2.3, we have that

$$\|u_n\|_{1,p}^{p(1-t)} \leq C(1 + \|u_n\|_{1,p}^{-pt}).$$

Since $0 < t < 1$ we conclude that $\|u_n\|_{1,p}$ is bounded which is a contradiction.

Consequently, u_n is bounded in W and then there exists $u \in W$ such that $u_n \rightharpoonup u$.

It is easy to show that

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \langle I'(u_n) - I'(u), u_n - u \rangle = 0. \tag{2.4}$$

Next, we will show that

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \int g(|u_n|^{p-2}u_n - |u|^{p-2}u)v dx = 0 \text{ for all } v \in W. \tag{2.5}$$

We have by Hölder inequality and assumption 1.6 that for any $R > 0$

$$| \int_{B_R} g(|u_n|^{p-2}u_n - |u|^{p-2}u)v dx |$$

$$\leq \|g\|_\infty \left(\int_{B_R} |u_n|^{p-2} u_n - |u|^{p-2} u |^{(p^*)'} dx \right)^{\frac{1}{(p^*)'}} \left(\int_{B_R} |v|^{p^*} dx \right)^{\frac{1}{p^*}}.$$

Here B_R denotes the ball of radius R in \mathbb{R}^N centred at the origin and we will denote $B'_R = \mathbb{R}^N \setminus B_R$.

So by Sobolev embedding it yields

$$\begin{aligned} & \left| \int_{B_R} g(|u_n|^{p-2} u_n - |u|^{p-2} u) v dx \right| \\ & \leq C \|g\|_\infty \|v\| \left(\int_{B_R} |u_n|^{p-2} u_n - |u|^{p-2} u |^{(p^*)'} dx \right)^{\frac{1}{(p^*)'}} \end{aligned}$$

Since u_n is weakly convergent to u in $W^{1,p}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ then $(\chi_{B_R} u_n)$ is also weakly convergent to $(\chi_{B_R} u)$ in $W^{1,p}(B_R)$. We can deduce that $(\chi_{B_R} u_n)$ converges strongly to $(\chi_{B_R} u)$ in $L^{(p^*)'(p-1)}(B_R)$ since $(p^*)'(p-1) < p^*$. Then there exists a subsequence, still denoted $(\chi_{B_R} u_n)$, and $h \in L^{(p^*)'(p-1)}(B_R)$ such that $\chi_{B_R} u_n \rightarrow \chi_{B_R} u$ a.e. in B_R as $n \rightarrow \infty$ and for all n , $|\chi_{B_R} u_n| \leq h$ a.e. in B_R . It follows that $\chi_{B_R} |u_n|^{p-2} u_n \rightarrow \chi_{B_R} |u|^{p-2} u$ a.e. in B_R and $\chi_{B_R} |u_n|^{p-1} \leq h^{p-1}$ a.e. in B_R . By the Lebesgue Theorem there exists another subsequence, still denoted $(\chi_{B_R} u_n)$, such that $\chi_{B_R} |u_n|^{p-2} u_n \rightarrow \chi_{B_R} |u|^{p-2} u$ strongly in $L^{(p^*)'}(B_R)$.

In an other hand we have by the Hölder inequality that for any $v \in W$

$$\begin{aligned} \left| \int_{B'_R} g(|u_n|^{p-2} u_n - |u|^{p-2} u) v dx \right| & \leq \left(\int_{B'_R} g |u_n|^{p-2} u_n - |u|^{p-2} u |^{\frac{\alpha p^*}{(p-1)q^*}} dx \right)^{\frac{(p-1)q^*}{\alpha p^*}} \\ & \cdot \left(\int_{B'_R} g |v|^{\left(\frac{\alpha p^*}{(p-1)q^*}\right)'} dx \right)^{\frac{1}{\left(\frac{\alpha p^*}{(p-1)q^*}\right)'}}. \end{aligned}$$

Applying again the Hölder inequality we get

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{B'_R} g |v|^{\left(\frac{\alpha p^*}{(p-1)q^*}\right)'} dx & \leq \|g\|_{L^{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}(B'_R)}^{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)' / \left(\frac{\alpha}{\alpha p^* - (p-1)q^*}\right)' } \left(\int_{B'_R} g^{\frac{pq^* - \alpha p^*}{q^* - \alpha}} |v|^{p^*} dx \right)^{\frac{\alpha}{\alpha p^* - (p-1)q^*}} \\ & \leq C \|g\|_{L^{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}(B'_R)}^{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)' / \left(\frac{\alpha}{\alpha p^* - (p-1)q^*}\right)' } \|g\|_\infty^{\frac{pq^* - \alpha p^*}{q^* - \alpha}} \|v\|_{1,p}^{\frac{\alpha p^*}{\alpha p^* - (p-1)q^*}} \end{aligned}$$

Boundedness of (u_n) together with the above assertions yield

$$\left| \int_{B'_R} g(|u_n|^{p-2} u_n - |u|^{p-2} u) v dx \right| \leq C \|g\|_{L^{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}(B'_R)}^A \|v\|$$

where $A = \frac{(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})'}{(\frac{\alpha}{\alpha p^* - (p-1)q^*})'(\frac{\alpha p^*}{(p-1)q^*})'}$. It follows that

$$\int_{B'_R} g(|u_n|^{p-2}u_n - |u|^{p-2}u)v dx \rightarrow 0$$

when $R \rightarrow \infty$, since $g \in L^{(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})'}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Consequently, $\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \int g(|u_n|^{p-2}u_n - |u|^{p-2}u)v dx = 0$ for all $v \in W$.

From relations 2.4 and 2.5 we get

$$\begin{aligned} &\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \int (|\nabla u_n|^{p-2}\nabla u_n - |\nabla u|^{p-2}\nabla u)(\nabla u_n - \nabla u) dx + \\ &+ \int (|\nabla u_n|^{q-2}\nabla u_n - |\nabla u|^{q-2}\nabla u)(\nabla u_n - \nabla u) dx = 0. \end{aligned}$$

By the Hölder inequality we have

$$\begin{aligned} &\int (|\nabla u_n|^{p-2}\nabla u_n - |\nabla u|^{p-2}\nabla u)(\nabla u_n - \nabla u) dx \geq \int |\nabla u_n|^p dx + |\nabla u|^p dx - \\ &- \left(\int |\nabla u_n|^p dx\right)^{\frac{p-1}{p}} \left(\int |\nabla u|^p dx\right)^{\frac{1}{p}} - \left(\int |\nabla u_n|^p dx\right)^{\frac{1}{p}} \left(\int |\nabla u|^p dx\right)^{\frac{p-1}{p}} \\ &= (\|u_n\|_{1,p}^{p-1} - \|u\|_{1,p}^{p-1})(\|u_n\|_{1,p} - \|u\|_{1,p}) \geq 0. \end{aligned}$$

By the same argument it yields

$$\begin{aligned} &\int (|\nabla u_n|^{q-2}\nabla u_n - |\nabla u|^{q-2}\nabla u)(\nabla u_n - \nabla u) dx \\ &\geq (\|u_n\|_{1,q}^{q-1} - \|u\|_{1,q}^{q-1})(\|u_n\|_{1,q} - \|u\|_{1,q}) \geq 0. \end{aligned}$$

It follows that $\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \|u_n\|_{1,p} = \|u\|_{1,p}$ and $\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \|u_n\|_{1,q} = \|u\|_{1,q}$. This together with the weak convergence of u_n to u in W implies that u_n is strongly convergent to u in W and the proof is complete. □

Next, we will show that the functional I given by 1.7 satisfies the Mountain pass geometry.

Lemma 4. *1. There exist $\rho, \beta > 0$ such that $I(u) \geq \beta$ on $\|u\| = \rho$.*

2. There exists $u_0 \in W$ with $\|u_0\| > \rho$ and $I(u_0) < 0$.

Proof. (1) Let $u \in W$, we put $\rho = \|u\| = \rho_1 + \rho_2$ were $\|u\|_{1,p} = \rho_1$ and $\|u\|_{1,q} = \rho_2$. By relation 2.2 it yields

$$\begin{aligned} I(u) &\geq \frac{1}{p}\rho_1^p - \frac{\lambda}{p}C\|g\|_\infty\|g\|_{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}^{p(1-t)}\rho_1^{pt}\rho_2^{q(1-t)} \\ &\geq \frac{1}{p}\rho_1^{pt}\left(\rho_1^{p(1-t)} - \lambda C\|g\|_\infty\|g\|_{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}^{p(1-t)}\rho_2^{q(1-t)}\right) \end{aligned}$$

We can choose $\rho_2 = \varepsilon$ and $\rho_1 = \left(1 + \lambda C\|g\|_\infty\|g\|_{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}^{p(1-t)}\varepsilon^{q(1-t)}\right)^{\frac{1}{p(1-t)}}$ for a sufficiently small $\varepsilon > 0$. Consequently

$$I(u) \geq \frac{1}{p}\left(1 + \lambda C\|g\|_\infty\|g\|_{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}^{p(1-t)}\varepsilon^{q(1-t)}\right)^{\frac{t}{(1-t)}} > 0$$

for any $u \in W$ such that $\|u\| = \left(1 + \lambda C\|g\|_\infty\|g\|_{\left(\frac{q^*}{\alpha}\right)'}^{p(1-t)}\varepsilon^{q(1-t)}\right)^{\frac{1}{p(1-t)}} + \varepsilon$.

(2) We denote by φ the normalized eigenfunction associated to the first eigenvalue λ_1 of the p -Laplacian with weight g , namely

$$-div(\nabla|\varphi|^{p-2}\nabla\varphi) = \lambda_1g|\varphi|^{p-2}\varphi \text{ in } \mathbb{R}^N$$

and

$$\int |\nabla\varphi|^p dx = 1.$$

Hence,

$$I(\tau\varphi) = \frac{\tau^p}{p} + \frac{\tau^q}{q} \int |\nabla\varphi|^q dx - \frac{\lambda\tau^p}{p} \int g|\varphi|^p dx, \tau > 0.$$

Since $\int g|\varphi|^p dx = \frac{1}{\lambda_1}$ we get

$$I(\tau\varphi) = \frac{\tau^p}{p}\left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{\lambda_1}\right) + \frac{\tau^q}{q} \int |\nabla\varphi|^q dx.$$

We claim that any eigenvalue of problem 1.4 satisfies $\lambda > \lambda_1$. So $I(\tau\varphi) \rightarrow -\infty$ when $\tau \rightarrow +\infty$. Consequently, there exists $\tau_0 > 0$ such that $I(\tau_0\varphi) < 0$ and we put $u_0 = \tau_0\varphi$. □

We return now to the claim that any eigenvalue λ of problem 1.4 satisfies $\lambda > \lambda_1$. For this, we introduce the quantity

$$\lambda^* = \inf_{\substack{u \in W \\ u \neq 0}} \frac{\int |\nabla u|^p dx + \int |\nabla u|^q dx}{\int g|u|^p dx}.$$

For any $u \in W$ we have

$$\frac{\int |\nabla u|^p dx + \int |\nabla u|^q dx}{\int g|u|^p dx} \geq \inf_{\substack{u \in W \\ u \neq 0}} \frac{\int |\nabla u|^p dx}{\int g|u|^p dx} \geq \inf_{\substack{u \in W^{1,p}(\mathbb{R}^N) \\ u \neq 0}} \frac{\int |\nabla u|^p dx}{\int g|u|^p dx} = \lambda_1.$$

So it follows that λ^* is a positive real number.

We suppose that there exists an eigenvalue λ of problem 1.4 such that $\lambda < \lambda^*$. So there exists $v \in W, v \neq 0$ that verifies

$$\int |\nabla v|^p dx + \int |\nabla v|^q dx = \lambda \int g|v|^p dx.$$

Then we get

$$\lambda^* > \lambda = \frac{\int |\nabla v|^p dx + \int |\nabla v|^q dx}{\int g|v|^p dx} \geq \inf_{\substack{u \in W \\ u \neq 0}} \frac{\int |\nabla u|^p dx + \int |\nabla u|^q dx}{\int g|u|^p dx} = \lambda^*$$

which is a contradiction. So, there is no eigenvalue less than λ^* and it is clear that $\lambda_1 < \lambda^*$. In addition, λ^* cannot be an eigenvalue of problem 1.4. Indeed, let $u_n \in W$ a minimizing sequence of λ^* . Similar arguments as used in [3] show that u_n converges strongly to a nontrivial function $u \in W$ that satisfies

$$p \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} \nabla u \cdot \nabla w dx + q \int |\nabla u|^{q-2} \nabla u \cdot \nabla w dx = \lambda^* p \int g|u|^{p-2} w dx$$

for all $w \in W$. This fact together with definition 2.1 implies that

$$\int |\nabla u|^{q-2} \nabla u \cdot \nabla w dx = 0 \text{ for all } w \in W.$$

Hence, $u \equiv 0$ which is a contradiction.

Proof of Theorem 1. Define the minimax class

$$\mathbf{B} = \{\psi \in C([0, 1], W), \psi(0) = 0, \psi(1) = u_0\}$$

and the corresponding minimax level

$$c = \inf_{\psi \in \mathbf{B}} \max_{\tau \in [0, 1]} I(\psi(\tau)).$$

By the previous lemmas it follows that the assumptions of the Mountain-Pass Theorem are fulfilled. Therefore for any $\lambda > \lambda^*$, c is a critical value of I associated to a critical point $u_\lambda \in W$. Namely, $I'(u_\lambda) = 0$ and $I(u_\lambda) = c$. By Lemma 4(1) we have necessarily $c \geq \frac{1}{p}(1 + \lambda C \|g\|_\infty \|g\|_{(\frac{q^*}{\alpha})'}^{p(1-t)} \varepsilon^{q(1-t)})^{\frac{t}{(1-t)}} > 0$. Hence, u_λ cannot be trivial since $I(0) = 0$. Hence, Theorem 1 is proved. \square

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