

## Exploring Socio-economic Correlates of Production Needs for Enhancing Food Security Through Farm Youth in Southwest Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the level of youth participation in crop farming activities and relationship with their levels of interest and satisfaction derived; also production needs of the youth and their correlates were determined. Structured interview schedule was used to elicit information from 353 crop farm youth randomly and proportionately selected across the eight farm communities in the study area. Also, unstructured interviews were conducted to probe into some of the issues that were not satisfactorily buttressed during the administration of structured interview. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that most of the activities in which the farm youth participated much attracted very low interest with no satisfaction derived. The study also established some socio-economic correlates of the production needs of the farm youth as: family size, years of formal education, farming experience, income, satisfaction derived, gender and career aspiration, among others.

**Key words:** Production needs, Socio-economics correlates, Crop farming activities, Food security and Farm youth

### INTRODUCTION

The larger parts of the Nigerian population live in rural areas, where more than half are living below poverty level. Over 63.0 percent of this population is engaging in various forms of farming activities<sup>[5]</sup>. Empirical evidences have also shown that these rural farm families produce mainly with the help of their family members especially their children since most of them could not afford to pay for either adequate labour or modern farm equipment<sup>[15]</sup>. In the country, agricultural production kept pace with the population growth between 1950s and 1960s, during which the farmers were able to produce enough food to feed the nation and also supply enough essential raw materials to the agro-industrial sector, aside the provision of employment opportunities to about 50 percent of the adult labour force (UNICEF, 1991).

However, after the country's civil war in the late 1960s, there was a drastic shortfall in food and raw material productions, which resulted to high cost of food prices and scarcity of agro-industrial raw materials. Moreso, shortly after the end of the civil war, discovery of oil in the country further diverted the government's attention and interest from the agricultural sector. The contribution of the sector to the socio-economic development was almost brought to absolute zero before it started to dawn on the citizenry that there was the need to revitalize the sector.

In recognition of these problems, the various successive governments have devised different programs

towards revitalizing the agricultural sector via rural development. Among the programs initiated were: National Accelerated Food Production Programme in 1974, Operation Feed the Nation in 1976; River Basin Development Authorities in 1976, Green Revolution in 1980; Back to Land in 1984, States' Agricultural Development Projects in 1986, Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure in 1987, Rapid Food Production Programme (RFPP) in 2001, Natural Agricultural Data Bank Project (NADB) in 2001. However, it has been variously reported<sup>[1,2,8]</sup> that most of the objectives of these programs could not be achieved since they could only make little or no significant impact in revitalizing the agricultural sector.

One of the major deficiencies of these programs was the neglect of the youth whose population is more than half of the total population in the rural areas<sup>[5]</sup>. Although, they contribute to the socio-economic and political growth of their communities by providing economic and emotional supports to their parents<sup>[11]</sup>; however, their interest has not been adequately and properly integrated into the country's agricultural policy vis-à-vis national development. Yet, they are very significant in agricultural development because they are energetically stronger to participate in crop farming<sup>[10]</sup> than their parents who are ageing and whose age may limit their participation. Moreso, the youth, having suffered a great neglect, deprivation, marginalization, exploitation or actual oppression according to Auta<sup>[4]</sup> could not effectively participate in crop farming activities, which is more

evidenced in the study conducted by Akinkunmi<sup>[3]</sup> and Williams<sup>[19]</sup>, which showed that youth's interest in farming activities is diminishing. However, for food and raw materials to be available at the required quantity to meet local and export demands, the production needs of the farm youths must be met so as to check their influx into urban centres where they constitute socio-economic burden on the nation and more importantly to boost agricultural production and productivity in Nigeria. The production needs of farm youth are the basic necessities which are directly used on the farm as tools and machineries in carrying out the various cultural activities on the farm. Understanding of these needs and their correlates is expected to engender adequate strategy to be employed by the policy makers in facilitating the farm youth for enhancing food security in the country.

The foregoing, therefore, required the research into identification of correlates of production needs of the farm youth that could enhance food security in the country. The study is, therefore, aimed at providing answers to the following pertinent research questions as: what is the current level of participation of the youth in crop farming activities?; what are the relationships between the farm youth's levels of participation, interest and satisfaction derived from their participation in crop farming activities and; which variables could determine their production needs which could be explored for enhancing food security?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in Ogun State, one of the leading agrarian States in Southwest Nigeria with about 32 percent youth population highly involved in crop farming, which is predominantly practiced. The major agricultural produce in the State include: *Oryza sativa* (Rice), *Zea mays* (Maize), *Vigna spp.* (Cowpea), *Manihot spp.* (Cassava), *Dioscorea spp.* (Yam), *Musa spp.* (Plantain/Banana), *Citrus spp.* (Orange), fruity and leafy vegetables, *Theobroma spp.* (Cocoa), *Saccharium spp.* (Sugar cane), *Ananas spp.* (Pineapple), *Carica spp.* (Pawpaw), *Kola spp.* (Kolanut), *Elaeis spp.* (Oil palm) etc. The rural settlement in the State is viewed as a compact settlement with a resident population of not more than 20,000 people characterized by a fairly high agricultural labour content of at least 40 percent with few basic amenities. With this view, about 63.74 percent of the State's estimated population of about 3.2 million in 1998 were said to be living and working in the rural areas<sup>[14]</sup>.

One Local Government Area (LGA) with the highest rural population was purposively selected from each of the four divisions of the State viz: Ijebu North, Remo North, Abeokuta North and Yewa South, respectively. Two rural communities in which many farm youth are actively involved in crop farming were purposively selected from each of the selected LGAs, making a total

of eight rural communities (Aba Paanu, Agunboye, Akaka Remo, Odofin, Isaga Orile, Olorunda, Idogo, Eredo). About 7.2 percent sample of the estimated population of the farm youth between the age of 13 and 30 were randomly selected from each of the eight selected rural communities. This makes a total of three hundred and fifty three (353) farm youth interviewed for the study.

Pre-tested and validated structured interview schedule was designed and used to elicit information from the farm youth under the following section: Farm youth's participation in crop farming activities; levels of interest and satisfaction derived; and production needs. Also, unstructured interviews were conducted to probe into some of the issues that were not satisfactorily buttressed during the administration of structured interview. Simple descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, rank order and pie chart were used to summarize the data collected while the Pearson's correlation and chi-square analyses were used to establish some of the correlates of the production needs.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Farm Youth Participation in Crop Farming Activities:

In order to understand the extent to which the farm youth participate in the various crop farming activities, a list of validated crop farming activities in the study area was presented to the respondents for them to rate on a 4-point scale (ranging from no participation to much participation) their level of participation in each of the activities. Data in Table 1 revealed that majority (over 75%) of the farm youth indicated much participation in land clearing, ridge making, heap making, planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, storage and marketing; while over 80.0 percent indicated that they have never participated in irrigation, drainage/flood control, cover cropping, green manuring and compost making. On average, the study revealed that over 51 percent were highly participated in the crop farming activities (Fig. 1).

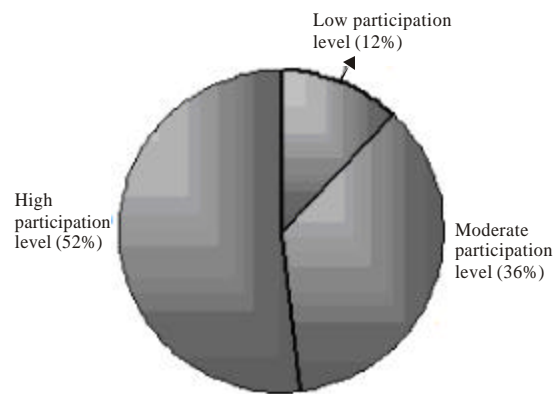


Fig. 1: Distribution of farm youth according to their level of participation in crop farming activities

Table 1: Distribution of rural youths by level of participation in each of the crop farming activities

Crop farming activities	No Participation	Little Participation	Moderate Participation	Much Participation
Land Clearing	1 (0.28)	1 (0.28)	45 (12.75)	306 (86.69)
Bed making	21 (5.95)	101 (28.61)	231 (65.44)	0 (0.00)
Nursery	210 (59.49)	129 (36.54)	6 (1.70)	8 (2.27)
Ridge Making	15 (4.25)	7 (1.98)	21 (5.95)	310 (87.82)
Heap making	14 (3.97)	13 (3.68)	25 (7.08)	301 (85.27)
Transplanting	72 (20.40)	217 (61.47)	50 (14.16)	14 (3.97)
Planting	31 (8.78)	11 (3.12)	18 (5.10)	293 (93.00)
Thinning	36 (10.20)	259 (73.37)	52 (14.73)	6 (1.70)
Supplying	27 (7.65)	265 (75.07)	58 (16.43)	3 (0.85)
Weeding	3 (0.85)	5 (1.42)	19 (5.38)	326 (92.35)
Manure Application	271 (76.77)	69 (19.55)	13 (3.68)	0 (0.00)
Fertilizer Application	85 (24.08)	208 (58.92)	58 (16.43)	2 (0.57)
Fallowing	233 (66.01)	43 (12.18)	50 (14.16)	27 (7.65)
Mulching	215 (60.91)	130 (36.83)	7 (1.98)	1 (0.28)
Staking	205 (58.07)	104 (29.46)	42 (11.90)	2 (0.57)
Pruning	25 (7.08)	169 (47.88)	155 (43.91)	4 (1.13)
Pest Control	19 (5.38)	122 (34.56)	206 (58.36)	6 (1.70)
Disease Control	23 (6.52)	103 (29.18)	217 (61.47)	10 (2.83)
Spraying of chemicals	55 (15.59)	98 (27.76)	180 (50.99)	20 (5.67)
Crop rotation	115 (32.58)	145(41.08)	83 (23.51)	10 (2.83)
Pilferage control	17 (4.82)	20 (5.67)	196 (55.52)	120 (33.99)
Harvesting	3 (0.85)	5 (1.42)	41 (11.61)	304 (86.12)
Processing	2 (0.57)	10 (2.83)	73 (20.68)	268 (75.92)
Storage	4 (1.13)	6 (1.70)	58 (16.43)	285 (80.74)
Marketing	13 (3.68)	3 (0.85)	31 (8.78)	306 (86.69)

Note: Figures within the parenthesis represents the percentage of 353 farm youth. Source: Field survey, 2004

This finding also supports the report of Farinde *et al.*<sup>[6]</sup> in their study of farm children involvement in crop production activities in which it was established that majority of farm children participated more in land clearing, ridge making, planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, storage and marketing of farm produce. In addition, they further established that little above average percentage of the respondents was involved in fertilizers and herbicides application and spraying of chemicals. Also, Olujide *et al.*<sup>[13]</sup>, in their study of involvement of farmers' children in farming activities, found that majority of the farmers' children participated in land clearing and marketing of farm produce.

**Relationships between the farm youth's participation, interest and satisfaction derived in crop farming activities:** In order to ascertain the relationships between the farm youth's level of participation in crop farming activities and their levels of interest and satisfaction derived. The respondents were asked to rate their level of interest (ranging from not interested, fairly interested, undecided, interested and very interested) and their level of satisfaction (ranging from very dissatisfied, not satisfied, undecided, satisfied and very satisfied) in the various 30 activities in which they participated in against a 5-points scale as shown in the respective parentheses above. Weighted mean of their levels of participation, interest and satisfaction derived in each of the various

Table 2: Comparative analysis of crop farming activities in relation to the rank order of fam youth levels of participation, interest and satisfaction

Crop farming activities Index	Level of participation		Level of interest		Level of satisfaction	
	Weighted Mean	Rank	Weighted Mean	Rank	Weighted Mean	Rank
Weeding	3.8924	1	1.0028	28	1.3059	7
Harvesting	3.8300	2	2.1813	4	1.6487	5
Marketing	3.7848	3	3.5609	1	1.9858	3
Ridge making	3.7734	4	1.0595	23	1.0339	20
Storage	3.7677	5	2.3399	3	2.0878	2
Heap making	3.7355	6	1.0623	22	1.0057	24
Processing	3.7195	7	2.3711	2	2.0963	1
Planting	3.6232	8	1.3116	9	1.4051	6
Pilferage control	3.1897	9	1.7762	5	1.7875	4
Disease control	2.6062	10	1.4533	6	1.2550	9
Bed making	2.5950	11	1.1105	18	1.0227	22
Pest control	2.5637	12	1.4025	7	1.2068	11
Spraying of chemicals	2.4674	13	1.3768	8	1.3031	8
Pruning	2.3907	14	1.2210	11	1.1926	12
Supplying	2.1048	15	1.3059	10	1.0595	17
Thinning	2.0793	16	1.2096	12	1.1785	13
Transplanting	2.0170	17	1.2040	13	1.1048	15
Crop rotation	1.9660	18	1.0198	27	1.1615	14
Fertilizer application	1.9348	19	1.1586	14	1.2606	10
Fallowing	1.6346	20	1.1331	16	1.1926	12
Staking	1.5496	21	1.0368	25	1.0918	22
Nursery	1.4674	22	1.1275	17	1.0198	22
Mulching	1.4164	23	1.0652	21	1.0113	23
Manure application	1.2691	24	1.0623	22	1.0453	18
Irrigation	1.1671	25	1.1360	15	1.0623	16
Drainage/flood control	1.0594	26	1.0935	19	1.0113	23
Compost making	1.0481	27	1.0623	22	1.0283	20
Cover cropping	1.0283	28	1.0907	20	1.0113	23
Land clearing	1.0255	29	1.0340	26	1.0339	19
Green manuring	1.0198	30	1.0560	24	1.0000	25

Source: Field survey, 2004

crop farming activities were calculated and ranked as shown in Table 2. It was revealed that most of the activities in which they (farm youth) participated much attracted very low interest with no satisfaction derived. For instance, weeding with weighted mean of 3.8924 was

ranked number 1 in participation, while their interest in it was ranked number 28 and their level of satisfaction was ranked number 7.

This further corroborates that most of the farm youth only participated in most of the crop farming activities

without deriving any interest or satisfaction in them. However, their much participation in marketing, storage and processing activities were in consonance with the high level of interest and satisfaction derived from these activities (Table 2), which could be classified as those with little drudgery. It was however, further revealed through the unstructured interview that females were more involved in those activities, which was in agreement with the findings of Jibowo<sup>[11]</sup> which reported that the males engaged in agricultural production than their female counterpart who is more involved in processing and selling of commodities produced by their male folk. Also, Oyekunle<sup>[16]</sup>, established in his study of parental perception of children's involvement in farming activities that many parents were not interested in their children becoming farmers, but they only involved them in farming because they do not have a better economic alternative.

**Socio-economic Correlates of the Production Needs of Farm Youth:** Production needs was determined by asking the respondents to rate each of the thirty six items (Table 3) generally perceived to be primarily required for effective crop farming activities on a four-point scale according to their order of importance. Drawings or photographs of some crop farm needs, which were nomenclated with different local names, were also provided as guide. Their responses were categorized and scored as follows: not needed (1), fairly needed (2), needed (3) and highly needed (4). The minimum score for each respondent was thirty six (36) points and the maximum score was one hundred and fifty four (154) points. Their crop production needs was ranked using the weighted mean production need score for each of the crop farming activities.

The study revealed that over 71.11 percent of the respondents rated fertilizers to be highly needed, tractor services (69.41%), bulldozer services (65.44%), cutlasses (63.46%), hand gloves (59.49%), hoes (51.27%), sacks or jute bag (50.14%) and shovel (45.61%). Others that were rated to be needed include pesticides (85.84%), storage facilities (73.94%), processing facilities (73.09%), hired labour (50.99%), improved seeds (49.86%), axe (49.58%), rake (42.78%), herbicides (41.08%) and sickle (37.11%). In addition, watering can (47.88%) and garden fork (47.03%) were indicated to be fairly needed, while drainage structure or flood control devices (82.15%), land (81.59%) dam (76.37%), dibber (63.17%), secateurs (62.89%), irrigation devices (51.56%), mattock (48.16%), shears (45.89%), tapping knife (43.06%), hand fork (42.49%) and head pan (39.94%) were rated not to be part of their production needs.

Data in Table 3 further revealed that the fertilizers, tractor services, bull dozer services, hand gloves, cutlasses, herbicides, storage facilities, processing facilities, hoe, jute bags and hired labor were ranked to be

Table 3: Rank order of farm youth weighted mean score of production needs

Production needs index	Production needs Mean score	Rank order
Fertilizer	3.7025	1.
Tractor services	3.6431	2.
Bulldozer services	3.5071	3.
Hand gloves	3.4278	4.
Cutlasses	3.4023	5.
Herbicides	3.3967	6.
Storage facilities	3.1813	7.
Processing facilities	3.1700	8.
Hoe	3.1671	9.
Sacks of jute bags	3.1020	10.
Hired labor	3.0850	11.
Shovel	2.9688	12.
Rain boot	2.9660	13.
Improved seeds	2.9348	14.
Pesticides	2.9178	15.
Rake	2.9178	16.
Wheel barrow	2.8527	17.
Preservation	2.7365	18.
Axe	2.7025	19.
Sickle	2.4164	20.
Spade	2.3881	21.
Hand trowel	2.3021	22.
Knapsack sprayer	2.2465	23.
Head pan	2.2181	24.
Garden fork	2.2040	25.
Watering can	2.0255	26.
Tapping knife	1.8385	27.
Hand fork	1.7904	28.
Shears	1.7819	29.
Mattock	1.7309	30.
Dibber	1.6374	31.
Irrigation	1.6062	32.
Secateurs	1.5637	33.
Dam	1.2776	34.
Drainage structure or flood control devices	1.2436	35.
Land	0.4334	36.

Source: Field survey, 2004.

among the first eleven major production needs in crop farming activities with weighted mean more than 3.

In order to establish the socio-economic correlates of the production needs of farm youth, some socio-economic characteristics of the farm youth which were presumed to possibly have a measure of influence on the production needs were tested using Pearson correlation (r) analysis for a parametric variable and Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis for a non-parametric variable as appropriate. Of all the sixteen variables tested only twelve were found to have significant relationship with the production needs of the farm youth at 0.05 level (Tables 4 and 5). It was revealed that years of formal education ( $r = 0.219$ ), years of farming ( $r = 0.116$ ) and income ( $r = 0.138$ ) had positive and significant relationship with production needs of the farm youth. The result of the unstructured interview further revealed that majority of the farm youth who are educated still participate actively in crop farming activities being the major source of life sustenance in the rural area. The relatively high number of years spent in the formal education might have increased their level of

Table 4: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between the production needs and some socio-economic variables

Characteristics [X-variables]	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Coefficient of determination (r <sup>2</sup> )	Percentage contribution
Family size	- 0.186	0.034596*	3.46
Years of formal education	0.219	0.047961*	4.80
Years of farming	0.116	0.013456*	1.35
Income	0.138	0.019044*	1.90
Level of satisfaction in crop farming	- 0.102	0.10404*	10.40

Number of respondents = 353, Degree of freedom = 351, Level of significance = 0.05 Critical value of 'r' at [0.05] [351]\* = 0.098.

Table 5: Chi - Square analysis showing the association between production needs of rural youths and some socio-economic variables

Variables	Chi-square calculated (χ <sup>2</sup> c)	Chi-square tabulated (χ <sup>2</sup> t)	Degree of freedom (d.f)	Co-efficient of contingency (C)
Gender	24.55*	5.99	2	0.25
Mode of living	22.79*	15.51	8	0.25
Career Aspiration	120.56*	9.49	4	0.50
Sources of finance	49.31*	18.31	10	0.30
Parental Dependency	97.71*	9.49	4	0.47
Extent of External Orientation	74.94*	9.49	4	0.42
Ownership of Farm	27.74*	5.99	2	0.30

Key: \*Significant at 0.05 level

education vis-à-vis their knowledge on the use of farm inputs which were not indigenous to their community. This further explained the reason for the increase in their production needs compare to their counterparts who were less educated. Suffice to say, therefore, that the more the years spent in formal education, the more their consciousness of their production needs. Also, the significant relationship between the production needs and farming experience was acquired over the years, which showed that the farming experience increases their knowledge in the profession and in the course of acquiring this knowledge, they are exposed to innovations on farm inputs which can influence their production needs. The positive and significant relationship between the income and production needs of the farm youth points to the fact that their level of income is a function of their scale of production which in turn determines their production needs. This further implied that those that operate on a large scale of production require more production needs and hence, more income is earned. In addition, the result on Table 4 also revealed a negative and significant relationship between family size ( $r = -0.186$ ), level of satisfaction ( $r = -0.102$ ) and production needs of farm youth. This showed that the family size would negatively influence the production needs of the youth. For instance, high number of family size, which is a typical phenomenon in an African family setting, would to a large extent determine the farm family economic capacity, which might invariably determine the production needs of the farm youth. The findings on the

level of satisfaction derived, point to the fact that as the production need decreases the level of satisfaction in crop farming increases and vice-versa.

Data in Table 5 revealed a positive and significant association between the production needs of farm youth and some of the variables with varying percentages of co-efficient of contingency as follows: gender (25.00%), mode of living (25.00%), career aspiration (50.00%), source(s) of finance to farming activities (30.00%), parental dependency (47.00%), extent of external orientation (42.00%) and ownership of farm (30.00%).

The finding further points to the fact that gender influences the choice of production needs because young men and women participate in different cultural practices on the farm and at varying level of participation. The result of the unstructured interview also revealed that the tenderness and fragile nature of the young female farmers tend to prone them to participate in those cultural practices that are less energy intensive such as processing and marketing than their male counterpart. This could further be explained by the findings of Farinde *et al.*<sup>[6]</sup> and Olujide *et al.*<sup>[13]</sup> in which they found that the cultural activities on the farm are allocated base on the farmers' children gender. Yomi Alfred<sup>[20]</sup> in his study of children's cognitive potentials on their psychological behaviour towards agriculture also found that gender influences attitude of children towards agriculture.

The findings with regards to the positive and significant association between production needs, parental dependency and mode of living of farm youth imply that

the youth whose parents have intrinsic interest in crop farming and on whom they depend for their production needs, shelter, clothing, schooling and feeding may be influenced to participate more in crop farming than those whose parents are not and this may influence their production needs. This finding is in consonance with Houghton<sup>[7]</sup> when he established that attitude towards farming will be improved when one has a well-to-do parent who is primarily a farmer and that lack of this may, however, lower or dampen such interest.

The result of the study also showed that career aspiration and ownership of farm significantly influence the production needs of the youth. The result of the unstructured interview revealed that the farm youth who aspire for non-farming profession has the least production needs compared to those who wish to become future farmers. Moreso, those who own farm(s) have more production needs than those who do not, in this regards, ownership of farm is presumed to be a reflection of an intrinsic interest in crop farming.

The finding further showed that production needs were also influenced by source(s) of finance for farming activities. Those who were sponsoring themselves or sourcing finance from their parents, family and or friends, might have less production needs due to financial inadequacy occasioned by the source, which might have lowered their scale of production. Whereas those who are able to secure prompt and adequate loan from banks and cooperative society might have more production needs due to their relatively high scale of production.

The significant association between production needs and extent of external orientation revealed that those who have more contact with the other communities outside their community were prone to be more exposed to innovations outside their community than those whose contact was limited to their community. Hence, their production needs would be more. This finding is in support of Torimiro<sup>[17]</sup> who found positive and significant relationship between cosmopolitanism (which is the extent to which they are exposed to life outside their residential community) and their adoption level.

**Conclusion:** The assessment of farm youth participation in crop farming activities and their production needs has revealed the various crop farming activities in which the youth are interested vis a vis those from which they derived satisfaction, coupled with the correlates of the production needs. Exploration of this revelation in implementing agricultural programmes that are focusing on farm youth will go a long way in enhancing food security in Nigeria. For instance, participation of farm youth in crop farming activities, such as marketing, processing and storage, among others, as revealed in this study would ordinarily enjoy both their (farm youth) interest and satisfaction with little or no efforts, compare to many other activities, such as ridge and heap makings

in which most of the farm youth are only participating without significant interest and satisfaction. Hence, facilitating the youth participation in crop farming activities under a crop farming project requires the proper understanding of this fact in order to develop adequate strategy that would ensure success of the project.

Also, all the twelve socio-economic correlates of the production needs established in this study could be useful in developing programmes for meeting the production needs of the farm youth when participating in any crop farming project.

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