

Economic Development and Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria: An Assessment of the N-Power Scheme

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Abstract

This study discussed N-Power Scheme as a tool in providing fundamental empowerment in developing economic status of the youths and the nation at large. Several governments have introduced a number of programmes in order to improve the socio-economic and political development of youths in Nigeria but economic challenges are the core problem the country faces. The study critically identified the benefits of N-power programmes as a tool in economic improvement and empowerment of youths in various sectors of the economic. The study explained micro models as one of the mechanisms introduced to support the argument on single rational and utility maximizing individual to economist rationality. In supportive views; the model identified the significance of competitive budget set to improve the lives of people. However, the study was basically conceptual; data were generated through secondary information, such as, journals, books, internets, newspapers, magazines and many more second hand data. The study examined its findings that skills and knowledge are fundamental in tracing the psychological and emotional ability of youths in ensuring effective utilization of the little resources in the progress of the nations. The study evaluated some of its challenges as corruption, nepotism, and ethnicity bias, laziness from the youths, ability to be creative and many more. Finally, the study recommends and ensures adequate strategies and methods that could be employed in transforming and keeping those programmes alive.

Keywords: *N-power, Empowerment, Youths, Economic Development*

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Background to the Study

Youth empowerment programmes across the globe were designed to improve the socio-economic and political status of youths and ensure positive behavioral transformation so as to contribute in the economic development of the nation. Ultimately, the fundamental and epistemological task of the government in providing programs for youth is authentically engaging the weaker ones in brightening their future and at the same time improving the economic status of that particular nation. For example, in United State, according to (R.H, 2019) youth empowerment program in the country were basically designed to address the issues of unhealthy behavior of youths which the country noted will create risk among them and the nation at large. The assessment of the argument in respect of United State response on youth empowerment was quite different with ours. Example, youth empowerment program in Africa under (Young African Leaders Initiative) is one of the programs established by (USAID) with the mission to empower youth across the world. Their aim was to support the youths in so many areas of the economy. (Mandela Washington Fellowship) was also introduced to cater for the youths who could not achieve a better life.

Since independence in 1960, successive Nigerian governments have initiated programmes and projects aimed at empowering the youths. These ranges from in-school education programme for physical and mental development and out-of-school programme aimed at shaping the character and behaviour of the youths, as well as promoting competitive spirit and national unity and integration. In-school programmes include the formation of clubs, encouragement of sporting activities and other out-door activities with discipline instilling organisations such as Boy Scouts, Girls Guide and Man O'War. Out of school efforts include facilitation of the emergency and development of voluntary self-help associations which contributes to community development, skills and vocational training programme, competitive activities and cultural festivals. In the decades of 197's and 198's, the Federal Government elevated programme of Youth Development by the establishment of a Ministry of Youths and Sports for instance. Expanded revenue base of the state, arising from increased petroleum export earnings, resulted in the allocation of substantial resources in the funding of such programme. The positions of the researchers were completely different from the current episode in respect of youths empowerment programs, series of programs were established yet a number of youths were completely handicapped in terms of socio-economic and political rights.

Additionally, state governments were encouraged to establish similar ministries at their own level and to initiate their own youth, sports, culture and community development programmes. At the federal level, the National Youth Service Corps programme was launched in 1973 to promote national unity and integration and expose graduates of tertiary institutions to leadership roles and community development projects before joining the job market. The Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre, Shere Hills, Jos, was developed and made to intensify its short-duration programmes and courses for youths with potentials for leadership. National sports and cultural festivals were also organized in the 1970's and 1980's as foundation for the search, identification and encouragement of talent amongst the youth. However, the first attempt to introduce a National Youth Policy was in 1983. This was followed with the drafting of an inclusive Social Development Policy for Nigeria in 1989,

providing the basis for a review of the first policy on youth. Regrettably, by the early 1990's, these commendable efforts aimed at youth development started to suffer tremendous neglect. Besides, the policy attempts hardly provided a concrete framework for addressing the heightened problems confronting the youth. This was partly because the implementation mechanisms of the policy were weak and ineffective and also partly because the macro-economic and socio-political environment was not conducive.

Statement of the Problem

In 1990's youth establishment came to be increasingly equated with sporting activities and competitions. Even then, these were not given the necessary policy and material support that they required. Programmes for civic education and leadership training suffered a serious setback. The issue of empowerment was hardly ever addressed. According to Egobooster, 2011, some of the problems facing youth empowering programs were poor monitoring and supervision of youth programs, lack of effective funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, weakness on the part of youths, poor management of youths, over population, poor correctional facilities, insufficient correctional centers, poor policy implementation, poor national economic policy, inability to address rural areas, particularly, in the area of agricultural development and many more. The position of the researchers in respect of all these problems identified by Egobooster, 2011, where completely practical with the current episodes that were happening in the nation, however, the country has experienced several strategies in the fight of eradicating poverty among Nigerian youth. Rafatu and Isah, 2020, noted that, programs were introduced in order to improve the lives of Nigerian youths particularly, in the area of entrepreneurship, education, skill, training and many more.

The federal government dismantled the Ministry of Youths and Sports and many state governments followed suit. Consequently, by the late 1990's it had become evident that Nigerian youths are probably the most neglected by their government compared to youths in other countries. The illustrations in the rise of unemployment and underemployment of the youth heightened involvement of youths which negatively triggered crimes and delinquency, an increase of preventable diseases and other health related problems among the youths, declining school enrolment and drop-out rates, and so on. Clearly, with the return of democracy in 1999, several policies and programs were established to cater for and introduce youths in various socio-economic and political benefits with the aim to achieve dividend of democracy. Over 34 policies and programs for youths hence, the administration embarked on a review of the previous policies, and the development of this new National Youth Development Policy.

Objectives of the Study

The study is fundamental and has vital objectives that need to be achieved. The following objectives are as follows: to discuss the impact of youth empowerment programs across the globe, to explain the progress so far in the establishment of youth empowerment programs and how it affects the economy of Nigeria, to highlight some challenges facing the scheme and to offer recommendations for possible strategies in improving the welfare of youth.

Literature Review/Theoretical Framework

Background of N-POWER Program (Brief) and Global Overview of Youth Empowerment Programs

N-power was established on the 9th of June 2016 with the first phase to target critical needs of the youth in Nigeria in the sectors of education, agriculture, and many more. Youth empowerment is one of the pillars in improving sustainable development. Today, there is large cohort of young people in the world, historically, over 1.8 billion under the age bracket of 25 years (UNFPA, 2014). As people who have come of age and they are the back bone of the world, developmental phase and the cornerstone of the nation's development, they furthered argued that it is fundamental to engage youths in the process of decision making and other valuable issues in the government. It is crucial to engage young policy makers of tomorrow in the development decisions of today. Youth empowerment is the phenomenon when young people realize that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make informed decisions freely, act based on those decisions and accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Empowerment also means having the ability for supporting enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. These enabling conditions fall into major categories such as an economic and social base; political will, access to knowledge, information and skills, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks; a stable environment of equality, peace, democracy and positive value system (African DPA, 2011).

The position of the researchers in respond of the above explanation, it was adequately effective and efficient if youth would be engage in all decision making of any nation, this will guarantee the productivity and sustainable development of any nations, increasingly, youth empowerment programs does not only center on providing youths with skill, education, and other financial assistance, it goes beyond that, that is including youths in various decision making in all sector pf economic, social and political matters.

Several episode regarding youth empowerment programs and initiative across the world have triggered many youths access to several socio-economic and political achievement. It also stresses for people to receive education, to have better health, to have access to decent employment opportunities and to be benefitted from civic and political empowerment (Olalekan, 2013). Globally, young people form a major mass in the current statistics of the world demography constituting over 1.8 billion of total population, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2014). Of this number, 62% live in Asia and 26% live in the SAARC2 region alone. Pakistan is a young country indeed as more than 64% of its total population is below the age of 29 years (Pakistan NHDR, 2015) but majority of them are vulnerable because of the sundry conditions they are coping with. Additionally, United State has the highest number of empowerment program established to reform the lives of youths, therefore, millions of youths have access to governmental properties and have sufficient educational opportunities more than any other country in the world.

Identified Countries in the World with the Best Youth Empowerment Program

Fig. 1

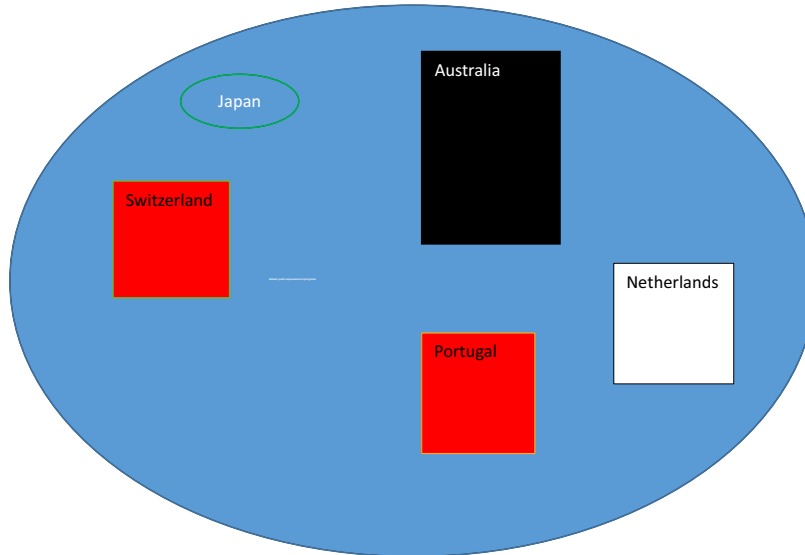
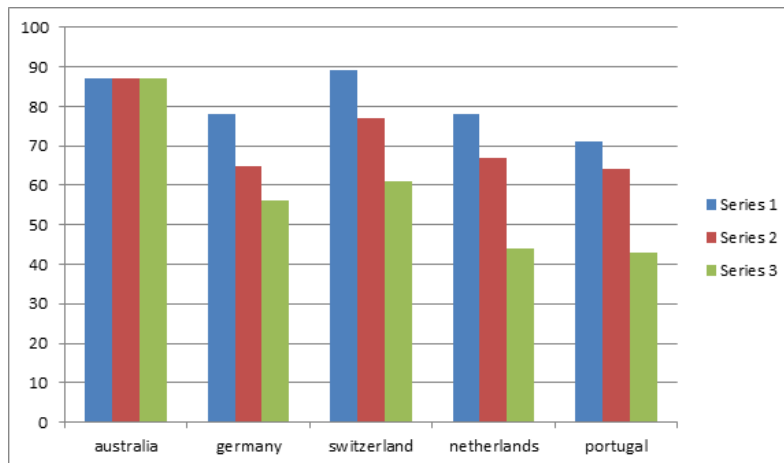


Fig. 2



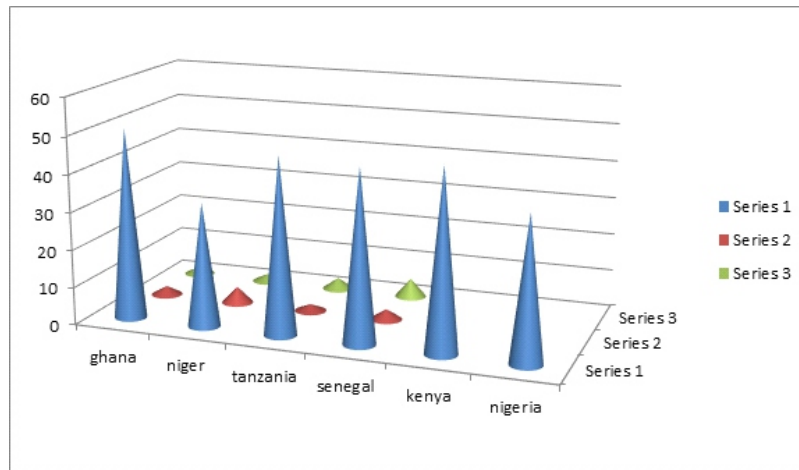
Sources: Reviewed, paper 2020

The above demonstration shows how several countries across the globe employed measures in tackling issues of youth empowerment programs and ensuring adequate protection of it citizens in terms of socio-economic and political development. However, Australia on the table shows the best country in the world in term of provision of socio-economic and political wellbeing index of it youths; with score of about 0.752. Germany has the second index which as shown in the table indicates that 79% of the economy of the German youths benefited, while 65% and 55% respectively represents socio and political development. Virtually, Switzerland represent 89% of the above economic status provided of their youths, similarly, the youths have enjoyed series of economic benefits from their government. 77% and 67% respectively, centered from the socio-political status regarding youths' empowerment programs, in Netherland several socio-economic and political status where improved to

youths yet according to the table, it shows that economic opportunity carried 77%, while 67% centered on social status and 56%, centered on political development of youths. Virtually, the table shows that a number of youth empowerment programs centred on socio-economic and political status of youths were not even compared to Africa. Finally, Portugal, 71%, 64% and 54% respectively, indicates that youths in Portugal have access to certain factors.

Below are countries in Sub-Sahara Africa, in respect of youth empowerment programs index.

Fig. 3

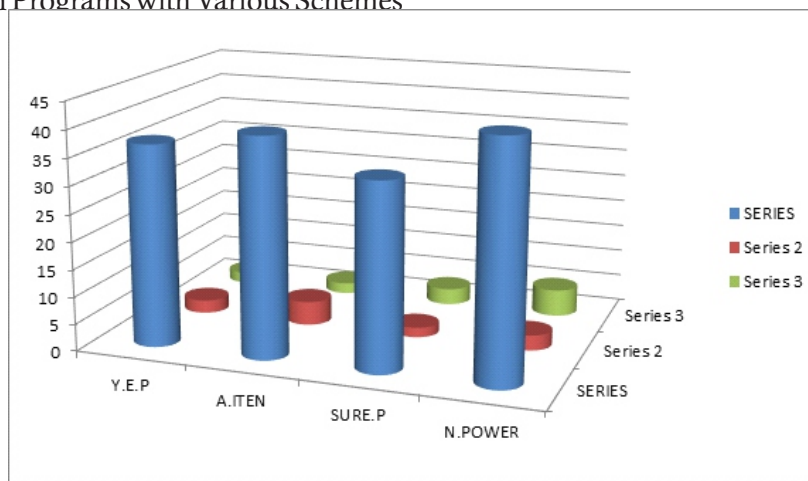


Sources: Reviewed 2020

The table above discussed how some countries in Sub-Sahara Africa have used their domestic resources to target and transform the lives of the youths; Ghana, Niger, Tanzania, Senegal, Kenya and Nigeria have contributed fundamentally in the fight against poverty reduction among youths. However, despite the percentages and ranking, all countries have tremendously affected the lives of the youths.

Below Are Strategies and Plans by Various Administrations in Fighting Against Poverty Reduction Programs with Various Schemes

Fig. 4



Source: 2020 reviewed papers

The table above shows various representations of series of democratic government and how they fight poverty among youths. Since the return of democracy in 1999, president Obasanjo had introduced (YEP) empowerment program with the intension to relief youths from the burden of socio-economic and political sten. Based on this, several programs and policies were established, which are 5000 naira for youths freely, introduce youths to various hand work and many more. His aim was to ensure total elimination of dependency from the government. However, the program had succeeded despite rate of corruptions and nepotism associated with it. (Amnesty International) was another schemed created by President Umar Musa Yaradua, his fundamental and epistemological task was to ensure all terrorists who uses arms to surrender and enjoy the dividend of democracy by giving allowances, it was in this directions a number of youths had accepted to surrender their weapons, particularly, Niger Delta (Militants), Boko Haram, and many more. President Goodluck Jonathan had introduced SURE-P, this was another youth empower program targeting youth entrepreneurship, skills and training, all these programs were successfully achieved. Money issued was 30.000.00 thirty thousand naira every month for youths working in various sectors of the economy. It lasted for only one year. Lastly, is the current government that established N-power, targeting unemployed youths, 30 thousand naira every months for two years, N-power is one of the successful schemes that has employed a number of youths across the country. However, the program is still ongoing despite the expiration of batch A last year.

Youth Empowerment and Sustainable Development

Youth empowerment programs is a resource, PMYP has been launched which offers the widows, needy and weaker once opportunity through an array of youth schemes which envisages youth development through educational, economic and social empowerment to face life challenges. This significant proportion in the overall population renders a demographic advantage for expediting and sustaining phenomenal growth once they are streamlined through empowerment (YDI Report, 2013). The explanations of YDI, 2013, clearly explained that schemes were established for the purpose of having adequate connections between the weak or poor to the government so as to enjoy and to have access to economic benefit of their countries.

Youth Policy Vision and Mission

The vision and mission of policies and programs established by various governments particularly, Nigeria is to effectively, provide a positive future role to the youths in national socioeconomic development. It is the vision of empowered Nigerian youths to fully realize their potentialities and positively contribute to the overall development of Nigeria. The mission of the policy is to build a youth with a sense of hope, self-confidence, imagination, creativity and pride in the nation's heritage; despite several issues and confrontations from the government, several policies have emanated through the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, that all citizens have the fundamental rights to enjoy the country's economic resources.

Similarly, youth who represent hope in the future of Nigeria; youth who are disciplined, well-focused, law-abiding and good citizens; youth full of the spirit of entrepreneurship, self-

reliance, mutual cooperation, understanding and respect; youth who are not corrupt and self-serving; youth with equality of opportunity, free from gender and other forms of discrimination, exploitation and abuse; youth who imbibe a culture of democracy and good governance; youth who take pride in our diverse cultural heritage and geographic conditions; and youth committed to the ideal of national unity and development as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

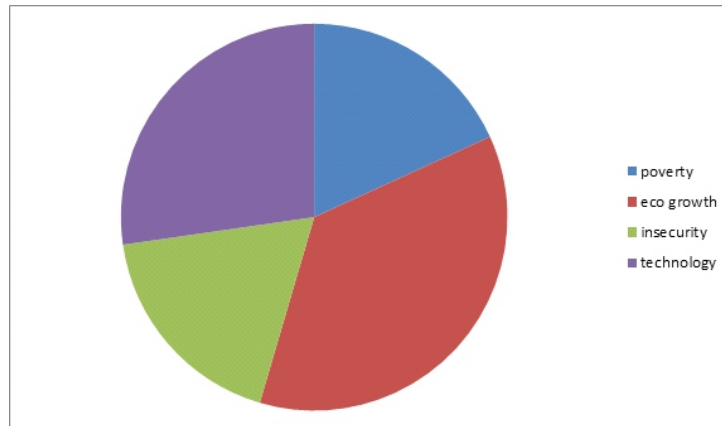
Obligations of the Youth

Every set of rights that a person has, has a corresponding set of obligations in order to make Nigerian youths tolerant, caring, responsible, and productive citizens, the policy outlines the following set of obligations for active participation of the youth in the conditions of the Nigerian people; Promotion and defence of democracy and civility in the governance of the country and in inter-personal relations with fellow citizens. However, it is obligatory for any citizens to effectively discharge his duty irrespective of place and geographical location. Increasingly, the government has provided programs that could enhance the lives of it youths. it is obligatory for the youths to abide by the fundamental rule and regulations labeled by the government so as to move the scheme and ensure foster transformation of the programs.

Approaches to Poverty Alleviation

Several methodological techniques were established to provide vital live security to weaker once in the society and to improve their socio-economic and political status in the society. However, the economic growth approach to poverty alleviation is based on the assumption that economic deprivation is at the root of all poverty and that non-economic causes of poverty are only secondary, arising from primary economic causes. This approach focuses on macro and micro economic policies and programmes that would ensure the rapid growth of the economy measured by per capital GDP or per capital national income, rate of growth in production rate of employment, consumer price stability etc. this principle holds that as economic growth continues, the effects will progressively trickle down to the core poor and the most disadvantage in the society e.g. favorable tax measures would directly benefit the poor, favorable import tariff would reduce the cost of imported basic necessities to the poor, investment in rural infrastructure would directly benefit the poor and above all various economic incentives. Resulting from the adequate provision of programs and policies that could affect the lives of the people and the economic growth of those particular nations will rise

Fig. 5: Effective Policy and Programs on Poverty Alleviation and Economic Growth



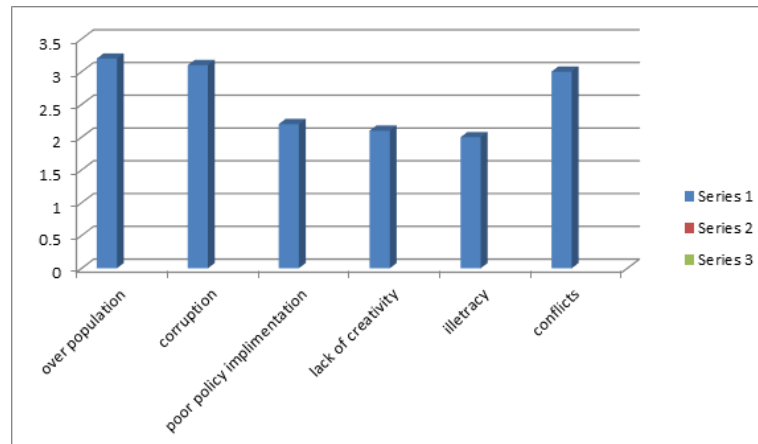
Sources: Reviewed 2020

The above table shows that effective and efficient fight against poverty could improve the economic growth of the nation, reduced poverty, reduce insecurity and improve the country's technology (Obadan, 1975).

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts the decision making theory and the system theory in trying to explain and provide a solution to the problems of poverty and youth empowerment if used properly. Decision making is a natural phenomenon. The process through which it was articulated into a body of theory is the result of man intellectual quest and advancement. Centuries before Benoulli was born, the anthenian citizens of Greece had already evolved a workable model of making political decisions in furtherance of their demo by the "Kratia" also the glorified Roman Empire was able to take concrete economic decision that made the emperor the imperial ruler of the world then (Synder et al 1992). According to Thackrah (1986), decision is a choice of goals or means at reaching some goals from among those seen to be available as alternative at the time for the purpose of reacting to the requirement of specific complex issue or some situation though likely to occur in the future. According to Synder, he posits that decision making theory lies at the heart of all political actions and therefore it alone provides the common focus under which we can bring together the political actors, situations and processes for the purpose of analysis. He posits that understanding a particular action requires the analyst to ascertain who made the decision that resulted in the action. He examines the interactive factors that influence the decision maker. According to him the internal setting includes such variables of the local society as public opinion, dominant value orientation, organization, dynamic and social structure the external setting consist of such factors as the action and reaction of other actors in the international of national arena and the physical environment.

Fig. 6: Challenges facing youth empowerment programs



Sources: 2020, Reviewed

The above table highlighted brief challenges facing youth empowerment programs such as over population, corruption, poor policy implementation and more other.

Gaps on the Various Literatures Reviewed

Several literatures have discussed on issues of job security, poverty alleviation programs, youths empowerment programs, socio-economic benefits of youths empowerment programs and several more. Some of those key contributors are USAID, 2019, R. H, 2019, Mandela fellowship, 2011, N.Y.P 1998, Egobooste, 2019, and many more, have discussed a number of issues regarding youths empowerment programs, however, it could be inadequately incomplete for all of the authors could not explained some of the vital issues and contemporary episode that had happened, are happening and can happen in future. However, recent growth in the number of population and rapid corruption in the country has a negative impact on establishing effective empowerment programs among youths. Similarly, it could be noted that, inability among youths to make creative mind on technology and other issues that could establish an independent mind.

Conclusion

Youth empowerment programs and economic development are two beautiful concepts that triggered success for any country all over the world particularly, Nigeria. Several programs such as YEP, Amnesty, International, N.Y.S.C, SURE-P and N-POWER all of these are schemes introduced by the government to improve the quantity and quality of lives of weaker once in the country. However, several programs were successfully achieved and improved the standard of living particularly, the youths.

Recommendations

1. Tools should be given to youths to solve their own problems.
2. Government should allow every youth to decide on what to do after issuing them loan or any financial assistance.

3. Parents should encourage their children that they can do more and more if they can dedicate on what they are doing
4. Shareholders, individual, and spiritual organizations should also assist the government in establishing training ground for educating, skills acquisitions and many mores

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