

Youth Unemployment and Rural Crime in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of youth unemployment on rural crime in Obanlinku Local Government Area of Cross River State. Specially, the study examined the relationship between structural unemployment and burglary crime, seasonal unemployment and drug abuse, and frictional unemployment and armed robbery. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design and structured questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The population and sample size for the study was three hundred and ninety seven (397) youths, farmers, and security personnel's in Obanlinku Local Government Area. Data collected was statistically analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that, there is positive and high correlation between structural unemployment and burglary crime, seasonal unemployment and drug abuse, and frictional unemployment and armed robbery in Obanlinku Local Government Area. It was recommended based on the findings that government should intensify efforts to create more vocational skills acquisition centres across the country especially in rural areas to enable our young men and women to acquire skills for them to be self-employed and also employ others. Skills acquisition is a strong instrument for empowerment of youth in areas like tailoring, carpentry, automobile mechanic, ICT, metal work as to avert youth seasonal unemployment.

Keywords: Effect, Youth Unemployment, Rural Crime

Introduction

Youth unemployment is the situations of young people are looking for a job but cannot find a job. The United Nation (2012) defined youth unemployment with the age range of 15-24 years old, and in Nigeria, the economically active or working age of people is 15-64 years of age. Youth unemployment is a social problem; this is because it is undesirable to the society and also the inherent nature of youth unemployment has posed a threat to society as a whole, and to the individuals who live in that society (Otu, Eja, Eko, & Josephat, 2011; Angioha, Nwagboso, Ironbar, & Ishie, 2018; Owan, Ayuk, Tiku, & Nwankwo, 2019). The types of youth unemployment commonly found in urban and rural society especially in Nigeria include, structural, frictional, and seasonal. One of the common characteristics of structural unemployment for instance, is when the skills set of a worker does not match the skills demanded by the jobs available, or alternatively when workers are available but are unable to reach the geographical location of the jobs. The seasonal unemployment on the other hand, comes and goes with the seasons of the year that dictates the demand of certain jobs, and this is commonly found in the rural setting because the demand for agricultural labour increases during the rainy season- planting, cultivation and harvesting, and in addition, road construction is always out of place in the rainy season, albeit it depends on the terrain of the areas. Therefore, some workers are relieved of their work during the prevailing season.

The persistent and growing youth unemployment is peculiar not only in Nigeria, but globally estimates indicates that out of 148 countries, unemployment was highest in the Middle East and North Africa (22 %), Sub-Saharan Africa (17 %) and lowest in Asia (5 %). Seventeen percent of the world's workforce was underemployed in 2011, a slight decline from 18 % in 2010. As with unemployment, underemployment rates are highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (32 %) and the Middle East and North Africa (also 32 %), and lowest in Asia (13%) (Odey & Owan, 2014; Agba, Agba, & Chukwurah, 2020; Ingwe, Ikeji, & Ojiong, 2010; Angioha, Nwagboso, Ironbar, & Ishie, 2018). Countries and territories such as South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Iran, Iraq, and the Palestinian Occupied Territories have among the highest unemployment rates in the world, largely driving the high unemployment rates in the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan regions (International Labour Organization, 2014).

In Nigeria, there is an increase of 23.1% in youth unemployment from 2018 to 33.3% in 2020 generally, and in rural Nigeria to be specific, youth unemployment rose to 28.0% in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The resultant of this increase of youth unemployment especially in rural areas is because they do not acquire the kind of skills that are frequently demanded in the environment they operate. Evidence from the finding of Kpakol (2006) revealed that some youth in rural areas are unemployed because their skills have been rendered obsolete by technological changes or because the youth have no skill at all.

However, the growing and persistent youth unemployment has negatively impact on the rise political unrest and anti-social behaviour. The increase of 34.52% of crime from 2016-2020 (World Bank, 2019; Ojiong-Ejoh, Bassey & Angioha, 2021; Ojiong, Agba, Njirinze, & Angioha, 2021). Such as riots and protests in Nigeria are the effects of youth unemployment. The lack of productive engagement of young people in wider society, underlined by high levels of unemployment and under-employment, only serves to add to this feeling of disenfranchisement.

In Nigerian rural communities, persistent effects of youth unemployment are drug abuse, burglary, and armed robbery. According to Barclay, Donnermeyer, Doyle and Talary (2001) unemployment and drug abuse areas the most prevalent social problems related to farm crime in rural areas. This can be also supplemented by the consumption of alcohol, and the

possession of weapons and vehicles which can be so-called crime facilitators (Felson & Boba 2010; Pesch & Neubacher, 2011; Ukwayi, Ojiong, Austin, & Emeka, 2012; Ayuk, Emeka, Chibuzo, & Omono, 2013, Achu, Owan, Uyang., & Francis, 2013; Ayuk, Owan, Ekok, & Odinka, 2012). Similarly, Ajaegbu (2012) observed that the accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, rape, terrorism and all facets of violence in rural areas can be largely attributed to the incidence of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

In Obanlinku Local Government Area of Cross River state, many cases of drug abuse, arm robbery, and burglary are recorded or reported as observed by the study. This is because, most of the employers rely deeply on seasonal jobs, and most workers do not match the skills demanded by the jobs available. It is therefore from the backdrop that a research on the effect of unemployment on rural crime in Obanlinku Local Government Area of Cross River is initiated.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment has been an endemic phenomenon in almost every human society. The problem of rural crime as a result of youth unemployment is a universal one in both developed and developing countries of the world including Nigeria. This menace has seriously affected the residents of rural dwellers. Obanliku Local Government Area of Cross River state also has been experiencing its fair share of rural crime such as armed robbery, drug abuse and burglary caused most especially by youths who are unemployed. These youth have in recent times perpetuated themselves as agents of crime involving in social vices such as cultism, armed robbery, drug peddlers and abuse with its consequences on the Obanliku residents.

Despite several measures employed by the government by providing youth development and empowerment programmes such as National Directorate of Unemployment (NDE), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), N-Power, and National Youth Policy which are focus on the wholesome development of young people and to active participation in various sectors of nation building. However, with these programmes and policies, youth unemployment remains a major defy to the developmental process of Nigerian economy. And the prevalence of this raising unemployment wave has been attributed to a lot of factors. Anyanwu and Duru (2010) in their study observed that the average graduate in Nigeria is unemployable and by implication lacks the skills required for employment in the formal sector by the employers of labour. The findings of Ugal, Nwagbara and Ugang (2011) and Angioha, Nwagboso, Ironbar, and Ishie, (2018) revealed that the phenomenon of youth unemployment has continued in Nigeria in the face of unfulfilled political promises of job creation by successive governments. Other research studies conducted on youth unemployment include those of Galadima, Selvadurai and Awang (2019) who were on the views that abandonment of agricultural activities as a result of oil in Nigeria that yield abundant revenue but oil sector was very inadequate to provide employment opportunities to Nigeria unemployed youth.

The effect of this youth unemployment on rural crime is severe especially as there is total unrest and restiveness in areas where these crimes are perpetrated. Sometimes, life and property worth millions are lost at the instance of these rural crimes. Although, little has not been investigated, and it is therefore in recognition of this fact that a study on the effect of youth unemployment on rural crime in Obanlinku Local Government Area of Cross River state is in the gap.

Research Questions

The general question of this study is to what extent the effect of unemployment on rural crime in Obanlinku Local Government Area of Cross River state. Specifically, the following research questions served as guide for the study.

1. Does structural unemployment lead to burglary crime among youths in Obanlinku Local Government Area?
2. Is there any relationship between seasonal unemployment and drug abuse in Obanlinku Local Government Area?
3. Does frictional unemployment prompt armed robbery and youth in Obanlinku Local Government Area?

Research Hypothesis

- i. There is no significant relationship between structural unemployment and burglary crime
- ii. There is no significant relationship between seasonal unemployment and drug abuse
- iii. There is no significant relationship between frictional unemployment and armed robbery

Literature Review

The United Nations define youth as the age group between 15 and 24. Variation in the definitions of individual countries' official statistics makes cross-country comparisons difficult (International Labour Organization,2011). In some analyses, the youth are further divided into teenagers (15–19 years old) and young adults (20–24 years old). Gorlich, Stepanok and Al-Hussami (2013) argued that the unemployment numbers for these two groups and the challenges they face vary significantly and would thus call for separate approaches for alleviating unemployment.

An individual is typically considered unemployed when he or she has not worked for a specific period of time but would like to and is, hence, actively searching for work. Yet, the definition of unemployment can also vary from country to country. Gorlich, Stepanok and Al-Hussami (2013) postulated that, in some countries, students who are actively looking for a job is counted as part of the work force while, in others, they are not. The number of inactive youth, that is, those not actively searching for work and not being in the labour force or in education can also exhibit quite a variation across countries. Such data of the non-employed, which comprises of both unemployed and inactive individuals, can be more meaningful as it gives a clearer idea of the real magnitude of the problem. It is, however, less viable due to differences in definitions and problems with the availability.

There are a number of causes of youth unemployment on many of which there is a fairamount of consensus. The findings of Coenjaerts, Ernst, Fortuny, Rei and Pigrim(2009) revealed the mismatch between the demand and supply of skills possessed by young workers has been mentioned to contribute to higher youth unemployment rates. Similarly, Manacorda and Petrongolo (1999) exposed that there is a relationship between skills mismatch and total unemployment across OECD countries. The skill mismatch issue is particularly important in the developing world. For example, firm surveys in the MENA region by Assaf and Benhassine(2003)show that entrepreneurs regularly cite the lack of skills as an important constraint to hiring, in some cases suggesting that it outweighs concerns with labour market regulations. Skill mismatch, combined with a growing share of youth in the labour force in MENA, has created a situation in which too many young people have a hard time finding jobs (Assaad &Roudi-Fahimi 2007;Owan, Ayuk, Tiku, & Nwankwo, 2019; Osonwa, Eja& Emeka, 2015).

O'Higgins (2007) found that youth unemployment early in life may have persistent negative consequences for the persons' subsequent career, as it may impair their productive potential and employment opportunities. Apart from scarring effects, O'Higgins (2007); Fougère, Kramarz, and Pouget (2009) discovered that youth unemployment has been found to be associated with drug use and crime. This is particularly severe as youth unemployment is typically concentrated among groups which have additional social problems.

Crime has been found to hamper development of rural areas in a serious way. Gerasimova (2008) notes that corruption alone is a serious obstacle in the development process of developing countries. Ceccato (2016) points out that "crime and safety are important dimensions of sustainable rural development". In other words, persisting crime in rural areas is likely to result in unsustainable development, depriving people of their livelihoods and promoting the outmigration of often younger household members to urban centers. This can have serious implications for food security in some developing countries: while the availability of workforce in rural areas decreases, and the environment gets deteriorated by criminal acts, more food needs to be produced to feed the urban population.

Skaperdas, Soares, Willman and Miller (2009) state that violent crime like armed robbery that committed by unemployed youth in rural areas results in high costs on global development, and that it directly reduces economic growth. Fafchamps and Minten (2004) find for Madagascar that crime and insecurity result in a significant reduction in income and access to public infrastructure such as health care centers and schools. Indirect costs also occur as psychic cost and loss in work time if people affected by burglary or theft feel suspicious and unsafe at home (Barclay et al. 2001; Ceccato 2016). Furthermore, the findings of Grote and Neubacher (2016) revealed that in case of property crime, farming households are deprived of their livelihood income if livestock, field crops, or equipment and tools are stolen of their homesteads or fields.

A study by Alabi (2014) on youth's unemployment and crime control in Nigeria revealed that many social problems such as prostitution, robbery, alcoholism, domestic violence, social, religious and civil unrest and suicide to mention but few, become more severe in times of high unemployment. According to Alabi (2014) there is a linkage between unemployment, poverty and crime, when people cannot earn an income from legal, legitimate and social acceptable work/means; they turn to illegal activities. Similar study of Ugal, Nwagbara and Ugang (2011) in Calabar Metropolis revealed that many social problems in study area in nature of crime, prostitution, hunger, poverty and general structural inadequacies are mainly the consequences of unemployment among the youths.

Persisting crime in rural areas is likely to result in unsustainable development, depriving even more people of their livelihoods and promoting outmigration of often younger household members to urban centers. This can have serious implications for food security in some developing countries: while the availability of workforce in rural areas decreases, and the environment gets deteriorated by criminal acts, more food needs to be produced to feed the urban population.

Study Area

The study area is Obanliku Local Government Area. The Local Government Area is both an inter-state and international boundary Local Government Area. It is bounded in the North by Kwande Local Government Area of Benue state, in the East by Republic of Cameroon, and in the west by Obudu Local Government Area. It has an area of 1,057km² and a population of 110,324 at the 2006 census. The people of Obanliku Local Government Area are predominantly farmers. Agriculture which accounts for about 80% of production is the mainstay economy. The

Local Government Area is blessed with abundant fertile land which is suitable for cultivation of the following cash and crops such as coca, bushmango, yams, kolanut, coffee, rice groundnut, cassava, soya bean, cotton, oil palm, banana, plantain, pineapple amongst others. Although, most of these crops are seasonal, and it comes and goes with the seasons of the year that dictates the demand of certain jobs in which some of the youths are relieved of their work during the prevailing season, and consequently resorting them (youths) in criminal activities such as drug abuse, burglary and armed robbery.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The reason for choosing a survey research design is to allow for a broad based input into the effect of youth unemployment on rural crime. It has been pointed out that the survey research design can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Orondho & Kombo, 2002). The study was employed quantitative method. The population of the study was youths, farmers, and security personnel's in Obanlinku Local Government Area. Obanlinku Local Government Area has a population of 110,324 (National Population Census, 2006). The sampling techniques for this study were purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Five (5) council wards in Obanliku Local Government Area namely, Becheve, Bishiri North, Basange, Busi, and Utanga were selected purposively because they are most producer of farm crops and most of their agricultural activities are seasonal culminating the youth to unemployed, and the nature and more prone to violence crime because of the characteristics of the targeted population of the study. In using simple random sampling which was used to select the youths, farmers, and vigilante members. The study identified five (5) villages in each council ward and wrote the name of the villages and squeezed them; they select three (3) out of five (5), the number of villages were identified at the end of the day from the villages the research work was carried out. Four hundred (400) youths, farmers and security personnel's were selected out of the 110,324 populations sample size for the study. This is to ensure a true representation of the entire population of the study. According to Wimmer and Domincik (2011), we can determine size from a heterogeneous population using Taro-Yamane's formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, n = Sampling size,

N = Population size, and

e = the level of precision (95% and 5% confidence level and tolerable errorsampling respectively).

Data for the study were collected through questionnaire. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, 397 were returned and found usable showing a response rate of 99.3%. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentages and tables, whereas inferential statistics such as Pearson product moment correction was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

This segment of the study focuses on the analysis of data about the research questions that were asked at the early stage of this investigation.

Table 1: Responses of Respondents on the Types of Youth Unemployment in Obanlinku Local Government Area.

Types of Youth Unemployment	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Structural	132	33.2
Seasonal	153	38.5
Frictional	112	28.3
Total	397	100

From the findings, 33.2% (132) respondents viewed structural as a type of youth unemployment, according to them; there are no industries in Obanliku Local Government Area, and most importantly, the youth in the area do not have the skills needed for the available jobs. This concurs with the assertion by Onwuka (2015) that the structural unemployment occurs when there is mismatch between jobs that are available and the people looking for work. This mismatch between could be because job seekers do not have the skills required to do the available jobs.

Seasonal unemployment is another type of unemployment as identified by 38.5% (153) respondents, the demand for agricultural labour increases during the rainy season- planting, cultivation and harvesting. In addition, road construction is always out of place in the rainy season, albeit it depends on the terrain of the areas. Therefore, some workers are relieved of their work during the prevailing season. This corroborates with the findings of Danjos and Ali (2014) among many others that this kind of unemployment is based on the dictate of the season.

The frictional unemployment was also identified as a type of youth unemployment by 28.2% (112) represents. The implication of the findings is that when new graduates spend some period or time searching for the right job that could lead them to frictional unemployment. The findings bore semblance to the study of Ojo (1998) that frictional unemployment persists as the continuous flow of people from one job to another (in and out of employment).

Table 2: Responses of Respondents on the Effect of Youth Unemployment on Rural Crime in Obanliku Local Government Area

Unemployment Effects on Rural Crime	Frequency	Parentages (%)
Burglary	141	35.5
Armed robbery	117	29.5
Drug abuse	139	35
Total	397	100

From the findings of the respondents, 35.5 % (141) identified burglary as one of the effect of youth unemployment on rural crime in Obanlinku Local Government Area. Burglary and theft, respectively, affect households not only by loss in property and in work time, but it also creates an indirect psychic cost making people feel suspicious and unsafe at home. The findings has also coincided with the views of Grote and Neubacher (2016) that most farm crimes which occur in developed countries are property-related and include theft of farm produce (such as fruits and vegetables, maize or wheat, and livestock).

Armed robbery was also identified as the effect of unemployment rural crime in Obanlinku Local Government Area as stated by 29.5% (139) respondents. Armed robbery has

been identified by the residents of Obanlinku as violent crime which most often has been resultingto death or permanent disability of the victim. The findings has also coincided with the views of the Trent (2014) where an incident involves robbery, victims usually lose their valuables after the attack like the 2014 incident in Ogun state where a businesswoman lost N1,803,000 cash, gold worth of N200,000 and wrist watch worth N5,000 and blackberry phone at a total of N2,187,500 to armed robbers.Similarly, assassination leads to the elimination of individuals who are usually of immense contribution to their family and indeed society in general.

Another effect of rural crime among youth unemployment on the people which in turn affects Obanlinku Local Government Area as posited by 35% (71) respondents drug abuse. Crime has consequences for individuals, groups, corporate bodies and the society. This result is in line with O'Higgins (2007) and Fougère, Kramarz, Pouget (2009) that youth unemployment has been found to be associated withdrug use and crime.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between structural unemployment and burglary crime

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the Relationship between structural unemployment and burglary crime

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig
Structural unemployment	397	15.24	2.63	0.687**	.000
Burglary crime	397	11.08	2.66		

P<.05, df=395, r-critical=0.113

The table shows that the calculated r-value = 0.687 using 395 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, the critical r-value is 0.113. Therefore, since the calculated value of 0.687 is greater than the critical value of 0.113. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between structural unemployment and burglary is rejected.This implies that there is a positive relationship between structural unemployment and burglary crime.

Hypothesis Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between seasonal unemployment and drug abuse

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between Seasonal Unemployment and Drug Abuse

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig.
Seasonal unemployment	397	10.24	4.33	0.773**	.000
Drug abuse	397	7.28	2.97		

P<.05, df=395, r-critical= 0.113

From the analysis of the table, the calculated r-value = 0.773 using 395 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, the critical r-value is 0.113. Therefore, since the calculated value of 0.773 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.113. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between seasonal unemployment and drug abuse is rejected.This implies that there is a positive relationship between seasonal unemployment and drug abuse.

Hypothesis Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between frictional unemployment and armed robbery

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between Frictional Unemployment and Armed Robbery

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig.
Frictional unemployment	397	13.43	2.21	0.604	.000
Drug abuse	397	14.92	2.37		

P<.05, df=395, r-critical= 0.113

From the analysis of the table, the calculated r-value = 0.604 using 395 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, the critical r-value is 0.113. Therefore, since the calculated value of 0.604 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.113. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between frictional unemployment and armed robbery is rejected. This implies that there is a positive relationship between frictional unemployment and armed robbery.

Discussion of Findings

The test of the relationship between structural unemployment and burglary crime has shown that there is significant, positive and high correlation between the two variables. This means that the degree of the technological displacement, lack of proper skills in the composition of demand, residency in depressed areas, changes in the structure of wages in relation to the pattern of demand and competition of imports with domestic goods among others. This implies that availability of jobs depend to a great extent on the degree of skills acquired by youths in rural areas which most often are not available. This is in agreement with Danjos and Ali (2014) who noted that the introduction of technology such as computers has displaced many people in many organizations, especially banks and this has resulted in structural unemployment. This finding is also in accordance to the findings of Gange (2016), who maintained that structural unemployment has led many youths in the rural areas to take robbery, kidnapping and hired assassins.

The analysis on the relationship between seasonal unemployment and drug abuse showed that there is positive significant relationship between the two variables. This implies that the unemployment is based on the dictate of the season. In essence, it comes and goes with the seasons of the year that dictates the demand of certain jobs. This is similar to the view of UN-Habitat (2008) who noted that youths who jobs are seasonal are the primary victims of social exclusion through unemployment. This view is equally corroborated by Ajaegbu (2012) who survey of Children and Youth in Organized Armed Violence in Nigeria, reported that disenchantment and frustration of young people due to mass unemployment, has increased the number of aggrieved youths and resulted in the emergence of “area boys” and Almajiris who target the very society that alienated them.

The analysis on the relationship between frictional unemployment and armed robbery showed that there is positive significant relationship between the two variables. Frictional unemployment, it is a situation where a person is out of one job and in search of another job. This implies that the changing employment is not particularly easy especially where the level of unemployment is high such as Nigeria where the labour market is saturated. This is in line with the finding of Bennel (2000)

which disclosed that rural society is becoming increasingly criminalized, especially with the proliferation of youth gangs. Neither homes, nor markets are safe in Nigeria because of frequent occurrence of armed robbery incidents. Ideyi (2005) similarly revealed that the unemployment problem, which now seems beyond remedy, has produced army of idle hands and some of them have decided to punish the society that fails to provide them with means of livelihood and dignity by robbing its members of their property at gunpoint.

Conclusion

This study has explored the effect of youth unemployment on rural crime in Obanlinku Local Government Area of Cross River state. Considering the findings of the study, the youth unemployment is a major problem. The youth unemployment in Obanlinku Local Government Area of Cross River state was very important factor for rural crime in spite of political promises of job creation by successive governments. Thus, the role of Nigeria's government in the formulation of policies and laws will be of immense benefit to improve the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens and deter criminality.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Government should intensify efforts to create more vocational skills acquisition centres across the country especially in rural areas to enable our young men and women to acquire skills for them to be self-employed and also employ others. Skills acquisition is a strong instrument for empowerment of youth in areas like tailoring, carpentry, automobile mechanic, ICT, metal work as to avert youth seasonal unemployment.
- ii. Government should put more efforts in the area of agriculture to generate employment opportunities because it has a lot of potentials and if proper investment is made, can go a long way to transform the economy, aside transforming the people engage in it. Thus, all the required support for the unemployed to engage in agricultural business should be made available to them like credit facilities, farm inputs at subsidized prices and accessible land for cultivations. New farming technology should be used to attract youth into farming because the old methods are not encouraging.
- iii. Government should give more emphasis to entrepreneurial and vocational education that is meant to expose our young men and women to self-reliance. Therefore, the review of curricula in our educational institutions is imperative, so as to be in line with the present demand to empower our youth with skills and make them more employable in the labour market or to be self-reliant.
- iv. Government should give more priority to the provision of infrastructure in the rural areas such as good roads, electricity, water, schools and small scale industries. This will go a long way to make the youth to reside in the rural areas and resort to farming.

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