

Improving Land Access by the Youth for Agriculture: Whither legal Incentives?

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Abstract

The paper analyses challenges that contribute to poor youth participation in agriculture. Access to land by the youth is identified as one of the challenges that contribute to minimal participation. Land is identified as a scarce resource which access by all the old and the young is a challenge. The author posits that improving access of land by the youth can enhance youth involvement in agriculture therefore which can make a positive contribution to food security and economic development of the country. This can go hand in hand with promotion of off farm activities which can be run by the youth who make up the population of the country. The paper discusses laws and policies on access to land and youth participation in agriculture as part of development activities. The author notes that the legal framework provides for interventions which if implemented can strengthen youth participation in agriculture. Comparatively, Kenya can adopt practices from other countries which have helped improve access of land for the youth. Such practices include creation of zones for planned agriculture development that can be set apart for the youth; inter sales of community land can be encouraged to favor the youth; *inver vivos* transfer of land can be encouraged from the old to young generations; and land can be leased from the community to be given to the youth for development.

1. Introduction

Agriculture is the biggest contributor to the Kenyan economy as it contribute approximately 25 % of the GDP, and employing 75 % of the national labour force.¹ Over 80 % of the Kenyan population live in the rural areas and derive their livelihoods from agriculture.² Kenya has an area of approximately 582,646 sq. km. comprising 97.8 % land and 2.2 % water sur-

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1 FAO in Kenya < <https://www.fao.org/kenya/fao-in-kenya/kenya-at-a-glance/en/>> accessed November 17, 2021; Republic of Kenya (2005). Economic Survey 2005. Government Printer, Nairobi.

2 *Patrick Alila and Rosemary Atieno*, Agricultural policy in Kenya: Issues and processes July 2006 (A paper for the future Agricultures Consortium workshop, 20–22 March 2006) 3.

face out of which only 20 % of the land area can be classified as medium to high potential agricultural land and the rest of the land is mainly arid or semi-arid.³

Approximately seventy five per cent (75 %) of the country's population lives within the medium to high potential agricultural areas (consisting of 20 % of the land mass) while the rest of the population lives in the vast Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs).⁴ The country has about 13.7 million youth which accounts for 35.4 % of the total population and constitutes 60 % of the total labour force of which 10 % are directly participating in agricultural sector.⁵ 64 % of the unemployed Kenyans are youth with majority moving away from the agricultural sector to fast growing non-agricultural sectors in urban areas resulting in rural-to-urban migration consequently reducing the labour force in rural areas to work in the agricultural sector.⁶ The agriculture sector accounts for about 40 per cent of Kenya's total exports and provides both formal and informal employment in urban and rural areas. The sector is comprised of industrial crops, food crops, horticulture, livestock, blue economy and fisheries and forestry.⁷ Most of the youth are engaged in the informal sector and not in agriculture. The population and housing census showed that employment rate of the youth of 18–24 years of age was 12.1 % while a big portion was in vulnerable employment where most were employed in informal sectors. Other challenges that hamper youth involvement are: youth labour migration, challenges with accessing loans: lack of collaterals and bureaucracies, low youth participation in agricultural activities, drugs and substance abuse and climate change.⁸

The extent of person's participation in agriculture is influenced by property rights or tenure enjoyed. Property rights or "tenure" refers to control over and access to resources, which involves the way in which people (individually or collectively) hold rights and responsibilities to land and natural resources upon it. They are terms and conditions under which rights to land are acquired, retained, used, disposed, or transmitted.⁹ The issue of property rights raises fundamental questions of who claims rights to what resources, who has access to the land and associated natural resources, and who has the responsibility for managing these lands.¹⁰ In essence it determines the person who has the right to undertake agricultural activities in the land as a natural resource. Land and property rights create incentives or disincentives for sustainable management and governance of natural resources

3 *Ministry of Lands*, National Land Policy (Sessional Paper 3 of 2009) 4.

4 *Ministry of Lands* (n 3) 5.

5 *Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Irrigation*, Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018–2022, 1.

6 *Ministry of Agriculture* (n 5) 1.

7 *Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs* Kenya Development Youth Policy 2019 (Government Printers) 46.

8 *Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs* (n 7) 13.

9 *Ministry of Land* (n 3).

10 'What is access to land?' < https://mpr.a.uib.uni-muenchen.de/38621/1/MPRA_paper_38621.pdf > accessed December 1, 2021.

such as agricultural lands, forest resources, freshwater and coastal resources, wild species of plants or animals or watersheds.¹¹ The kind of investment on land depends on the tenure rights attached to land. Anyone without secure or full tenure rights is unlikely to do a long term investment which can boost food production and even grow wealth.

There is a lot of pressure on the scarce land that is available for agriculture which makes it difficult for the youth to engage in meaningful agricultural activities. There are 1.2 billion youth in the world and it is projected that by 2020 the youth will account for 60 % of urban dwellers most of whom are landless and unemployed.¹² The same case applies to Kenya where most youth are found in the urban areas. Some of the activities that put pressure on the use of land are: severe land pressure and fragmentation of land holdings into uneconomic units; deterioration in land quality due to poor land use practices; unproductive and speculative land hoarding; under-utilization and abandonment of agricultural land.¹³ Other factors that adversely influence youth participation are: disinheritance of women and vulnerable members of society, and biased decisions by land management and dispute resolutions institutions; landlessness and the squatter phenomenon; uncontrolled development, urban squalor and environmental pollution.¹⁴

The youth also has to contend with the challenges that affect agriculture. Some of these challenges affecting growth in agriculture are: limited high potential agricultural land; declining agriculture performance; and overreliance on rain fed agriculture; limited diversification of agricultural production and inadequate and declining research in agriculture.¹⁵ Further, there are various factors that hinder youth participation in agriculture such as: access to land, lack of agricultural finance and insurance, lack of knowledge, skills and extension services; and use of innovative technologies and markets.¹⁶

Despite these challenges the youth need to be fully involved in agriculture in order to fend for themselves and contribute to the economic development of the country. One of the main factors that hinders youth participation in agriculture is access to land which has historically been occupied by the older generation. The paper will analyse the problem of lack of access to land by the youth in Kenya by identifying the challenges that contribute to the problem and propose strategies which if adopted can help mitigate the problem of access to land that reduces youth participation in agriculture.

- 11 *Roxana Blanco- USAID*, the Role of Property Rights in Natural Resource Management, Good Governance and Empowerment of the Rural Poor (October 2006) 1 < https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/USAID_Land_Tenure_Property_Rights_and_NRM_Report.pdf > accessed December 2, 2021.
- 12 Bennell Paul, Promoting livelihood opportunities for rural youth. Knowledge and Skills for development Paper 2007 IFAD.
- 13 Ministry of Lands (n 3) 8.
- 14 Ministry of Lands (n 3) 8.
- 15 Patrick Alila et al. (n 2) 3.
- 16 Ministry of Agriculture (n 3) 3.

2. The challenge of access to land

Land is central to security of tenure which helps to secure shelter needs, food security, livelihoods, economic opportunities and good quality of life of young men and women. Tenure security for the youth means ensuring that there are appropriate and affordable tenure options are available.¹⁷ Access to and control over land is one of the main challenges that young people face in many rural areas of the world.¹⁸ The youth can only enjoy access rights at the whims of the owner.¹⁹ The nature of investment on land is determined by the access and control rights over land therefore youth are unable to make long term investment on land due to their limitation of rights.²⁰ Government policy supports those with ownership of land but does not support those with access land rights.²¹ Those who enjoy access land rights cannot be granted collateral and therefore they have to use other means to access financial resources. Most subsidies are granted on the basis of the nature of rights one enjoys. One cannot enjoy a number of subsidies which require ownership of land as a requirement.²² Therefore it is hard to engage in optimal agriculture without ownership of land.

Persons have even lost their lives due to disputes relating to ownership and use of land.²³ Access to land by youth is affected by factors such as shortage of land and biased attitudes that the young are not mature enough to manage lands.²⁴ The young people perceive tenure of land as a complex matter due to lack of information with respect to land tenure; the belief that it is unresponsive to their needs and is difficult to access it.²⁵ In addition, agriculture is not viewed by the youth as a viable business largely because majority of farmers practise traditional farming methods or are associated with enterprises

17 Siraj Sait *et al.*- UN Habitat, What land means to youth- securing land and property rights for all",2004,3 <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/What%20land%20means%20to%20youth_English_2013.pdf>accessed 26 September 2021.

18 Harold Liver Sage *et.al.* Lessons learned: Youth and Land Tenure (IFAD Policy and Technical Advisory) < <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/publication/lessons-learned-youth-land-rights-and-tenure>> accessed September 26, 2021. 1.

19 Jane Kamangu, Lecturer Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Kenya Informant Interview, September 3, 2021.

20 Jane Kamangu (n 19).

21 Jane Kamangu (n 19).

22 Jane Kamangu (n 19).

23 *Capital FM*, 'Land Kills: Kenya, man kills his parents in Makueni over land' < <https://allafrica.com/stories/202101280445.html>> accessed October 13, 2021.; *The Guardian* 'British ranch owner killed by armed raiders in Kenya'- former British soldier- 5 March 2017-; 70 year old kills his parents over land tussle- parents 80 yr old and 96 yr old; Mak killed in Land Row- 27 September 2021- Narok East sub county.case in court- 16 years.

24 Harold Liver Sage *et.al.* (n 18) 4.

25 Harold Liver Sage *et. al.* (n 18) 2.

that yield low returns which do not lead to decent livelihoods.²⁶ Consequently, there is no optimal utilization of the youth potential in contributing to the agriculture sector and therefore food and nutrition security, income generation, decent employment and wealth creation cannot be fully achieved.²⁷

One may access land through a number of ways such as inheritance, buying or leasing or through distribution by the state.²⁸ Inheritance of land or rights is often the means by which young people obtain access to land. Inheritance will usually lead to subdivision of land among a large number of siblings causing fragmented and unviable land parcels which undermines agriculture production.²⁹ Those without inheritance and with no other means to acquire land are left landless. The challenge of access to land is made worse as increased life expectancy in many countries means that young people have to wait longer to inherit their shares of family land. As a consequence, young farmers' access to land and the means of production is delayed, leaving them with no real management responsibilities and few opportunities for investment and economic growth leading to lack of financial autonomy and is the reason why landlessness among rural youth is a primary cause of migration to urban areas to find alternative sources of income.³⁰

Cultural barriers also do contribute to limited access of land for young girls and women. In most communities, land is passed on to the men in the family and the women access land through marriage as a customary practice. The inheritance systems leave young women vulnerable to being dispossessed land by neighbours or male relatives when their husbands die.³¹ As a consequence any youth who is a child to such a widow is dispossessed of land hence forced to acquire through other means if they were to participate in agriculture. Family land may also be lost where it is sold for other needs such as medical care leaving the family landless.³²

Where land is owned by the community, decisions on how to use it are generally taken by the older generation, for whom young people's interests are not a primary concern: the fear of fragmentation and unviable land parcels results in youth being treated as farmhands or unpaid family workers without tenure security, rather than as young farmers in their own right.³³ This lack of autonomy, in turn, restricts young farmers' participation in farmers' organizations, which are generally only for independent farmers.

26 Ministry of Agriculture (n 3)10.

27 Ministry of Agriculture (n 3) 4.

28 "What is land Tenure" < <https://www.fao.org/3/y4307e/y4307e05.htm>> accessed September 26, 2021>

29 Harold Liver Sage et.al. (n 18) 2.

30 Ibid.

31 Harold Liversage (n 18) 3.

32 Siraj Sait et al (n 15) 5.

33 Ibid, 2.

Access to land can also be acquired through the market, but markets are not always well developed, and young people may not have the resources to buy land as they may lack access to credit because they cannot provide collateral such as land and savings. Leasing of land may be an option, but this too is not always possible because of lack of resources or because it is not socially acceptable for young women.³⁴ The state may also distribute land and more often than not adult men who act as heads of households tend to be the main beneficiaries of such distributions leaving out women and the youth who are mostly unable to agitate for their rights to access land due to low levels of literacy and lack of knowledge of their rights.³⁵

There is limited availability of high potential land and it is projected that increasing agricultural production will have to come from intensification of production through increased use of improved inputs, diversification especially from low to high value crops, commercialisation of smallholder agriculture, and increased value addition through stronger linkages with other sectors.³⁶ The non availability of land presents few opportunities for investment and economic growth and provokes rural to urban migration by the youth cannot fully participate in agriculture. Nonetheless, legislation and policies have been put in place to promote youth participation in agriculture and are analysed in the next section.

3. The Legal and Policy Framework for Youth Participation in Agriculture

The legal and policy framework is intended to deal with a number of challenges that hamper youth involvement in their participation in agriculture. The government and other stakeholders recognise the youth potential in the growth of the sector and are committed to involve youth in agricultural development.³⁷ A youth is defined as a person aged between eighteen (18) years and thirty four (34) years,³⁸ while under the African Youth Charter a youth is a person between 15 and 35 years.³⁹ The youth are recognised as a special category of persons that require protection of the law. The youth have a right to own property and enjoy the protection of the state in ensuring that they are not deprived of property.⁴⁰ The Charter also provides that the youth have the right to take part in social, economic, political and cultural development in the part of utilization and management of natural resources.⁴¹ The state is required to take up measures in the nature affirmative action to ensure to ensure that the youth access relevant education and training; have opportunities to associate, be

34 Harold Liversage (n 18) 3.

35 Harold Liversage et al. (n 18) 3.

36 Patrick Alila et al. (n 2)3.

37 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs (n 7) 11.

38 Article 260, Constitution of Kenya (CoK).

39 *African Union*, African Youth Charter, 2 July 2006<<https://www.refworld.org/docid/493fe0b72.html>> accessed 7 December 2021.

40 article 9 African Youth Charter; Article 40 CoK.

41 article 10 African Youth Charter.

represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life; access employment; and are protected from harmful cultural practices and exploitation.⁴²

The constitution guides on the values and principles which provide direction in the process of formulating any decision affecting the youth. They are: patriotism, sharing and devolution of power, the rule of law, democracy and participation of the people; human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalised; good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability; and sustainable development.⁴³ The constitution proscribes discrimination⁴⁴ which in this context means deprivation of freedom to access land and participate in the economic development of the country. The constitution demands equality before the law for every person in terms of protection and access to benefits of the law.⁴⁵

Access to land is governed through tenure systems which determine one's relationship with land.⁴⁶ The tenure systems are categorized into private land, community land and public land. Public land is owned by government therefore government allocates right of access, use and development and can transfer the land.⁴⁷ Private land is owned by person either through freehold or leasehold and therefore has a right to exclusive enjoyment of the land and disposal of land.⁴⁸ Community land is owned by the communities which hold the land through customary rights and the Community Land Act 2015 seeks to register such rights.⁴⁹ Customary rights determine how such land is used by the members of the community. Such land is normally used for community forests and grazing areas.⁵⁰ The constitution provides for principles of land management which calls for activities such as agriculture production to be done in a sustainable manner in a way that is beneficial to all persons. The constitution provides that,

'Land in Kenya shall be held, used and managed in a manner that is equitable, efficient, productive and sustainable, and in policy accordance with the following principles: equitable access to land; security of land rights; sustainable and productive management of land resources; transparent and cost effective administration of land; sound conservation and protection of ecologically sensitive areas; elimination

42 article 55 (CoK).

43 article 10 CoK.

44 article 27 of CoK.

45 Ibid.

46 *Selim Reihan et al.*, Access to land and other Natural Resources by the Rural Poor: The Case of Bangladesh June 2009, 5 < https://mpr.a.ub.uni-muenchen.de/38621/1/MPRA_paper_38621.pdf >accessed September 25, 2021.

47 *Stellamaris Ogutu*, The Status of Tenure Security in Kenya (Land Tenure systems : Land Economics, 2019)7< https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333078586_THE_STATUS_OF_TENURE_SECURITY_IN_KENYA>accessed 26 November 2021., article 62, CoK.

48 art 64 CoK, *Stellamaris Ogutu* (n 47)7.

49 *Stellamaris Ogutu* (n 47).

50 article 63 (2) CoK.

of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property in land; and encouragement of communities to settle land disputes through recognised local community initiatives consistent with this Constitution.”

The State has the power to regulate the use of any land, or any interest in or right over any land, in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, or land use planning.⁵¹ This underscores the point that the state may compulsorily acquire any land for the purpose of public defence or public order or any other purpose as stated.⁵² This means that one may be deprived of land that is used for agricultural production hence limiting one's participation to agriculture or such compulsory acquisition may be for land that is to be set apart for agriculture production where the youth may take part in the activities.

Youth participation in agriculture can further be enabled through the National Youth Council Act.⁵³ The statute establishes the council whose mandate is to promote youth participation in agriculture. Some of the functions of the council are to: regulate and co-ordinate activities and initiatives relating to the youth being undertaken by youth groups and other organizations; mobilize resources to support and fund youth programmes and initiatives; liaise with other organizations to ensure that the youth gain access to resources and services appropriate to their needs; act as a voice and bridge to ensure that the government and other policy makers are kept informed of the views and aspirations of the youth; promote the inclusion of youth agenda in the formulation of policy by public institutions and organisations; promote the inclusion of youths in decision-making bodies, boards, agencies and other public institutions and organisations; promote and popularize the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and such other devolved funds targeting the youth as established.⁵⁴ The functions of the council can strengthen the much needed effort to encourage youth participation in agriculture

One of the agenda for sustainable goals, 2030, is to eliminate poverty and hunger and the youth are identified as critical players who can take part in innovation, communication, educators and leadership in activities such as agriculture which can help drive the agenda.⁵⁵ The youth development policy⁵⁶ acknowledges the importance of prioritising activities that can help develop youth and make them contribute to the economy. Some of the objectives are: to realize a healthy and productive youth population; build qualifiedThe development of the youth is to be done by building a competent youth workforce for sustained development; creating opportunities for youth to earn decent and sustainable livelihoods;

51 article 66 (1) CoK.

52 Article 66 CoK.

53 Act Number 10 of 2009.

54 section 4, National Youth Council Act no 10 of 2009.

55 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2019/02/chapter1-wyr-2030agenda.pdf>> accessed December 10,2021.

56 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth affairs (n 7) xvi.

developing youth talent, creativity and innovation for wealth creation; ensuring sustainable financing of youth programmes; and transforming agriculture to make it attractive to youth among other objectives.

In order to transform agriculture and agri-business and make it attractive to the youth;⁵⁷ the policy prescribes the need to integrate use of ICT to assist in establishment of innovative and modern farming methods, value addition, and marketing to achieve improved food security and nutrition.⁵⁸ The government is determined to ensure that the energy, innovation and passion of the youth are fully and inclusively integrated in the operations of the agricultural sector through measures such as: increase of access to appropriate agricultural education and training; increase of investment in rural farm and non-farm activities and social and economic infrastructure to offer youth attractive job prospects and living conditions; promotion of access to domestic and global market linkages, mechanization.⁵⁹ Other measures include: support for youth's access and ownership of land for agri-business and access to innovative agricultural technologies, including climate change adaptation; strengthen youth's agribusinesses through enhanced coordination, monitoring and evaluation of product development and supply chains in agribusiness activities; promote innovation and incubation of agricultural technologies, youth access to credit for agricultural development; and, provide youth with extension services to support growth and development of enterprises.⁶⁰

The vulnerabilities affecting the youth in agriculture and enterprises can further be addressed by: rebranding agriculture as the unexplored frontier for growth in business opportunities; re-directing and training youth to focus on sections of the value chain activities such as production, processing and marketing; developing innovative financial packages that provide incentives for youth entrepreneurs in the sector; investing in value addition through processing, branding, investing in irrigation and water harvesting technologies to facilitate full time engagement of the youth and shorten waiting time for economic returns; digitizing agricultural production and marketing information into web-based resources; reviewing land tenure and use systems to provide adequate security and access to land to encourage youth to invest in land improvements, development and productivity among other activities.⁶¹

Regionally, the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa⁶² contains several important decisions regarding agriculture, such as the "commitment to the allocation of at least 10 percent of national budgetary resources to agriculture and rural de-

57 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth affairs (n 7) 46.

58 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth affairs (n 7) 46.

59 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and youth affairs(n7) 46.

60 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs (n 7) 46.

61 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth affairs (n 7) 47.

62 (Assembly/AU/Decl. 7(II) African Union in July 2003 in Maputo, African Heads of State and Government.

velopment policy.⁶³ If such a declaration was implemented by the heads of state of Africa which Kenya is part of, youth would benefit immensely from such support as a special category which should be helped in order to develop the economy.⁶⁴ Counties would be implored to allocate 10 % of their budgets to agriculture which would benefit the youth at the local level.

The big four agenda is another important policy that was poised to guide the government in the economic development of the country between the year 2018–2022.⁶⁵ The agenda identified four priority areas namely food security and nutrition, universal health-care, affordable housing and manufacturing. The agenda is aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and locally Vision 2030 which are all poised to achieve food security in order to address the challenge of hunger that affects the people. Through the agenda the government committed its financial resources towards improving agricultural technologies, promotion of small scale farming through subsidies and promotion of large scale cultivation of staple foods through public private partnerships. Such intervention can target the youths to allow them in participation in the improved agriculture processes.

4. Lessons from other Countries

Kenya can learn a number of strategies from other countries which can help mitigate the problem of access of land by the youth. The youth in India in Tarode-di village were enabled to access land through cooperatives where the organization leased land from the community and gave youths to engage in sunflower farming after receiving external help in terms of funding.⁶⁶ In Mexico *inter vivos* transfer is enabled to allow youth access family land while the older generation is still alive. Intergeneration sales of land were enabled for community land.⁶⁷ In Peru parents transferred land to the young to allow them join coffee cooperatives.⁶⁸ In Togo zones of planned agricultural development were created to allow access to land for young people. The state had an agreement with landowners to delimit the zone which is prepared for allocation to young people for use in farming.⁶⁹ Some of the strategies that have been successful in other countries can form good solutions to the problem of access to land by the youth in Kenya.

63 <<https://www.nepad.org/caadp/publication/au-2003-maputo-declaration-agriculture-and-food-security>>accessed December 13, 2021.

64 *Jane Kamangu*, Researcher in Agriculture Policies, Interview 13 November, 2021.

65 *National Treasury and Planning*, 'Implementation status of the Big four agenda 2018/2019' (April 2020< https://monitoring.planning.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Big-Four-Agenda-Report-2018_19.pdf> accessed December 13, 2021.

66 *Harold Liversage et. al* (n 18) 5.

67 *Harold Liversage et. al.* (n 18).

68 *Harold Liversage et al.* (n 18) 5.

69 *Harold Liversage et al* (n 18),6.

5. Proposed solutions to youth involvement in agriculture

There is need to involve the youth in policy dialogues that influence legislative framework which can have tangible interventions that can help get them fully involved in agricultural activities. It is clear that there is an elaborate legal and policy framework in place that is structured to bolster youth participation in agriculture and therefore, the laws and policies should be implemented in order to enable youth participation in agriculture. With more commitment by the government, most of the challenges that hamper youth in participation can be dealt with. The legislation and local institutions can further be strengthened in order to ensure that the aspirations contained in the law are achieved.⁷⁰ Rural youth organisations can be facilitated to be part of organisations in order to allow the youth to participate in policy making processes.⁷¹ Since land is scarce and access to land may not be possible for all, off farm economic activities can be promoted to benefit the youth while also promoting small scale farming as provided for in the legal and policy infrastructure.⁷²

70 *Harold Liversage* (n 18) 4.

71 *Harold Liversage* (n 18) 4.

72 *Harold Liversage* (n 18) 4.