

Unemployment and Youth Criminality: The Perceptions of Landmark University Students, Omu-Aran, Nigeria

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Abstract

Unemployment in Nigeria has continued to increase despite various plans and programmes used by government to tackle its existence. This has, in turn led to crimes and other social vices among youth. The main objective of this study, therefore, is to examine the impacts of unemployment on crime among Nigerian youths. The study adopted the survey research design. A total of 113 research subjects were drawn from the target population using the stratified and random sampling technique. Frequency counts, simple percentage and chi-square methods were used to analyse the data and testing the hypothesis. Some of the findings show that unemployment serves as one of the major factors that often plague youths' involvement in criminal activities. The study also confirmed that those youths who have not been employed are more likely to commit crimes than those that are employed. The study recommends, among others, that skill acquisition programmes should be embarked upon by government to help the youths to be self-reliant rather than becoming job seekers. With this, unemployment and crime will be reduced to barest minimal.

Keywords

Youths, Unemployment, Crime, Government, Nigeria

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1. Introduction

The problem of chronic youth unemployment is very evident in Nigeria. Every year thousands of graduates are turned out without employments. Nigerian streets are littered with youth hawkers who would have found gainful employment in some enterprises; or would have demonstrated their skills and resourcefulness in organisations. Instead youths have now shifted their attention to anti-social vices such as criminal acts, for instance, stealing, armed robbery, burglary, etc. The large number of youths who are unemployed is capable of undermining democratic practice as they constitute a serious

threat if engaged by the political class for clandestine activities (Adepegba, 2011; Ibrahim, 2011; Lartey, 2011; Olatunji and Abioye, 2011). Job security is an all-encompassing condition in which the individual citizen of a country lives in an environment where equal job opportunities are provided for all citizens and not exceptionally for the rich and those with the highest connection. It should also entail a situation whereby one can have access to the type of job he/she is trained to do; and which gives individual job satisfactions. Unemployment describes the condition of people who are without jobs. The

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International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998:63). Also for Adebayo (1999) this exists when members of the labour force wish to work but cannot get jobs. Unemployment has generated many controversial issues particularly in the economic sector where more than half of the youth population is jobless. The problem of unemployment is a multi-dimensional one which includes social, economic, political and religious. This is very true in line with Karl Marx who argued that the economy is the structure upon which other structures function and when there is a dysfunction, the whole of society will be affected.

Unemployment is a global trend, but it occurs mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. Thus, massive youth unemployment in any country is an indication of far more complex problems. The ILO (2007) report showed that the proportions of world unemployment are steadily increasing and that the number of those without jobs remained at an all-time high at more than 195 million, or 6.3 per cent, in 2007. For instance during that period of 2007, the Middle East and North Africa were the regions with the highest unemployment rate in the world, at 12.2 per cent followed by Sub-Saharan Africa at nearly 10 per cent, while East Asia's unemployment rate of 3.6 per cent remained the lowest. The report affirmed that population growth, especially in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, was putting a lot of pressure on job creation. In Nigeria, accurate unemployment rates are difficult to access. These individuals, because the government of the country has failed to provide for their basic amenities (food, shelter and clothing), look for alternative measures to meet these needs in whatever way possible. In view of this unemployment situation, one of the greatest problems facing modern societies is crime. Pervasive crime robs us of our sense of security and safety, causing psychological harm, even to those who are never actually victimized. It deprives victims of their property or even their lives, it can destroy family stability thereby causing a loose hold of parents' control on their children and could lead to these children becoming delinquents and eventually criminals. However, crime will not be studied in isolation without relations to unemployment. This research work therefore tends to investigate the relationship between unemployment and crime among Nigerian youths with perception of Landmark University students.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the impact

of unemployment on crime.

Other specific objectives of the study include;

- To examine the effect of unemployment on crime among Nigerian youths.
- To verify what undergraduates think about unemployment and crime.

1.2. Literature Review

The concept of unemployment and crime are reviewed in this section. The concept of unemployment, like many other social problems, is difficult to define because of their multi-dimensional nature which is a result of diverse other problems compounding it. This prevents its having a straightjacket definition. However based on the works of other scholars and bodies concerned with unemployment, the concept will be defined. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2009), the labour force of a country is a set of people or citizens who are willing and are able to make available, at any given point in time, their efforts for gainful employment, while the unemployed are the individuals with no work, but are looking for work at the time of any study. Scholars have identified various forms of unemployment. These include seasonal, frictional, cyclical, and structural unemployment (Adebayo, 1999; Damachi, 2001; Hollister and Goldstein, 1994; Todaro, 1992). According to Adebayo (2013), unemployment is a global trend happening across the countries of the world but is somewhat common among the developing countries in the world in where Nigeria belongs with social, economic, political and psychological side effects attending the process. Thus, massive youth's unemployment in any country is an indication of far more complex problems (Okafor, 2009). Unemployment as a global concern is of more dire consequence for youth's employment. Global youth's unemployment rate was projected at 12.7 per cent in 2012. This portends immense dangers when understood from the point of view that young people are the next generation of potentially productive economic and social actors. In Africa, youth's unemployment has been a major problem, giving rise to other criminal tendencies in the youths and threatening the social-economic peace and stability of the continent (Ajufo, 2013).

On the concept of crime, there are different definitions of crime as there are many persons. The premise of crime is complicated and complex and so there is no one universal definition. According to Abolurin (2010), crime in a non-technical sense is an act that violates a political or moral rule. He proposed that in many nations, governments have discovered that informal sanctions are ineffective to control some anti-social behaviour; therefore, the system of social control has to be formalized. To him laws are designed to

regulate human behaviour and the state provides remedies and sanctions to protect its citizens if the laws are broken. Nevertheless, not all breaches of the law are considered crimes, for example breaches of contract. The label of "crime" and the accompanying social stigma are usually reserved for those activities causing more serious loss and damage to the citizens of the state. As defined by law, a crime includes both the act, or *actus rea* and the intent to commit the act, which is *mens rea*. Criminal intent involves an intellectual apprehension of factual elements of the act or acts commanded or enjoined by the law. It is usually inferred from the apparently voluntary commission of an overt act. Criminal liability is relieved in the case of insanity. Legal minors are also relieved of criminal liability, as are persons subjected to coercion or duress to such a degree as to render the commission of criminal acts involuntary. In most countries, according to him, crimes are defined and punished pursuant to statutes. Punishments may include death, imprisonment, exile, fine, forfeiture of property, removal from public office, and disqualification from holding such office (Encarta, 2009).

Under common Law, a crime was generally classified as treason, felony, or misdemeanour, but many offences could not be defined exactly, and the rule was adopted that any immoral act tending to the prejudice of the community was *per se* a crime and punishable by courts. Crimes are now usually classified as *mala in se* (crimes that are universally wrong) which includes acts such as murder, so offensive to morals as to be obviously criminal; and *mala prohibita* (crimes which are not universal and depend on place and time), which are violations of specific regulatory statutes, such as traffic violations that may not be punished if there are no statutory enactments prohibiting the commission of such acts.

According to Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009), "a crime is held to be an offence, which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority... for crime to be known as such, it must come to the notice of, and be processed through, an administrative system or enforcement agency. It must be reported and recorded by the police (or other investigator); it may then become part of criminal statistics; may or may not be investigated; and may or may not result in a court case." Dambazau (1994) defined crime as an act or omission against public interest and which is prescribed by law enacted by the legislature in the overall interests of the society, and to which prescribed punishment is attached in the event of violation and it involves four major principles which are public wrong,

moral wrong, law and punishment for the criminal. Crime is also seen as a violation of the rules agreed to be respected by all members of the society, and upon which the rest members of the society mete sanction upon those guilty of the violation. The prevalence of crime in the world today is a cause for serious concern for all and sundry. It undermines the social fabric by eroding the sense of safety and security. Crime impacts on society in a variety of ways according to the nature and extent of crime committed. It constitutes a problem when its incidence is as rampant in the society as to constitute a threat to the security of persons and property, as well as social order and solidarity (Onoge, 1998). It has been noted that Nigerian cities are conducive areas for criminal activities because they provide the anonymity needed for criminal activities (Okafor, 2011). In this city, the youth population pose more incidences of crime than any of other groups in the entire populace

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation Theory was adopted for this study. This theory was first coined by Sam Stouffer and his associates in their wartime study *The American Soldier* (1949), relative deprivation was rigorously formulated by Water, G. Runciman in 1966. Its use in criminology was not until the 1980s by theorists such as S. Stack, John Braithwaite and particularly the left realists for whom it is a key concept. In explaining relative deprivation, Walter Runciman noted that there are four preconditions of relative deprivation (of object X by person A): Person A does not have X, Person A knows of other persons that have X, Person A wants to have X, Person A believes obtaining X is realistic. Deprivation Theory means that people who are deprived of things deemed valuable in society, whether unemployment, money, justice, status or privilege, join social movements with the hope of redressing their grievances. Relative deprivation theories argue that when attempting to understand the causes of crime, it is insufficient to examine objective factors such as unemployment, poverty or inequality, and instead we must try to "delineate the factors that regulate the relationship between objective and subjective status" (Crosby, 1976).

Relative deprivation is what people think they should have relative to what others have, or even compared with their own past or perceived future. Improved conditions fuel human desires for even better conditions, and thus can spark revolution/crime.

A specific form of relative deprivation is unemployment. Unemployment is defined as a situation where someone of working age is not able to get a job but would like to be in full time employment. Unemployment can lead to relative poverty which may not change the situations of the

unemployed. Relative Deprivation occurs where individuals or groups subjectively perceive themselves as unfairly disadvantaged over others perceived as having similar attributes and deserving similar rewards (their reference groups). The discontent arising from relative deprivation has been used to explain radical politics (whether of the left or the right), messianic religions, the rise of social movements, industrial disputes and the whole plethora of crime and deviance.

The relative deprivation theory is very prominent as major argument for the use of arms and ammunition. Sometimes people perceive themselves to be more deprived than others. This happens in a situation where condition improves more slowly for a group than for others. Due to poor governance structure and unequal access and distribution of economic resources, some class of the population tends to have better opportunities than the other, the less privileged then finds crime as an available means of themselves in the society. When people perceived that poverty is inflicted on them by unemployment, then criminal activities is inevitable.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Design

This is a case study of self reported perception of unemployment on crime among Nigerian youths by Landmark University students, Omu Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria.

2.2. The Study Area

The research location for this work was Landmark University. The university was licensed for opening on March 21 2010 by the National Universities Commission (NUC). However, it began admitting students in April of 2011 with only three (3) students in the entire school. However, the University can boast of more than 2000 students that have been admitted, and so many lecturers. The University is a missionary school established with the aim of producing students with the capacity to impact positively on the Nigerian country and Africa as a continent and the world at large. The University has seven (7) core values upon which it is upheld and run, they include: Spirituality, Possibility, Mentality, Capacity Building, Integrity, Responsibility, Diligence and Sacrifice.

The University has just been in existence for about three (3) and half years and yet she has began to make impacts within her locality and gradually moving towards its Diaspora. She is moving constantly to heights that the founding fathers saw when the University was established.

The essence of using Landmark University is simply to know

and make deductions of the perceptions of the students concerning the research topic.

2.3. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

This entails a combination of simple random technique and the stratified among the Landmark University students. This enables us to achieve proper representation of all departments in the university. It also enhances the reliability and validity of the studies.

2.4. Instruments of Data Collection

Data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaire containing mostly close ended-questions. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section borders on socio-economic characteristics of the respondents while the second borders on relationship between unemployment and crime among Nigerian youths.

2.5. Methods of Data Collection

Questionnaires were administered by the researchers and research assistants specially trained for the study. In order to ensure confidentiality, respondents completed the questionnaire privately and returned to the researchers.

2.6. Methods of Data Analysis and Presentation

Data was analyzed using the statistical analytical package of social sciences. Data were presented in tables using percentage distributions. Chi-square statistics was used to test statistical significance of the association between the independent and dependent variables of the study.

2.7. Research Findings

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents' by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20	52	46.02
21- 30	48	42.48
31 and above	13	11.50
Total	113	100
Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	62	54.87
Female	51	45.13
Total	113	100
College	Frequency	Percentage
College of Agricultural Science	12	10.62
College of Science and Engineering	43	38.05
College of Business and Social Sciences	58	51.33
Total	113	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Impact of Unemployment on Crime

Students Perception of Youth involvement in Crime	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	94	83.19
No	19	16.81
Total	113	100
Factors Responsible for Unemployment	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate Private companies	20	17.7
Large number of graduates	43	38.05
Corruption in the Public Sectors	50	44.25
Total	113	100
Increasing Rate of Crime among Youths	Frequency	Percentage
High	72	63.72
Moderate	26	23.00
Low	15	13.27
Total	113	100
Crime Pervasive among Lower Class	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	71	62.83
No	42	37.17
Total	113	100
How Employment Help Youth to Reduce Crime	Frequency	Percentage
A large extent	78	69.02
A small extent	41	36.28
Total	113	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 3. Cross tabulation of Unemployment and Rate of Crime among Youths

Rate of Crime among Youth	Youth Unemployment			Total
	High	Average	Low	
High	60	9	3	72
Moderate	12	10	4	26
Low	2	9	4	15
Total	74	28	11	113

$$X^2_c = 14.23 > X^2_{1} = 9.49; df = 4; n = 13$$

3. Results and Discussions of the Findings

3.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Students

The significance of socio-demographic characteristic of respondents such as age, sex, college and their levels in the university in any social research cannot be overemphasized, because it tells about the biography of the subject being studied. In table 1, the age distribution indicates that majority of students in the Landmark University, were under the ages of twenty years 46.02% (52) and the age range of 21-30years weighed 42.48% (42). Explanation for this may be due to the fact that most of the university students are at that age level. In another development, the male respondents were little more than female. The male respondents were 54.8% (62) while the female respondents accounted for 45.3% (51).

The table also shows that the respondents were chosen from the three colleges in the University; College of Agricultural

Sciences accounted for 10.62% (42); College of Sciences and Engineering had 38.5% (43) while College of Business and Social Sciences accounted for 51.33% (58). The variations of numbers of respondents in the colleges show the preference in the choice of number of students per colleges.

3.2. Students' Perceptions of Impact of Unemployment on Crime

Table 2 shows the perception of respondents on impact of unemployment on crime. The first in this table indicates that 83.19% (94) of the respondents perceived that youths are involved in crime; while 16.8% (19) perceived they are not involved. On the factor responsible for unemployment, the majority of respondents 44.25% (50) relate the problem to corruption in the public sector, while 38.05% (43) of the respondents indicates that large number of graduates is the responsible factor for unemployment in Nigeria. Meanwhile, 17.7% (20) believed that inadequate establishment of private companies is responsible for unemployment. Also, table 2 shows the level or rate of crime among youths. 63.72% (72) of the respondents believed that the rate of crime among youth is high; while 23.0% (26) and 13.23% (15) of the respondents showed that the rate of crime among youth is moderate and low respectively. Furthermore, on whether crime pervasive was among lower class and higher class, majority of the respondents 62.8% (71) agreed that it was common among Lower class than higher class. The last measured was on how employment helps youth to reduce crime. The large percentage 69.2% (78) of the respondents indicated that creation of employment helps youth to reduce crime to a large extent.

3.3. Test of Hypothesis on Youth Age and Crime Perpetration

Table 3 tested hypothesis on the significant relationship between youth age and crime perpetration. The result showed that there is a significant relationship between youthful age and crime perpetrator. This finding can be related with views of Abranyam, Lumun, David and Daniel (2013) who posit that youth and young graduates indulge in crime, however, they remain in crime for a long time to provide for high standard or style of living. The nature of these youthful crimes are armed robbery, murder, rape, car theft, burglary, adulteration, gambling, smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering, internet scam, advanced fee fraud and other illegal activities (Dambazau, 2007). Also, Ajabi (2011) and Adebayo (2013) confirm that there is indeed widespread unemployment in Nigeria and the consequences of this on the development of the nation have been pathetic having its manifestation in various youthful criminal activities all over the country.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study established the perception of Landmark University students on impact of unemployment on crime among Nigerian youth. It has been shown from the study that unemployment serves as one of the major factors that often plagued youth with high level of criminal activities. The study also confirmed that those youth who have been employed are less likely to commit crime than those who are not employed. On the basis of the study, the following recommendations were made:

First, there should be skill acquisition programmes to help youths to be job creators rather than job seekers, this will enable them to be self-reliant and self-dependent and this will reduce crime rate among youth

Second, government should embark on target, project and investments as a way of reducing unemployment, poverty, and deprivations which have attendant negative effects on youth in the society. Third, government should create an enabling and peaceful environment to attract foreign investors into the country that will inadvertently help the youths to further show-case their skills and endowments. This, in the long run, will encourage youths to be inventive.

Finally, government should endeavour to invest more on education, particularly on technical education, and at least make education free, if not entirely at all levels, but at the elementary and secondary levels.

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