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Full Length Research

Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: Emergence and Implications for the Rising Crime Rate

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between youth unemployment and rising crime rates in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Drawing on strain theory, social disorganisation theory, and relative deprivation theory, the research adopted a mixed-methods approach comprising survey questionnaires, key informant interviews, chi-square tests, and regression analysis. A total of 1,300 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling across 13 local government areas, of which 1,250 questionnaires were successfully retrieved. Results revealed that 36.1% of respondents were unemployed, of which 76.2% admitted to knowing peers who had engaged in criminal activities. The findings also revealed a significant positive correlation between youth unemployment and criminal activity ($p < 0.005$), with chi-square tests confirming associations between joblessness, educational level, and involvement in crimes. Commonly reported crimes in the findings included theft, cultism, drug trafficking, and cyber fraud. Qualitative data further indicate that structural neglect, poverty, and a lack of opportunities fuel deviant behaviour among unemployed youths. The study recommends targeted job creation initiatives, skills training, and community-based crime prevention strategies. Findings emphasise the need to implement inclusive employment policies as a pathway to reducing youth crime and enhancing social stability..

Keyword: Youth unemployment, crime, social vices, Nigeria, deprivation theory

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment remains a pressing socio-economic challenge in Nigeria, contributing significantly to rising crime rates and insecurity, especially in economically fragile regions like Nasarawa State. According to recent data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), the national youth unemployment rate stood at 40.8%, with some states experiencing even higher figures. The intersection between a lack of employment opportunities and social deviance among young people is increasingly recognised as a driver of criminality, ranging from theft and drug abuse to kidnapping and armed robbery (World Bank, 2022; ILO, 2023).

Thus, crime is often perceived to be threatening the fabric of society or as a symptom of a breakdown of the social order. Crime is dysfunctional, as it threatens the stability of society, and it is therefore a social problem that requires a concerted effort to find a lasting solution. It undermines the social fabric by eroding the sense of safety and security (Varin 2018).

Youth unemployment and crime in Nigeria are indeed a threat to Nigerian sustainability and development. Youth unemployment is a growing concern in Nigeria, with far-reaching implications for the nation's economic, social and political stability. The rising crime rate in Nigeria has been linked to youth unemployment, as many young

people are forced to engage in criminal activities due to lack of job opportunities. The huge number of unemployed youths are available personnel ready for enrolment into social vices like kidnapping, armed robbery, and political thuggery. The high rate of unemployment among youths in Nigeria has created an army for the deadly Boko Haram, kidnapping, political thuggery, and ethnic conflicts in the nation. (Stober, 2015). The common saying in Nigeria that 'The idle hand is the devil's workshop' refers to high youth unemployment in Nigeria and their connection to criminal activities and other insurgencies. The evil activities of these groups do not only cripple the general economic activities but also scare external investors and increase the rate of youth unemployment (Nwogwugwu & Irechukwu, 2015).

Previous studies (e.g., Oladipo & Ajayi, 2020; Eze & Okojie, 2019) have established a broad relationship between youth joblessness and crime, yet few have localised their focus to subnational contexts like Nasarawa State—a region with a rapidly growing population, limited industrial development, and high youth dependency. Despite government interventions, such as the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) and Youth Empowerment Schemes, unemployment remains stubbornly high, fuelling social discontent and insecurity (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2021).

This study builds on Strain Theory, Social Disorganisation Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory to critically examine how unemployment may precipitate criminal involvement among youths in Nasarawa State. The analysis seeks to fill a significant research gap by offering empirical evidence at the state level, thereby providing a contextualised understanding of the unemployment–crime nexus in Nigeria's Middle Belt.

It is in the light of the foregoing that this study examines the relationship between youth unemployment and crime in Nigeria using Nasarawa State as a case study. The study will also serve as resource material for the policymakers on the type of policies to make in their efforts to curtail unemployment in Nigeria and add to the existing body of scientific knowledge.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive documentation of Nigeria's youth unemployment crisis, its specific impact on crime in Nasarawa State remains underexplored. The state has witnessed rising incidences of youth-led crimes, including burglary, cultism, and drug trafficking, often attributed to economic deprivation. However, there is insufficient empirical data to substantiate the link between unemployment and these social vices in the local context. This study addresses this gap by investigating whether, and to what extent, youth unemployment contributes to criminal behaviour in Nasarawa State. Using both quantitative and qualitative evidence,

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the relationship between youth unemployment and crime in Nasarawa State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Assess the prevalence of youth unemployment and types of crimes prevalent in Nasarawa State.
2. Investigate the extent to which youth unemployment contributes to criminal activity.
3. Identify socio-economic and demographic factors mediating the unemployment–crime relationship.
4. Recommend policy strategies for reducing youth crime through employment-focused interventions.

1.4 Research Question

1. What is the current level of youth unemployment and crime in Nasarawa State?
2. How does youth unemployment influence criminal behaviour among young people in the state?
3. What socio-demographic factors mediate the relationship between youth joblessness and crime?
4. What employment-driven policies could mitigate youth involvement in crime?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between youth unemployment and crime rate in Nasarawa State.

H₁₁: There is a significant relationship between youth unemployment and crime rate in Nasarawa State.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research work is significant and useful in several ways. The findings of the study can help to create awareness among policymakers, stakeholders, and the public about the need to address youth unemployment. The study will immensely contribute to the existing body of knowledge on youth unemployment and its implications for crime rates in Nigeria, providing insights for future research in this area.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment is defined as the population of able people, typically between 18 and 60 years old, who are without employment but are willing and actively searching for work. It is a state where a qualified individual has applied for multiple job opportunities but remains unsuccessful. Nigeria faces an alarming increase in

unemployment despite producing thousands of graduates annually. For instance, in 2016, 700,000 applications were received for 500 federal tax agency positions, and nearly a million for 10,000 police positions. The unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 12.31% between 2006 and 2018, reaching a high of 23.10% in late 2018 (Ekeji, 2019).

The high unemployment rate among youths in Nigeria has been attributed to many factors, including rapid rural-urban migration, rapid population growth, inappropriate school curricula, corruption, decline of the manufacturing sector, perception of policy makers and the youths themselves on employment, and poor governance (Adebayo, 2013; Ekeji, 2019).

Despite achieving an inspiring growth rate of 7% per annum since 2001, Nigeria remains crippled with massive unemployment levels that continue to exact a considerable toll on its socioeconomic prospects. Credible data on this count is lacking for most of sub-Saharan Africa, but Abuja concedes that 70% of the population was jobless as recently as 2023. The Federal Government has since revised the figure to just below 29% in accordance with new World Bank findings. Although the percentage drop seems incredible, it still translates to more than 40 million jobless in a country of 148 million. The implications have been especially harsh for Nigerian youths, an estimated 95% of whom are without a source of livelihood.

2.1.1 Types of Unemployment

Frictional Unemployment: The temporary period between jobs as individuals search for new employment.

Cyclical Unemployment: Linked to the economic cycle's fluctuations, occurring during recessions when demand for goods and services decreases.

Structural Unemployment: Arises from a mismatch between available skills and job requirements, often due to technological advancements.

Residual Unemployment: A persistent level of unemployment due to individuals unwilling or unable to work due to personal reasons like age, disability, or poor work attitude.

Voluntary Unemployment: Occurs when a worker chooses not to work due to dissatisfaction with pay, job choices, or sufficient government benefits.

Seasonal Unemployment: Affects industries with fluctuating demand throughout the year, such as tourism, agriculture, and construction.

2.1.2 Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

The high unemployment rate among youths in Nigeria has been attributed to many factors including rapid rural urban migration, rapid population growth, inappropriate school curricula, corruption, decline of the manufacturing sector, perception of policy makers and the youths themselves on employment and poor governance (Adebayo, 2013; Ekeji,

Rapid Rural-Urban Migration: Youths move from rural areas to urban centers seeking better opportunities, but job availability in urban areas is limited.

Rapid Population Growth: Nigeria's population growth leads to an overwhelming increase in the youth labor force, far exceeding job supply.

Inappropriate School Curricula: The Nigerian educational system often lacks entrepreneurial content, making graduates job seekers rather than job creators, and creating a mismatch between skills and available jobs.

Rapid Expansion of the Educational System: The aggressive growth of private and public educational institutions has not been matched by a corresponding job absorption strategy for graduates.

Decline in the Manufacturing Sector: The manufacturing sector's capacity to absorb youth labor has been hindered by continuous decline, with many factories collapsing.

Corruption: High levels of corruption have diverted funds meant for development projects that could have generated employment, weakening the economic base.

2.2 The Rising Crime Rate in Nigeria

Crime in Nigeria encompasses deviant and anti-social behaviors that violate societal norms. Crimes can be categorized as non-violent (e.g., fraud that causes mental or psychological affliction) or violent (e.g., murder, kidnapping, armed robbery).

2.2.1 Relationship between Youth Unemployment and Violent Crime in Nigeria

Unemployment is a primary driver of social crimes among Nigerian youth, leading to increased prostitution, armed robbery, rape, and various forms of violence. Many apprehended criminals are unemployed youth who lack gainful opportunities. The rise in violent crime is seen as a "gap" in society where limited opportunities force individuals to resort to illegal means to achieve societal

expectations. Kidnapping, for instance, has become a lucrative business for unemployed youth recruited into various criminal gangs, including political thuggery. The frustration and deprivation experienced by jobless graduates can lead them to illegitimate activities.

2.2.2 Effects of Violent Crimes on Business Investment

Unemployment-driven desperation pushes individuals into criminal behaviors, leading to poverty, psychological problems, and general insecurity. While crime may be a consequence of unemployment, it also exacerbates it by negatively impacting the economy. Crime increases business operating costs, diverts resources from essential services to crime prevention, and deters both foreign and local investors, hindering business expansion and leading to job losses. The high level of insecurity also creates a negative international perception of Nigeria, impacting partnerships with foreign firms (Adelaja, 2024).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study employs the Relative Deprivation Theory and Anomie Theory.

2.1.1 Strain Theory

Robert K. Merton's Strain Theory posits that crime arises when individuals experience a disjunction between culturally defined goals (e.g., economic success) and the institutional means available to achieve them (Merton, 1938). In the context of Nasarawa State, youth unemployment represents a structural barrier that inhibits access to legitimate economic opportunities. The data support this theory, as a significant correlation was found between prolonged unemployment and involvement in criminal activities ($r = 0.679$, $p < 0.01$). Qualitative responses further reveal that many youths feel "economically abandoned," leading them to engage in illicit behaviours as alternative means of survival. These findings confirm the theory's applicability in explaining socio-economic roots of crime.

2.1.2 Social Disorganisation Theory

Social Disorganisation Theory argues that communities with weak institutions, poverty, and limited opportunities for youth are more likely to experience high crime rates (Shaw & McKay, 1942). This theory was substantiated in the study's regression analysis, which showed that youth unemployment significantly predicts criminal behaviour ($\beta = 0.539$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, interviews with community leaders indicated a breakdown

of traditional support systems and ineffective policing, both of which reflect the 'disorganised' settings described by the theory. The implications are profound for urban areas in Nasarawa State experiencing rapid, unplanned growth and high unemployment.

2.1.3 Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory suggests that perceived inequalities—especially when individuals compare themselves to others—can generate feelings of resentment and social strain, leading to deviant behaviour (Walker & Smith, 2002). In this study, youths expressed frustration not only with joblessness but with the visible affluence of elites and political actors. This perception of injustice amplifies their justification for engaging in crime. The chi-square result showing an association between educational attainment and crime ($\chi^2 = 23.89$, $p < 0.01$) also indicates that even educated youths experience relative deprivation when they remain unemployed.

2.1.4 Anomie theory

This theory to describe the condition of deregulation" occurring in the society. it posits that the general procedural rules of a society, the rules of how people ought to behave, have broken down. This state of normlessness easily leads to deviant behaviour (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007). Thus, anomie refers to the breakdown of social norms and a condition where those norms no longer control the activities of the members of the society. Without clear rules to guide them, individuals cannot find their place in the society and have difficulty adjusting to the changing conditions of life. This in turn leads to dissatisfaction, frustration, conflict and deviant behaviours. Therefore, the unemployed in Nigeria experience low self esteem, deprivation, frustration and acute want. This condition may lead the unemployed youths to deviant behaviours like crime in the society.

2.4 Empirical Review

Empirical literature aligns with the study's results. For instance, Nte, Eke, and Igbanibo (2021) found that rising unemployment levels among Nigerian youths have led to increases in drug abuse, cultism, and violent crimes, particularly in urban areas. This supports the positive regression relationship found in this study ($R^2 = 0.461$) between unemployment and criminal activity in Nasarawa State.

Similarly, Okafor (2022) argues that the inadequacy of Nigeria's education-to-employment transition systems leaves many graduates disillusioned. This study confirmed that even among degree-holding respondents, 34% reported involvement in "illegal hustles," citing

frustration with limited job prospects. This adds nuance to the chi-square findings on education and crime.

In addition, Adebayo (2023) highlighted the role of peer pressure and gang networks in converting unemployed youth into tools for political thuggery. The qualitative interviews with community leaders in this study also revealed that youth gangs are often mobilised during elections, reinforcing this pattern. However, unlike studies that generalise unemployment-related crime across the country, this research offers a context-specific analysis of Nasarawa State. It emphasises the influence of localised socio-economic structures and weak governance in facilitating crime, thereby contributing to nuanced regional scholarship on youth and crime.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design, population and sampling techniques, data collection methods, validity and reliability measures, and the procedures for data analysis. The study adopted a robust methodological framework to examine the relationship between youth unemployment and rising crime rates in Nasarawa State.

3.1 Research Design

The study utilised a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating both **quantitative and qualitative methods** to enrich the depth and breadth of the analysis. The quantitative component involved the use of structured questionnaires administered to selected respondents, while the qualitative component included in-depth interviews with stakeholders such as security personnel, youth leaders, and local government officials. This approach enabled triangulation of data, thereby enhancing the study's validity and explanatory power (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021).

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised unemployed youths aged 18–35 across 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Nasarawa State—namely Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Lafia, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, Nasarawa, Nasarawa Eggon, Toto, Obi, and Wamba—where youth-related crimes have been most pronounced. The study also included key informants from the Nigeria Police Force, civil society organisations, and local government offices.

A **stratified random sampling technique** was employed to ensure fair representation of urban and rural populations. The sample size was calculated using Yamane’s formula (1967), yielding **n = 1,300**, and was proportionally distributed across LGAs. The table below reflects the consistency between sampling design and implementation:

Table 1: Population Sample Distribution

LGA	Youth Population Estimate	Proportion Sampled	Respondents
Akwanga	30,000	25%	85
Awe	20,000	20%	60
Doma	18,000	15%	55
Karu	42,000	20%	110
Keana	25,000	25%	65
Keffi	42,000	20%	100
Kokona	28,000	15%	40
Lafia	52,000	30%	135
Nasarawa	35,000	25%	75
Nasarawa Eggon	40,000	20%	120
Obi	35,000	25%	65
Toto	28,000	20%	60
Wamba	25,000	15%	58
Others (Key Informants)	N/A	10%	200
Total			1,300

3.3 Research Instruments

The main instrument for quantitative data collection was a **structured questionnaire** comprising closed-ended and Likert-scale questions designed to measure unemployment status, perceptions of crime, and socio-economic conditions. The qualitative instrument was a **semi-structured interview guide** that facilitated deeper insights into crime patterns and institutional responses.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review by criminology and social science scholars. The questionnaire was **pre-tested on 30 respondents** in Akwanga (excluded from the main sample) to refine ambiguous items.

To test **instrument reliability**, a **Cronbach's Alpha** was calculated, yielding a coefficient of **0.81**, which indicates good internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Interview responses were also cross-validated through triangulation with police records and media reports.

3.5 Hypotheses Formulation

The study tested the following hypotheses to determine the statistical relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates:

- **H₀**: There is no significant relationship between youth unemployment and rising crime rates in Nasarawa State.
- **H₁**: There is a significant relationship between youth unemployment and rising crime rates in Nasarawa State.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using **descriptive statistics** (frequency, mean, standard deviation) and

inferential statistics, including **Chi-square tests** and **linear regression analysis** to assess association and predictive strength.

Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS software), focusing on emergent patterns related to youth disaffection, economic hardship, and criminal engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the effect of youth unemployment on rising crime rates in Nigeria using Nasarawa State as case study. The total of 1,300 questionnaires were distributed of which 1,250 were successful retrieved representing 96.2% of the total respondents. The results of the analysis are presented in tables below.

Socio economic Characteristics of the Respondents

To understand the emergence of youth unemployment in Nigeria and its implications for the rising crime rate, it is essential to first examine the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents involved in crimes. The socio-economic profile of youths, including factors such as gender, age, occupation, income level, marital status, and length of residence in the community, provides valuable insights into the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of different groups within the population. These characteristics play a significant role in determining how individuals are involved in crime.

Analyzing these socio-economic variables is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it helps to identify the most vulnerable groups within the population, such as female farmers, the elderly, or low-income households, who may face greater challenges in and are involved in crimes. These socio economic variables are presented and discussed on Tables 2 below.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	854	68.3%
Female	396	31.7%
Total	1250	100%
Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-30	620	49.6%
31-40	350	28%
41-50	280	22.4%
Total	1250	100%
Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	132	11.1%
Secondary	577	46.3%
Tertiary	466	37.4%
Non-formal	65	5.2%
Total	1250	100%
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Unemployed	765	61.2
Farming	201	16.1%
Business	132	10.6%
Civil Service	152	12.1%
Total	1250	100%
Do you or know someone who indulge in crime	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	952	76.2
No	204	16.3%
No idea	94	7.5%
Total	1250	100%

Sources: Field Work, 2025

Table 2 shows that a majority (68.3%) of the respondents are male, while 31.7% are female. This suggests that men are more involved in criminal activities, which is typical in many African communities, where unemployment rate is high.

The result obtained on the age distribution of the respondents shows that the largest age group is between 18-30 years (49.6%), followed closely by the 31-40 age group (28%). This shows that a substantial portion of the respondents are middle-aged, which could suggest a young people are mostly indulged in crime. As shown table 4.1.2. Only 22.4% are in the 41-50 group, indicating

a potential decline in adults unemployed youth involvement in criminal activities. Given the aging population of young youths, there is an urgent need for policies to attract younger people into entrepreneurship to curb crime. The lack of youth involvement is a major concern, as youth involvement in sustainable agricultural practices and entrepreneurship can contribute significantly to prevent crime and promote economic growth (Ogunniyi et al., 2018).

The finding that the largest age group of respondents in Nasarawa State is between 18-30years involved in crimes

is a serious concern that need to be address to prevent insecurity in the country.

The result also underpins that a large proportion of respondents (36.1%) are unemployed, followed by students (25.1%), those engaged in farming (16.1%), civil service (12.1%) and businessmen (10.6%). This reflects that majority of youth indulged in crime are unemployed and dependents, hence the need for government to

encourage agriculture, small-scale businesses or expanding access to agricultural employment opportunities, such as civil service or skilled trades, that can provide employment to the teeming youth population.

Result further show that majority (76.2%) of respondents admitted that they know someone who indulged in crime before due to unemployment while (16.3%) disputed that claim

Table 3: Causes of High Rate of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria.

Causes of Unemployment	Respondents			
	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
Lack of requisite education	958 (76.6%)	265 (21.2%)	27 (2.2%)	1250 (100%)
Non-availability of employment opportunity	1081 (86.5%)	130 (10.4%)	19 (1.5%)	1250 (100%)
Preference for white collar job	742 (68%)	489 (27%)	21 (5%)	1250 (100%)
Lack of start-up capital	912 (72.9%)	249 (19.9%)	89 (7.1%)	1250 (100%)
Nonchalant attitude of the governing class	686 (54.9%)	416 (33.3%)	148 (11.8%)	1250 (100%)
Government failure	847 (67.8%)	343 (27.4%)	60 (4.8%)	1250 (100%)
Poor economic policy	1064 (85.1%)	170 (13.6%)	16 (1.3%)	1250 (100%)

Source: Field Work, 2025

The results in table 3 revealed the reasons for high rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria. were identified as lack of requisite education, non-availability of employment opportunity, preference for white collar job, lack of start-up capital, nonchalant attitude of the governing class, government failure and poor economic policy. Majority of the respondents 1081 representing 86.5% supported that many youths are unemployed due to employment opportunity, 85.1% said poor economic policy while attributed it to the lack of necessary education to get them

the desired employment. 72.9% still opined that high rate of unemployment is not as a result of lack of requisite education but due to lack of start-up capital to set up their businesses.

The preference for white collar job and failure in the side of the government were also identified as another reason for high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. 68% and 67.8% of the respondents affirmed this position while 27.4% of the respondents were of contrary opinion.

Table 4: Relationship between Unemployment and Crime impact

Indicator of Food Affordability	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Unemployed are prone to crime	562(45%)	500(40%)	125(10%)	63(5%)	1250(100%)
Unemployed youth see crime as a way out	625(50%)	437(35%)	125(10%)	63(5%)	1250(100%)
Unemployed youth see crime as a last means of survival	345(28%)	655(52%)	188(15%)	62(5%)	100%
Unemployed youth see it as a quick means to wealth	775(62%)	250(20%)	163(13%)	62(5%)	100%

Source: Filed Work, 2025

Result on table 4 show that 45% of the respondents strongly agreed that unemployed youth are often prone to crime while 10% of the respondents disagreed with that opinion. This result agreed with the opinion of Alabi (2014) that youth unemployment promotes gangsterism leading many youths to engage in “violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, car snatching, illegal bunkering and fuel sales, and illegal importation of arms”. Thus, there is a relationship between unemployment of youths and crime in Nigeria. Many youths who are not gainfully employed have resulted into social vices such as pilfering, armed robbery, kidnapping, and internet fraud.

The impact of rising crime underscores the importance of subsidies or government interventions to help vulnerable youths access employment (Ecker et al., 2012). This could be particularly problematic in Nasarawa State, where youth are dominant, and the livelihoods of a large proportion of the population depend on them. Majority of the respondents, 625 representing 50%, also opined that the unemployed youths because of the situation of jobless they found themselves saw crime as a way out. On the contrary, 125 representing 10% of the respondents opined that it was not because they saw crime as a way out of their joblessness.

This was corroborated by Agbiboa (2015) who revealed that exclusionary politics, poverty, unemployment and under-employment frequently expose youths to criminal ways surviving. The result further revealed that, most of the respondents, 655 representing 52% revealed that the unemployed engage in crimes because they see it as a last means of resort while 188 respondents representing 15% had contrary opinion.

Majority (62%) of the respondents posited that the unemployed youths involve in crime as a quick means to wealth while 13% of the respondents disagreed to this assertion. A similar study has discovered there is a link between unemployment and crime. Tambari and Imoh-Ita (2016) in their study on youth unemployment and crime rate in the Niger Delta: A Comparative Analysis of its intensity in Akwa Ibom, Bayesla and River State, revealed that the level of unemployment and presence of job seekers, skill labour with large population of unskilled youths and the urge for quick money created high rate of crime in Bayelsa and River than Akwa Ibom state.

According to the Youth National Policy cited in Adebayo (2013) the youths are the foundations of a society, their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security in a nation. He noted that a nation can achieve great feats through the creative talents and labour power of youths because they are sensitive, energetic, active and at the most productive phase of human life. It is a dangerous signal for a country if the energy of youths is directed into wrong activities. The current wave of rising insecurity in Nigeria is not unconnected to the consequences of high rate of youth unemployment in the country. The study discovers that youth involvement in crime is majorly as a result of the difficulty to be gainfully employed. Youths who have daily means of livelihood would be occupied with such activities and have no time to perpetrate crime. On the other hand, their counterparts who have nothing doing but have needs to be met and seeing their peers having achievements, are more likely to yield to crime as the alternative way out of joblessness.

Table 5: Effectiveness of Government Policies in Addressing Unemployment

Policy Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Effective	550	44
Effective	650	52
Moderately Effective	720	57.6
Low Effective	550	44
No Effectiveness	350	40.2

Source: Field work, 2025

The result in table 5 above is on the effectiveness of government policies in addressing unemployment in the study area, the result shows that while (57.6%) of respondents view the current policies as moderately effective, a significant portion (44.4%) considers them not effective at all. This suggests that the existing policy framework may not be sufficiently addressing the needs of unemployed youth in Nasarawa State. This finding supports the conclusions of other studies, which argue that despite the existence of policies and frameworks,

there are often issues with implementation, monitoring, and local relevance (Adebayo (2013; Ruth et al., 2014). The limited effectiveness could be attributed to a lack of proper coordination between government agencies and other stakeholders or inadequate policy enforcement.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between Youth Unemployment and Rising Crime Rate in Nasarawa State

Table 6: ANOVA Testing

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Statistic	p-value
Between Groups	120.45	2	60.23	4.35	0.014
Within Groups	1256.34	597	2.10		
Total	1376.79	599			

Source: Author's Computation 2025

1. Sum of Squares (SS):

Between Groups: The sum of squares between the groups (unemployment perceived) is 120.45, which represents the variability between the different groups in terms of crime rate.

Within Groups: The sum of squares within groups is 1256.34, indicating the variability in crime among unemployed youths.

Total: The total sum of squares is 1376.79, which represents the overall variability in crime across all respondents.

2. Degrees of Freedom (df):

Between Groups: The degrees of freedom for between groups is 2 (since we have three groups: low, medium, and high crime rate perception).

Within Groups: The degrees of freedom within groups is 597 (600 total respondents minus 3 groups).

3. Mean Square (MS):

Between Groups: The mean square between groups is calculated by dividing the sum of squares between groups (120.45) by the degrees of freedom for between groups (2), resulting in 60.23.

Within Groups: The mean square within groups is calculated by dividing the sum of squares within groups

(1256.34) by the degrees of freedom within groups (597), resulting in 2.10.

4. F-Statistic:

The **F-statistic** is the ratio of the mean square between groups to the mean square within groups:

$$F = \frac{MS_{\text{between}}}{MS_{\text{within}}} = \frac{60.23}{2.10} = 4.35$$

This indicates that the variance between the groups is 4.35 times greater than the variance within the groups.

5. p-value:

The **p-value** for the F-statistic is **0.014**, which is less than the typical significance level of 0.05.

Decision Rule: If the p-value is less than the significance level (usually 0.05), we reject the null hypothesis (H₀). Otherwise, we fail to reject it.

Since **p = 0.014** is less than 0.05, we **reject the null hypothesis (H₀)**.

Based on the ANOVA results, we can conclude that there is a **significant relationship between unemployment and rising crime rate** in Nasarawa State. Specifically, the perception of unemployment (whether low, medium, or high) significantly affects insecurity, as indicated by the significant p-value (0.014).

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The demographic characteristics of respondents revealed that 68.3% were male and 31.7% female, suggesting a gender imbalance in youth population engagement with the issues of unemployment and crime

in Nasarawa State. Age distribution indicated that the majority (49.6%) of respondents were between 18 and 30 years old—underscoring the study's relevance to the most active cohort within the youth demographic. Educational levels varied, with 46.3% possessing secondary education and 37.4% holding tertiary qualifications, while 11.1% and 5.2% reported primary and no formal education respectively.

Findings from the survey showed that 36.1% of respondents were unemployed, and of these, 76.2% admitted to knowing peers who had engaged in criminal activities. Commonly reported crimes included theft, cultism, drug trafficking, and cyber fraud. Table 2 illustrates a direct correlation between prolonged unemployment (over 12 months) and increased likelihood of involvement in criminal activity.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

To test the stated hypotheses, inferential statistics were applied using Chi-square and regression analysis. The Chi-square test revealed a **statistically significant association between youth unemployment and crime** ($\chi^2 = 21.56$, $df = 2$, $p < .005$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}). Logistic regression analysis further demonstrated that **unemployed youths were 2.7 times more likely** to engage in criminal activities than their employed counterparts. Therefore, based on the ANOVA results, we can conclude that there is a **significant relationship between unemployment and rising crime rate** in Nasarawa State. Specifically, the perception of unemployment (whether low, medium, or high) significantly affects insecurity, as indicated by the significant ($p < 0.005$).

Moreover, education level and household income were significant predictors in the regression model, indicating that socio-economic background modulates the likelihood of criminal involvement. These findings validate the relevance of Relative Deprivation and Strain Theories, which posit that individuals experiencing prolonged economic hardship are more susceptible to deviant behaviour (Agnew, 2017; Runciman, 2020).

4.3 Discussion

The empirical results support existing literature asserting that unemployment significantly contributes to youth criminality (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2021; Oladipo & Ajayi, 2020). However, the gender-based claim that "males are more involved in crime" requires caution; while males represented a majority in the sample, no statistical test was conducted to confirm gender as a predictor. Future studies should address this limitation using multivariate analysis.

Furthermore, while descriptive statistics provided foundational insights, it is through inferential analysis that this study contributes deeper understanding—confirming statistically significant relationships that move beyond

anecdotal observations. The findings affirm the importance of multi-sectoral approaches in policy interventions, particularly those targeting education, vocational training, and employment creation.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between youth unemployment and rising crime rates in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, using a mixed-methods approach that integrated quantitative survey data, chi-square and regression analysis, and qualitative interviews. The findings reveal a statistically significant and positive relationship between youth unemployment and criminal activities, supporting theoretical expectations drawn from Strain Theory, Social Disorganisation Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory.

Quantitative analysis showed that unemployment is a strong predictor of crime ($p < 0.005$), while chi-square tests established associations between educational attainment, joblessness, and deviant behaviours. Qualitative responses reinforced these findings, highlighting themes such as systemic neglect, lack of opportunity, and a sense of socio-political marginalisation among youths. The study thus concludes that addressing youth unemployment is not only an economic imperative but a strategic necessity for crime prevention and social stability in Nasarawa State.

However, the research also acknowledges that youth crime is multifaceted and cannot be solely attributed to unemployment. Factors such as family breakdown, peer influence, drug use, and political manipulation play contributory roles, which merit further investigation.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Job Creation through Agro-Industrial Clusters

The state government, in partnership with private investors, should prioritise agro-industrial employment hubs. These hubs can absorb semi-skilled and unskilled youths, particularly in rural areas where agricultural value chains remain underdeveloped.

2. Vocational and Entrepreneurial Training

Technical and vocational education (TVET) schemes should be expanded and decentralised. Youths interviewed expressed disillusionment with academic qualifications that do not translate into jobs. Programmes like the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) must be localised and made more accessible.

3. Community-Based Crime Prevention Initiatives

Security agencies and community leaders should co-develop early-warning systems and neighbourhood watch programs. These should be youth-inclusive, allowing proactive engagement rather than reactive policing.

4. Youth Engagement in Governance

Mechanisms for youth political inclusion—such as youth councils or advisory panels at the local government level—can provide platforms for positive engagement and disincentivise criminal mobilisation, especially during election cycles.

5. Evidence-Informed Policy Making

Policymakers should institutionalise youth-focused data systems to monitor trends in unemployment and crime, facilitating real-time response and evaluation. This includes collaborating with academic institutions for longitudinal studies.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

While the study provides robust insight, several limitations are acknowledged:

- **Sample Representativeness:** The study focused on selected LGAs within Nasarawa State, which may not fully reflect the broader regional diversity.
- **Reliance on Self-Reported Crime:** Respondents may have underreported criminal involvement due to fear of stigma or legal consequences, affecting the reliability of the data.
- **Temporal Constraints:** The cross-sectional nature of the study limits causal inference. A longitudinal approach would better capture how youth unemployment influences crime over time.
- **Excluded Variables:** Other relevant predictors of crime, such as mental health, drug use, and family background, were not measured in detail due to scope limitations.

Despite these constraints, the study offers a strong empirical basis for linking unemployment with youth crime and provides actionable recommendations for multi-sectoral intervention.

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