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## **An Assessment of the Link between Youth Unemployment and Crime in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria: Fixing the Hinges**

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DOI - <http://doi.org/10.37502/IJSMR.2022.5413>

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### **Abstract**

Youth unemployment is one of the many problems confronting the globe. Every continent of the world is faced with youth unemployment challenges but this situation seems to be worst in developing countries where Africa and Nigeria is part of this ugly situation is catastrophic and destructive to our youth as well as the society in the present and in the future. This is because of its tendency to induced deviant and criminal behaviour. This study bothers itself with an assessment of the link between youth unemployment and crime in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria: fixing the hinges. It adopted the Anomie theory, propounded by Robert Merton (1957) and Robert Agnew (1992) strain theory to explain the problem of youth unemployment. The study employed survey design and adopt quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (Key Informant Information) techniques of data collection. The completed questionnaires were subjected to analysis using Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate a table of frequencies and percentages. The generated and analyzed data were interpreted in relation to Youth unemployment and crime in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria: fixing the hinges. The findings revealed a connection between youth unemployment and crime. It was concluded that unemployment is capable of pushing the idle and jobless youths into deviant and criminal behaviour. The work recommends an all hand on deck immediate approach to contend the hydra-headed problems of youth unemployment and crime in Nigeria.

**Key words:** Youth Unemployment, Link, Crime, Fixing the hinges, Obudu, Cross River, Nigeria

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### **1. Introduction**

Every society across the globe has its peculiar problems and challenges. Nigeria is not an exception. As a developing country, she faces her own share of social, political, economic and cultural problems which has in no small measure affected the well-being of the populace. Such problems bedeviling the country include youths` unemployment and the rising wave of crime, which have serious implications for national development (Okafor, 2011).

According to Jaja (2003) in Igbo (2006), in the beginning there was no differentiation between offences. The idea of crime and non-criminal wrongs as we have it today did not exist. All wrongs without exception were generally called crimes conveying a simply sense of wrongfulness. All acts were regarded as private matters, and wrongs were considered as private wrongs not requiring the official intervention of the king who was the ultimate political authority. Under the original dispensation and order, persons who were wronged were expected to take private revenge on the wrong doer or the latter's family. In essence, private revenge or family feuding (revenge by a wronged family against the family of the wrongdoer) was the order of the day (Igbo, 2006).

But as societies grew more complex and people became more mobile (social and geographical mobility), and family structure became altered, the system of private revenge and family feuding began to break down. Subsequently, the concept of crime developed but it was limited in application to acts committed against the king. Thus only acts committed against the king were defined as crimes while wrongs committed against individual members of the society were not regarded as crimes. At this time, the system of private revenge continued as the only form of punishment for wrongs committed against private individuals (Reid, 2002 in Igbo, 2006). This study seeks to carry out an assessment of the link between youth unemployment and crime in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria: fixing the hinges.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The media, both print and electronic is awash daily with reports of crimes committed by the unemployed and seeming helplessness of the law enforcement agents especially the police, in curbing the ugly and disturbing trend which has made it more worrisome. Crime is a universal phenomenon and differs only in degree among the various nations of the world (Anthony, 2013).

In Nigeria, unemployment is not uncommon. A number of states including Cross River State have often experience a continuous rise in unemployment rate and how it exerts its impact on the youths especially with regards to criminality. Unemployment situation in Cross River State is inherent in the nature of the capitalist system of the Nigerian economy (Ugal, 2012).

Policy makers and our leaders are not ready or committed to evolve pragmatic measures capable of reducing unemployment and criminality to the barest minimum, one will find out from previous researches and literature that the unemployed are alienated, rejected, isolated, worried, downgraded etc and are seen as not being able to fulfill their dreams and purposes in life (Okafor, 2011).

The standard United Nation (2009) definition which is also used by the International Labour Office (ILO, 2010), classifies "youth" as the young people between 15-24 years old. The definition however often varies from country to country. Recent data from the ILO (2012) showed that globally, one person out of every five is between the ages of 15 – 24 years. Altogether, there are over 1.2 billion youths in the world, majority of them (about 80%) live in developing countries, with 60% in Asia, and 17% in Africa (14% from sub-Saharan Africa and 3% from North Africa). While it is generally believed that youthful population is an important asset for innovation and creativity in society, the opposite could be the case if these

peculiarities of the youths are not well harnessed (Albert 2000; Gilbert, 2010; in Vremudia, 2012). Therefore, this study takes an assessment of the link between youth unemployment and crime in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria: fixing the hinges.

### **Research questions**

The following questions were formulated for the study

1. What is the meaning of unemployment in Obudu Local Government Area?
2. What link exists between idleness and crime in Obudu Local Government Area?
3. What is the nexus between joblessness and crime in Obudu Local Government Area?
4. What relationship exists between lack of basic needs (poverty) and crime in Obudu Local Government Area?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective is to assess the link between Youths Unemployment and Crime in Obudu local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria: fixing the hinges while the specific objectives are:

1. To understand the meaning of unemployment in Obudu Local Government Area
2. To examine the nexus between idleness and crime in Obudu Local Government Area
3. To ascertain joblessness and crime in Obudu Local Government Area
4. To investigate lack of basic needs (poverty) and crime Obudu Local Government Area

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The strain theory, propounded by Robert Merton (1957) as Anomie theory and Robert Agnew (1992) as General Strain Theory, is used as theoretical framework for this study. The theory was developed by Merton (1957) using Durkheim's concept of anomie and later modernized by Robert Agnew (1992).

Merton posited that when a legitimate means, for example (job/employment) of acquiring a culturally defined goal (money) is limited by the structure of society, the resulting strain may lead to crime. As such, strain theory explains criminality as a result of blocked opportunities or impediments which are put on the way of people consciously or unconsciously by the society or government.

This leads to social disorganization, which makes the individual (unemployed youth) strive to achieve the societal goals (employment) through deviant means (criminality). To such individuals, any institutionalized means is legitimate as long as the end justifies the means.

Furthermore, Merton (1957) postulated that individuals adapt to the inconsistency between means and goals in a society that socializes every one into wanting the same thing, but provides opportunities for only some.

Merton suggested that, except for the conformist, who accept the culturally defined goals and socially means of achieving them, others take to **innovation**: those who accept the cultural goals but reject the institutional means of achieving the goals eg armed robbers, **ritualist**: those who reject the goals but accept the institutional means of achieving the goals. Here, the ritualist embraces the rules to a point they lose sight of the goals completely. Such people

insist on the minutest of detailed adherence to bureaucratic norms even at the expense of achieving the cultural goals. **Retreatist:** Those who abandoned both the cultural goals and the institutional means of achieving them. They may be aware of the goals and the means to achieving them, but may consider themselves alien to the society and refuse to take responsibility and **rebellionist:** Those who reject both the cultural goals and the institutional means of achieving them. Rebels develop new methods or means of achieving cultural goals as modes of adaptation to achieve societal goals.

Innovation and rebellion which is the adaptation strategy most associated with criminal behaviours, explains the high rate of crime committed by the unemployed youths in the society who lack access to legitimate means of achieving the societal goals of employment/wealth.

Applying this theory, the vexed problems of youth unemployment account for the criminality phenomenon in the Nigeria polity today because according to Merton, crime is an option under certain structural means hence, the lack of legitimate means of achieving a goal (employment opportunities) produces frustration and distress which in turn produces crime.

However, the two basic elements that are culturally defined goals and the institutional means of achieving the goals are the main reason for individual's conformity or deviation. Merton emphasized that differential treatment/ placement of societal members (discrimination in employment) in the social structure that is stratification system creates the situation where people do not have the same opportunity for realizing culturally defined goals.

He maintained that, such a situation can also generate deviance and crime (Schaefer, 2005:182). This clearly shows that individuals whose chances of attaining success (unemployment opportunities) are blocked by social forces usually resort to crime as an alternative innovative means as opposed to the legitimate means in the bid to realize their aspiration since the institutional means of achieving them are not available to them.

Given that no single sociological theory addresses social phenomenon in totality, the Marxist conflict model will be used to support and illuminated the phenomenon of unemployment under study.

One of sociological models that carefully explained the context of unemployment in Nigeria is the theory of surplus value by Marx and Engels (1848) David McClelland (2009).

Marx believed that capitalist societies like Nigeria always had and would have high levels of unemployment.

He believed such economies went through cycles-periods of expansion in which there was full employment, followed by periods of crises during which unemployment rose, recoveries from crises were only temporary.

Marx asserted that capitalist economies works in favour of the few bourgeoisies, capitalist's property class at the expense of the working class.

In Marx's assertion:

*"It is in the very nature of the capitalist mode of production to overwork some workers while keeping the rest as a reserve army of unemployed paupers". Marx (1848)*

According to Marx, unemployment is inherent within the unstable capitalist system and periodic crises of mass unemployment are to be expected. The function of the proletariat within the capitalist system is to provide a "reserve army of labour" that creates downward pressure on wages.

This is accomplished by dividing the proletariat into surplus labour (employees) and under-employment and unemployed as well (McClelland, 2009).

These reserve army of labour fight among themselves for scarce jobs at lower and lower wages. At first glance, unemployment seems inefficient since unemployed workers do not increase profits.

However, unemployment is profitable within the global capitalist system because unemployment lowers wages which are costs from the perspective of the owners. From this perspective low wages benefit the system by reducing economic rents but, it does not benefit workers.

Capitalist systems unfairly manipulate the market for labour by perpetuating unemployment which lowers labourers' demands for fair wages. Workers are pitted against one another at the service of increasing profits for owners.

In Nigeria context, the Nigerian super-rich politicians together with super-rich capitalists formed a cabal and logically established economic imperialism. Economic and social policies formulated by the government are not in any way beneficial to the common Nigerians. Young people with skills, certificates and energies have nothing to offer as a result of mass unemployment, but to dance to the tune of the politicians who in turn used them to manipulate, rig and destabilized elections. In most cases, after they have been used by the politician, they are dumped or left to face their fate whenever the law catches up with them. The few available jobs for the battalion of youth job-seekers are politicized. Unless the job seeker is connected to a political godfather he may not get the job (Alemika, 2012).

### **3. Methodology**

The study employed survey design and adopt quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (Key Informant Information) techniques of data collection. The study sampled two hundred and eighty-nine (289) respondents across the ten (10) electoral wards in Obudu. A simple random technique was used to elicit responses from respondents. This research method was chosen because of flexibility, effectiveness in data collection and the fact that, survey gives the researcher opportunity to select a large respondent from the population. The completed questionnaires were subjected to analysis using Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate a table of frequencies and percentages. The generated and analyzed data were interpreted in relation to Youth unemployment and crime in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State.

### **4. Data Presentation and Findings**

**Table: 1.7.1: Respondents Understanding of the Meaning of Unemployment**

	Frequency	Percent
Unemployment means being jobless	242	83.7
Unemployment means being idle	41	14.2
Unemployment means being poor	6	2.1
Total	289	100.0

**Source: (Field survey 2016).**

Given the nature of this research, it was felt that there was the need to find what respondents understand by unemployment. Table 1.7.1 shows the responses to the question, what respondents understand by unemployment. Majority of the respondents (83.7 percent) see unemployment as being jobless while 14.2 percent see it as being idle. The remaining 2.1 percent think unemployment means being poor. Since 83.7 percent saw unemployment as being without a job, it can be assumed that majority of the respondents understand the meaning of the word. This is reinforced by the responses in table 4.7 where 97.6 percent of the respondents believed that unemployment means being without a job.

**Table 1.7.2: Unemployment in Obudu Community means Joblessness**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	282	97.6
No	7	2.4
Total	289	100.0

**Source: (Field survey 2016).**

Table 1.7.2 seek to know if respondent understands the meaning of unemployment, the result in the above table with 97.6 percent saying they understand unemployment to mean unavailability of jobs, only 2.4 percent being negative. This result merely confirms table 1.7.2 with 83.7 percent saying unemployment means being jobless. With this overwhelming confirmation it is clear that respondents understand the meaning of unemployment.

*The findings from the key informant interview (KII) on their understanding of unemployment among Obudu people of Cross River State indicate that unemployment means being jobless, followed by being idle and closely followed by absence of government employment. It was glaring from their behaviour and responses that the meaning of unemployment is well known in the area.*

*A male interviewee from Urban One (I) opined that “in Obudu we value education, we even sell our properties to sponsor our children to school with the hope that government will employ them and life will be better for us, but see all my five children are graduates yet unemployed, what is the need to send children to school?”*

*Another interviewee a female from Urban Two (II) asserts “we are unemployed, our children have finished school too and are jobless, we are suffering here in Obudu and nobody cares about us”.*

*From the above assertion, one will conclude that majority of the respondents in Obudu which is the study area concur that they were unemployed and understand the meaning of unemployment.*

**Table 1.7.3: Unemployment means idleness**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	242	84.0
No	31	10.7
I don't know	16	5.5
Total	289	100.0

**Source: (Field survey 2016).**

Table 1.7.3 has given us a pictorial outlook of idleness as a form of unemployment in Obudu. 84.0 percent said idleness is unemployment, 10.7 percent said being idle is not being unemployed and the remaining respondents said they don't even know if being idleness is actually being unemployed. By implication, this table is clearly telling us that majority of the youth in Obudu are actually saying being unemployed is same as being idleness in Obudu.

**Table 1:7.4 Unemployment means having lack of basic needs (poverty) in Obudu**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	193	66.8
Agree	49	17.0
Undecided	14	4.8
Disagree	22	7.6
Strongly disagree	11	3.8
Total	289	100.0

**Source: (Field survey 2016).**

Table 1.7. 4 show perception of the respondents in Obudu. 66.8 percent strongly agreed that lack of basic needs (poverty) is unemployment in Obudu, 17.0 percent agreed that lack of basic needs (poverty is unemployment in Obudu, 4.8 percent were undecided, 7.6 percent of them actually disagreed that lack of basic needs (poverty is unemployment in Obudu while 3.8 percent also strongly disagreed. It is very clear here that lack of basic needs in Obudu with a total of 83.7 percent said lack of basic needs (poverty is unemployment in the area under study.

**Table 1.7.5: There is nexus between joblessness and crime in Obudu**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	174	60.2
Agree	83	28.7
Undecided	12	4.2
Disagree	14	4.8
Strongly disagree	6	2.1
Total	289	100.0

**Source: (Field survey 2016).**

Table 1.7.5 seeks to ascertain the nexus between joblessness and crime in the study area. The finding shows that 60.2 percent strongly agreed that joblessness leads to crime in Obudu, 28.7 percent agreed that joblessness leads to crime in the study area. 1.0 percent were undecided, 4.2 percent of them actually undecided with 4.8 percent disagreed that, there is no link between joblessness and crime in Obudu while only 2.1 percent also strongly disagreed. It is very clear here that joblessness leads to crime in Obudu LGA since a total of 88.9 percent responses said joblessness leads to crime in the area under study.

**Table 1.7:6 There a link between idleness and crime in Obudu**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	168	58.1
Agree	99	34.3
Undecided	3	1.0
Disagree	12	4.2
Strongly disagree	7	2.4
Total	289	100.0

**Source: (Field survey 2016).**

Table 1.7.6 shows perception of the link between idleness as a form of unemployment and crime in Obudu. 58.1 percent strongly agreed that idleness leads to crime in Obudu, 34.3 percent agreed that idleness leads to crime in Obudu. 1.0 percent were undecided, 4.2 percent of them actually disagreed that there is no link between idleness and crime in Obudu while 2.4 percent also strongly disagreed. It is very clear here that crime is present in Obudu as a total of 92.4 percent said idleness leads to crime in the area under study.

**Table 1.7.7: There is a relationship between lack of basic needs (poverty) and crime in Obudu**



	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	159	55.0
Agree	87	30.1
Undecided	18	6.2
Disagree	13	4.5
Strongly disagree	12	4.2
Total	289	100.0

**Source: (Field survey 2016).**

Table 1.7.7 is curious to know the relationship between lack of basic needs (poverty) and crime in the study area. 55.0 percent strongly agreed that lack of basic needs (poverty) leads to crime in Obudu, 30.1 percent agreed that lack of basic needs (poverty) leads to crime in Obudu. 6.2 percent were undecided, 4.5 percent of them actually disagreed that there is no relationship between lack of basic needs (poverty) and crime in Obudu while 4.2 percent also strongly disagreed. It is very clear here that lack of basic needs (poverty) is one of the reasons responsible for crime in Obudu given that a total of 85.1 percent said lack of basic needs (poverty) leads to crime in the area under study.

### **5. Discussion of Findings**

The data generated from the field in table 1.7.1 shows that, respondents in Obudu Local Government Area sees unemployment to mean being idle 14.2 percent, being jobless 83.6 percent and lacking the basic needs of life (poverty) 2.1 percent.

Table 1.7.2 on whether unemployment implies being jobless, respondents overwhelming response of 97.4 percent yes against 2.6 percent No revealed that unemployment connotes being jobless. Table 1.7.3 shows the views of the respondents on the link between idleness as a form of unemployment and crime in Obudu. 58.1 percent strongly agreed that idleness leads to crime in Obudu, 34.3 percent agreed that idleness leads to crime in Obudu. This finding show that 92.4 percent responses favoured the fact that idleness leads to crime in the study area. Table 1.7.4 seeks to understand if unemployment is synonymous with lack of basic needs (poverty). The responses from the field work with 66.8 percent strongly agreed and 17.0 percent agreed means that an overwhelming 83.8 percent agreed that lack of basic needs (poverty) is same as being unemployed.

Table 1.7.5 seeks to ascertain t if there is a nexus between joblessness and crime in the study area. The finding shows that 60.2 percent strongly agreed that joblessness leads to crime in Obudu with 28.7 percent agreed that joblessness leads to crime in the study area. Therefore it is evident from the finding that an overwhelming 88.3 percent are of the view that joblessness leads to crime in the study area. Table 1.7.6 seeks to underscore idleness and crime in the study area. The result revealed that idleness encourage crime this findings was seen where 58.1 percent and 34.3 percent making of total of 92.4 percent subscribing to the existence of a

link between idleness and crime with only 7.6 percent challenging the view. Table 1.7.7 is curious to know the relationship between lack of basic needs (poverty) and crime in the study area. 55.0 percent strongly agreed that lack of basic needs (poverty) leads to crime in Obudu, 30.1 percent agreed that lack of basic needs (poverty) leads to crime in Obudu. The above result from table 1.7.7 revealed that 85.1 percent responses are of the view that there is a relationship between lack of basic needs (poverty) and crime.

Objective one seek to know if respondent understands the meaning of unemployment, the result presented in table 1.7.1 above with 97.6 percent said they understand unemployment to mean idleness, joblessness and lack of basic needs of life.. Objective two wish to know if joblessness means being unemployed, the finding proved that it is. Objective three wanted to access joblessness as a form of unemployment. The result shows that joblessness is a form of unemployment. Objective four wished to know if lack of basic needs (poverty) is a form of unemployment. The findings revealed that it is. These results from tables 1.7.2; 1.7.3 and 1.7.4 merely confirms what obtains in table 1.7.1 with 83.7 percent respondents agreeing that unemployment means being jobless.

It can be inferred from this study firstly that unemployment means being idle, jobless and lacking the basic needs of life (poverty). Secondly that joblessness, idleness and lack of basic needs (poverty) are synonymous with unemployment and thirdly that there is link between joblessness and crime, idleness and crime as well as lack of basic needs of life (poverty) and crime in the study area.

## **6. Conclusion**

Majority of the responses and findings for this study admitted that unemployment has negative consequences on the people of Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State. They posit that the high level of unemployment in the area has led to high level of crime, poverty, slow pace of development, hunger, low aspiration, and death; high level of debt, vandalization of public properties, prostitution, dashed the hope, happiness and focus of most youths and has as well caused divorce among married couples. Measures suggested in managing and controlling the twin problems of unemployment and crime in this study should be seen as valid statements and as such, they should be considered as solution to the problems in order to accomplish the major aim and objectives of this research.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made by the researcher with the hope that their implementation will help manage and control the phenomenon of unemployment and crime in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State.

The only government employment opportunity in the study area is the Local Government, State Government and Federal College of Education which employs only a relatively few indigenes. Government, NGOs and good spirited individuals should set up industries,

agencies, build schools and open the hinterlands to create jobs for the ever teeming unemployed youths in Obudu and beyond.

Government should diversify the Nigerian economy and reduce the over dependence on oil by venturing into mechanized agriculture which will employ alot of the unemployed youths in Obudu and beyond.

Building of social infrastructure like road will link the town with the villages; create jobs for transporters as well as growth and development. Electricity will provide a platform for other business to thrive; water will be resourceful and create avenue for both domestic and industrial take off, hospitals will provide good health care as well as create job opportunities for Obudu people and beyond. Recreational facilities will develop talents and give them a livelihood, hotels and hospitality industries will promote aesthetics, exposure and cross-culturation from tourist. Above all, it will attract foreign investors and create development.

Government state allocation for Cross River State should be reviewed upward to create room for employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths.

Leaders in Obudu/Cross River State should develop people oriented policies to drive the economy amidst, recession and economic meltdown to create employment opportunities.

The judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the Cross River State rich oil Bakassi peninsular and the National Boundary Commission seizing and handing over of Cross River State 52 oil wells to Cameroon and Akwa-Ibom state respectively should be reversed as this will impact positively in the lives of the citizens, boost commercial activities and also create varied job opportunities.

Godfatherism, bad government policies, politicization of available jobs, corruption, and mismanagement of resources amongst others should be frowned at and jettison by the leaders to give way for merit and credit of self-achievement.

Youths should strive to learn skills so that they can be self-employed and self-reliant rather than always waiting for the government to provide job opportunity for them.

Government should create and monitor programmes and competitions like talent hunts that will create and impact well on the youths to become self-reliant and employers of labour as they develop into successful business icons and celebrities in music, science, sports and arts.

From all indications, the reduction of youth unemployment will translate into reduction in crime, and engender sustainable national development. The youths are an important part of the society, who should be encouraged to channel their energies to national development by being positively engaged in productive ventures to drive the system, and discouraged from activities that could be detrimental to the growth of the country. Therefore, every action taken towards youth employment is an action towards crime reduction and control as well as promoting national development.

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