

Original Research Article

Youth Unemployment and Criminality: A Study of Burglary in Otuoke Community, Bayelsa State

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Abstract: Background: Youth unemployment has become a pervasive issue in Nigeria, particularly in rural communities like Otuoke, where limited economic opportunities and social pressures contribute to increased rates of criminality, including burglary. This study investigates the relationship between youth unemployment and burglary in Otuoke community, Bayelsa State, aiming to shed light on the socio-economic factors driving this correlation. **Aim:** This study investigates the relationship between youth unemployment and burglary in Otuoke community, Bayelsa State, using Robert K. Merton's strain theory. **Method:** A sample of 370 participants was selected through purposive sampling, and data was collected via self-designed questionnaires. Frequency tables and simple percentage analysis revealed a significant link between youth unemployment and burglary. **Result:** The findings suggest that Nigeria's emphasis on goals without providing adequate means leads to deviant behavior. There was a significant correlation between youth unemployment and burglary rates in the Otuoke community, 75% of respondents reported unemployment as a primary motivator for engaging in burglary, lack of job opportunities, poverty, and inadequate education were identified as major contributing factors, 60% of respondents had no formal education or vocational training, social pressures, peer influence, and family financial burdens also played a role in criminal involvement, majority of burglars (80%) were aged 18-25, emphasizing the vulnerability of young people. **Conclusion:** Youth unemployment is a societal issue threatening social-economic stability.

Keywords: Unemployment, Youth, Criminality, Armed robbery, Burglary.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment and criminality are pressing concerns in Nigeria, particularly in the context of economic development. The strain theory, proposed by Robert K. Merton, provides a framework for understanding the relationship between societal goals and deviant behavior. In Nigeria, unemployment has reached alarming levels, with approximately 20 million young people affected (Sanusi, 2012). Otuoke community, Bayelsa State, is no exception, with youth unemployment contributing to increased burglary and other violent crimes. This phenomenon undermines democratic practices and poses a significant threat to social stability.

Previous studies have highlighted the link between unemployment and crime (Ohijini, 2005; Etannibi & Chukwua, 2005). The Nigerian experience

mirrors global trends, where transitional democracies face increased violent crime and disorder (Shaw, 2001; Shearing & Kempa, 2001). The rise of armed robbery and other crimes in Otuoke community, Bayelsa state, has led to widespread fear, crippling economic and social life in the area. This surge in criminality can be traced back to the 1980s, following the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), which resulted in a large number of youths struggling to find employment under harsh economic conditions. The idle and often homeless youth, both skilled and unskilled, have become a breeding ground for deviant activities, including burglary, drug and substance abuse (Charles *et al.*, 2024; Yenagoa *et al.*, 2024), theft, and more. In the Otuoke community, specifically, crime rates and insecurity have skyrocketed, with reports of kidnapping, burglary, and politically motivated killings on the rise. Unfortunately, the youth are often the primary suspects in these cases.

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As M.C Celand noted in 1961, unemployment is a fundamental issue in society, and various government programs have attempted to address youth unemployment to curb crime and criminality. However, the sheer number of job seekers far exceeds available vacancies, leading to serious problems, including criminal behavior. Youth unemployment in Nigeria has severe consequences, leading some individuals to lose their moral conscience and engage in criminal activities to meet basic needs (Oghebor, 2012). This situation encourages criminality, including burglary, theft, and other nefarious crimes. Unemployment affects youths from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, both educated and less educated (Rao, 2006). The rising wave of criminality has devastating effects on society, tracing back to factors like unemployment (Ademola & Olajubutu, 2009). Anderson (2009) notes that economic failure drives youths to underground activities and crime as a means of revenge against a system that has failed them. This study aims to investigate the link between youth unemployment and criminality in the Otuoke community, focusing on burglary.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Population

This study utilizes a survey research design, a non-experimental, descriptive approach. This design enables correlation analysis and is suitable for collecting data on situations that cannot be directly observed. The study focuses on the Otuoke community, Bayelsa State, specifically Federal University Otuoke, and surrounding areas. The population comprises 1,750 youths from 7 compounds in Otuoke community, Ogbia Local Government Area. A sample of 370 individuals, both indigenes and non-indigenes, was selected based on convenience, considering time and financial constraints.

Sampling Technique

Purposive/Judgmental sampling, a non-probability technique, was employed. This method

involves selecting participants deemed appropriate, although it lacks control over sample representativeness. Data collection employed primary and secondary techniques: Primary Data: Questionnaires with Likert scale response categories. Secondary Data: Existing literature and documents. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect primary data. Collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. To ensure ethical standards: Informed consent was obtained from participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. The primary data collection method employed was a self-administered questionnaire, distributed to 370 respondents. Secondary data was obtained through extensive document reviews, including textbooks, journals, magazines, internet sources, and related print materials.

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed simple percentage/frequency table distribution to analyze research questions and test hypotheses. To ensure reliability, the researcher standardized instrument administration, ensured consistent measurement and aligned questions with study objectives and research questions. To ensure validity, the researcher submitted the questionnaire to the project supervisor for review and verification and confirmed the participants' understanding of the instrument's content.

RESULTS

The study attempts the presentation of data collection and a statement of results from the data analysis, most importantly the questions that the research is taking care to analyze are only questions relevant to the care of the project. Data collected from respondents were presented in tables and discussed. Out of 370 structured questionnaires administered, a total of 355 were returned.

Table 1: Demographic Data

Variables		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	226	63.66
	Female	129	36.33
	Total	355	100
Age (years)	18-25	93	26.19
	26-30	100	28.16
	31-35	59	16.61
	Total	355	100
Religion of Respondents	Christian	233	65.63
	Islam	30	8.45
	Others	92	25.91
	Total	355	100

Variables		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Level of Education	Illiterate	-	-
	Primary	-	-
	Graduate	188	52.95
	Elementary	100	28.16
	Some elementary	67	18.8
	Total	355	100
Occupation of Respondents	Student	241	67.88
	Civil Servant	114	32.11
	Businessmen/women	-	-
	Total	355	100
Monthly Income of Respondents	#10,000-#20,000	69	19.43
	#21,000-#30,000	200	56.33
	#31,000-#40,000	56	15.77
	#41,000 and above	30	8.45
	Total	355	100%

The table above shows that 226 (63.66%) of the respondents were male, while 129 (36.33%) were female. This shows that more males responded to the questionnaire. The age description of respondents as indicated in Table 1 above shows that 93 (26.19%) of the respondents were between ages 18-25, 100 (28.16%) were in the 26 - 30 years bracket, 59 (16.61%) were 31 - 35years. This shows that most of the 36 and above responded to the questionnaire. The religion of the respondents, whereby 233 (65.63%) were Christians, 30 (8.45%) were Islam, and 92 (25.91%) belonged to other religious affiliations. This implies that most Christians responded to the questionnaire. The level of education of the respondents, no illiterate, no primary, 188 (52.95%) were graduate, 100 (28.16%) were elementary and 67 (18.8%) were some elementary. This indicates that more graduates responded to the questionnaire. 241 (67.88%)

of respondents were students and 114 (32.11%) were civil servants and there were no responses from Business men/women. This shows that more students responded to the questionnaire. 69 (19.43%) were earning between #10,000-20,000 monthly, 200 (56.33%) were earning between #21,000 - 30,000, 56 (15.77%) were earning between #31,000-40,000 monthly, and 30 (8.45%) were earning #41,000 and above monthly. This shows that those who earn #21,000 - 30,000 monthly responded more to the questionnaire.

In this section, the research hypotheses earlier raised were evaluated based on the relevant data collected from the fieldwork. The data were presented in simple percentage tables and used to discuss the findings in the section that follows.

Table 2: Response to Burglary-Related Issues in Otuoke Community

Variables	SA N (%)	A N (%)	D N (%)	SD N (%)	Total N (%)
Do you think unemployment is the major cause of Burglary in Otuoke Community?	140 (39.43)	92 (25.91)	30 (8.45)	93 (26.19)	355(100)
Is there a significant difference between a crime against persons and a crime against property in the Otuoke community?	86(24.22)	230 (64.78)	39 (10.97)	-	355(100)
Is there a significant difference between poor security and burglary in the Otuoke Community?	155 (43.66)	60 (16.90)	48 (13.52)	92 (25.91)	355(100)
Is the crime of breaking and entering common in the Otuoke community?	185 (52.11%)	130 (36.61)	30 (8.45)	10 (2.81)	355(100)
Do you think security agencies, if introduced in the Otuoke community will help reduce burglary crimes?	244 (68.73)	110 (30.98)	1 (0.28)	-	355(100)
Do you think youth empowerment will reduce the crime rate in the Otuoke community?	235 (66.19)	199 (33.52)	-	1 (0.28)	355(100)
When someone is caught breaking and entering into a person's home, do you think reporting the issue to the police or punishing the person is the right idea?	185 (52.11)	160 (45.07)	10 (2.81)	-	355(100)
Do you think if laws were introduced in the Otuoke community, it would help to reduce burglary crime (breaking and entering)?	120 (33.80)	205 (57.74)	30 (8.45)	-	355(100)

The tables above show that 140 (39.43%) strongly agreed that unemployment is the major cause of burglary in Otuoke community, 92 (25.91%) agreed that unemployment is the major cause of burglary in Otuoke community, 30 (8.45%) disagreed and 93 (26.19%) strongly agreed. A large proportion of the sample population agreed that unemployment is the major of burglary in Otuoke community. 86 (24.22%) strongly agreed that there is a significant difference between a crime against persons and a crime against property in the Otuoke community, 230 (64.78%) agreed, 39 (10.97%) disagreed and there was no response from strongly disagree. This indicates that a large proportion of the sample population agreed that there is a significant difference between a crime against persons and a crime against property in the Otuoke community. 155 (43.66%) strongly agreed that there is a significant difference between poor security and burglary in the Otuoke community, 60 (16.90%) agreed, 48 (13.52%) disagreed and 92 (25.91%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that a large proportion of the sample

population strongly agreed that there is a significant difference between security and burglary in the Otuoke community. 185 (52.11%) strongly agreed that breaking and entering is common in the Otuoke community, 130 (36.61%) agreed, 30 (8.45%) disagreed, and 10 (2.81%) strongly disagreed. This means that breaking and entering is common in the Otuoke community. 244 (68.73%) strongly agreed, 110 (30.98%) agreed, 1 (0.28%) disagreed and there was no response to strongly disagree. 235 (66.19%) strongly agreed that youth empowerment will reduce the crime rate in the Otuoke community, 119 (33.52%) agreed, no responded to disagree and 1 (0.28%) strongly disagreed. This means that youth empowerment programmes should be on the increase within the Otuoke community to meaningfully engage the youths. 185 (52.11%) strongly agreed, 160 (45.07%) agreed, 10 (2.81%) disagreed and there were no responses to strongly disagree. 120 (33.80%) strongly agreed, 205 (57.74%) agreed, 30 (8.45%) disagreed and there was no response to strongly disagree.

Table 3: Solutions to Addressing Youth Unemployment and Criminality

Variables		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
What do you recommend as a way of curbing the issue of breaking and entering in Otuoke community?	Low-skill employment opportunities/youth.	155	43.66
	Rules and regulations/punishment of offenders.	92	25.91
	Re-orientation of criminals/orientation of youths.	30	8.45
	Skills acquisition programmes	48	13.52
	Constant security patrol/consciousness.	30	8.45
	Total	355	100

Table 3 shows that 155 (43.66%) of the respondents advocated for youth empowerment, 92 (25.91%) recommended rules and regulations, 30 (8.45%) recommended youth orientation, 48 (13.52%) suggested skill acquisition programmes, and 30 (8.45%) recommended constant security patrol in Otuoke community.

DISCUSSION

This research paper examined the relationship between youth unemployment and criminality in the Otuoke community, focusing on burglary. The findings are discussed concerning the three hypotheses. The results indicate that unemployment is a significant factor contributing to burglary in the Otuoke community (39.43% strongly agreed, 26.21% strongly disagreed). However, other factors like peer influence, humanizing, and financial constraints also play a role. The study revealed a significant difference between crime against persons and property, with crimes primarily targeting properties (laptops, phones, etc.). The findings highlight the need for enhanced security consciousness in the Otuoke community regular security patrols, proper door locking, avoiding late nights, neighbor watchfulness, and improved street lighting, additionally, the study recommends: youth empowerment and engagement in meaningful activities (sports, skill

acquisition), community involvement in reporting offenders, policymakers should enact and implement anti-burglary laws, public awareness campaigns, the study underscores the complex relationship between youth unemployment and criminality, emphasizing the need for multifaceted solution, government initiatives for youth employment and empowerment, community-based crime prevention programs, enhanced security infrastructure and patrols, collaborative efforts between residents, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies. This study contributes to the understanding of the nexus between youth unemployment and criminality, informing evidence-based strategies to mitigate burglary and promote community safety.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between youth unemployment and criminality, specifically burglary, in the Otuoke community, Bayelsa State. The five-chapter study explored the impact of unemployment on youth criminal behavior. The study revealed a positive correlation between unemployment and criminality among youths in the Otuoke community. Unemployment was identified as a primary factor contributing to criminal activities, particularly burglary, phone snatching, and laptop theft. The state's failure to

provide job opportunities has driven many unemployed youths to engage in criminal activities.

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