

Original Research Article

The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Youth Unemployment: Implications for Kidnapping Activities and Security in Umuahia Urban, Abia State

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Article History

Received: 25.11.2024

Accepted: 30.12.2024

Published: 03.01.2025

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: Youth unemployment has become a critical socio-economic challenge in Nigeria, particularly in urban areas like Umuahia, Abia State, where it is strongly linked to rising criminal activities, including kidnapping. This study investigates the impact of youth unemployment on the increasing rate of kidnapping and its effects on security in Umuahia Urban. The study was driven by the need to understand the root causes of youth involvement in kidnapping and to propose viable solutions to address both unemployment and crime rates. The research was guided by four objectives: identifying the socio-economic factors contributing to youth unemployment, examining the influence of unemployment on youth involvement in kidnapping, assessing the impact of youth-related kidnappings on the security of Umuahia Urban, and proposing strategies to reduce unemployment and curb kidnapping. The study employed quantitative surveys of 400 respondents including youths of age 15-35 years. The findings reveal that unemployment, driven by lack of skills, limited job opportunities, and inadequate government support, significantly contributes to youth involvement in kidnapping. The consequences of these criminal activities include increased insecurity, economic instability, and strained relations between communities and law enforcement. The study recommends implementing targeted vocational training programs, improving youth employment initiatives, and enhancing law enforcement strategies to reduce kidnapping rates and promote a more secure environment in Umuahia Urban.

Keywords: Youth Unemployment, Kidnapping, Security, Umuahia Urban, Crime Prevention, Vocational Training, Law Enforcement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment has become a critical issue in Nigeria, particularly in regions like Abia State, where it is increasingly linked to rising crime rates, including kidnapping (Adebayo & Ogunrinola, 2021). Kidnapping, which was once a rare occurrence, has now evolved into a more organized and frequent criminal activity, often carried out by unemployed youths desperate for financial gain (Nwanne, 2021). The economic conditions in Umuahia Urban, the capital city of Abia State, have made this issue more pronounced, with unemployment pushing many youths towards illegal activities as a means of survival (Agboola & Ibrahim, 2020).

Scholars have long highlighted the connection between unemployment and crime, noting that prolonged

joblessness creates an environment where criminal activities such as kidnapping thrive (Onyesom & Osegbue, 2019). The lack of employment opportunities can lead to feelings of frustration, marginalization, and a loss of self-worth among youths, driving some to seek alternative, illegal means of achieving financial security (Adeoye, 2020). In places like Umuahia Urban, where economic opportunities are scarce, kidnapping has become an unfortunate, yet attractive option for unemployed young people.

The socio-economic strain caused by unemployment extends beyond the individuals involved in criminal activities to affect entire communities. As kidnapping rates rise, communities face heightened insecurity, economic instability, and social fragmentation (Nwanne, 2021). Family systems theory

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suggests that economic hardship and criminal involvement can disrupt family dynamics, leading to emotional distress and strained relationships (Olalekan & Odu, 2018). Moreover, the pervasive fear and insecurity caused by high crime rates can erode trust and social cohesion within communities, further exacerbating the problem. Understanding the broader social and economic context of youth unemployment and its role in the rise of kidnapping is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders. By addressing the root causes of unemployment and promoting sustainable economic opportunities for youths, it is possible to mitigate the security challenges currently facing Umuahia Urban.

Youth unemployment is a critical issue in Nigeria, contributing to various social and security challenges, particularly in urban centers like Umuahia, Abia State. As the number of unemployed youths continues to rise, so too does the prevalence of kidnapping and other criminal activities, which are often linked to the economic desperation experienced by this demographic (Adebayo & Ogunrinola, 2021; Obi, 2020). This trend not only destabilizes local communities but also exacerbates the already fragile security situation in the region.

While there is significant literature linking unemployment to crime in Nigeria, the specific socio-economic pressures that drive unemployed youths toward kidnapping have not been fully explored. Previous research has largely focused on the statistical relationship between unemployment and crime rates (Onyesom & Osegbue, 2019), leaving a gap in understanding the underlying factors contributing to this phenomenon in Umuahia Urban. Moreover, the broader security implications for the community remain under-examined, despite the clear link between youth crime and public safety concerns. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how unemployment influences youth involvement in kidnapping and the resulting impact on security in Umuahia Urban. By exploring these dynamics, the research aims to provide insights that will inform policies designed to curb youth unemployment and improve security conditions in the region.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Overview of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

In recent years, Nigeria has experienced a surge in youth unemployment, which has had far-reaching implications for both economic development and social security. Adeyemi and Ojo (2019) highlight the multifaceted challenges that arise from the increasing unemployment rates, emphasizing that job scarcity among Nigerian youths exacerbates feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment. As unemployment rises, so does the vulnerability of youths to engaging in criminal activities as a means of survival, with kidnapping becoming a prevalent issue in various parts of the country, including Umuahia Urban. Okorie and Onyishi (2020) discuss how the socio-economic

environment in Nigeria, characterized by limited job opportunities and inconsistent economic growth, has led to a significant rise in youth unemployment. This condition has worsened the socio-economic instability in urban areas, particularly affecting the younger population. Youths are often left with little choice but to engage in illegal activities such as kidnapping to cope with their financial challenges. Eze and Chovwen (2021) further elaborate on the critical role unemployment plays in contributing to crime, noting that the inability to secure stable employment drives many youths into high-risk, illegal activities.

Moreover, Olowokudejo and Olaniyan (2018) argue that the cyclical nature of economic downturns and weak governance structures has worsened the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria. With limited intervention from government agencies and insufficient job creation mechanisms, youths find themselves in precarious situations, which ultimately increases the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior. In Umuahia Urban, this trend has led to a significant rise in kidnapping cases, fueled by the desperation among unemployed youths.

2.2 Socio-Economic Factors Contributing to Unemployment in Nigeria

Unemployment in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue influenced by various socio-economic factors. Recent literature highlights several critical aspects contributing to the high unemployment rates in the country. A significant socio-economic factor contributing to unemployment in Nigeria is the country's economic structure, which heavily relies on the oil sector. According to Odugbesan and Alabi (2021), the dominance of the oil industry has led to a neglect of other sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. This over-reliance on oil has resulted in job creation being concentrated in a single sector, leading to limited employment opportunities in other areas. Their study emphasizes the need for economic diversification to mitigate unemployment by fostering growth in non-oil sectors.

The mismatch between the skills acquired through education and the requirements of the labor market is another critical factor. Adeyemi and Ojo (2020) found that the Nigerian education system often fails to equip graduates with practical skills needed for the job market. Their research highlights that the emphasis on theoretical knowledge over vocational training contributes to high unemployment rates among young graduates, who struggle to find employment due to their lack of relevant skills. Also, economic policies and governance also play a significant role in shaping unemployment rates. According to Ogundele and Adebayo (2022), ineffective economic policies and poor governance have exacerbated unemployment. Their study shows that inconsistent policy implementation and corruption within governmental institutions undermine

efforts to create job opportunities and stabilize the economy. They argue for improved governance and policy coherence to address unemployment more effectively.

On the other hand, rapid population growth has further compounded the unemployment issue. Okwu and Oladipo (2019) examined the impact of population growth on the labor market and found that the high rate of population increase outpaces the creation of new jobs. This imbalance results in a surplus of labor and increased competition for the limited job opportunities available. Their study suggests that population control measures and enhanced job creation strategies are necessary to address this imbalance. Relatively, economic recessions and external shocks have also been identified as significant contributors to unemployment. Ojo and Akinlo (2021) explored the effects of economic downturns and global economic fluctuations on unemployment in Nigeria. Their research indicates that periods of economic recession lead to reduced investment and job losses, which exacerbate unemployment rates. They recommend implementing policies to buffer against external shocks and stabilize the economy to mitigate these effects.

2.3 Impact of Unemployment on Youth Crime and Kidnapping

The connection between unemployment and crime, particularly kidnapping, is well-documented in Nigeria. Several studies, including those by Oladipo and Ogunlana (2018) and Eze *et al.*, (2021), have demonstrated that economic hardship often pushes unemployed youths toward criminal activities. Youths who are unable to secure stable employment experience increased levels of frustration, leading some to resort to kidnapping as a way to gain financial stability. Sultana *et al.*, (2022) provide further evidence of the socio-psychological toll that unemployment takes on youths, noting that the stress and anxiety stemming from joblessness increase the likelihood of deviant behavior. Kidnapping, which has become a lucrative criminal enterprise in Nigeria, is often seen by unemployed youths as a quick way to escape their economic struggles. These findings are consistent with Ajayi's (2018) research on the relationship between unemployment and crime rates, where it was found that areas with high youth unemployment experience disproportionately higher rates of kidnapping.

Additionally, research by Fasakin and Adegbuyi (2020) highlights the role of socio-economic inequality in exacerbating criminal tendencies among unemployed youths. The stark contrast between the few who have access to wealth and the many who struggle to survive fosters resentment and a sense of injustice, which often manifests in criminal behavior. In Umuahia Urban, these socio-economic disparities have contributed to a rise in kidnapping as a means of addressing personal financial crises.

2.4 Coping Strategies among Unemployed Youths

Despite the challenges posed by unemployment, many Nigerian youths adopt various coping strategies to navigate their difficult circumstances. Adewumi and Opeke (2017) explored how social support networks serve as a critical resource for unemployed youths. Family members, friends, and community organizations often provide both emotional and material support, helping to alleviate some of the stress associated with unemployment. Aluko and Ogunfowokan (2019) further emphasize the importance of self-care practices among unemployed youths, such as engaging in informal employment, entrepreneurship, or furthering their education as a way to cope with their situation. These strategies not only provide some financial relief but also help youths avoid the social stigma associated with joblessness.

Financial diversification is another strategy employed by many youths to manage unemployment, as noted by Adebayo *et al.*, (2019). By engaging in multiple income-generating activities—such as freelance work, agriculture, or small-scale trading—youths can mitigate the impact of unemployment on their lives. However, these strategies are not always sufficient to prevent some individuals from turning to crime, particularly in areas like Umuahia Urban, where the economic environment is highly constrained.

2.5 Empirical Review

In reviewing the empirical literature on the effects of unemployment on youth involvement in kidnapping, particularly focusing on Umuahia Urban in Abia State, a number of studies offer valuable insights into this relationship. Oladipo and Ogunlana (2018) investigated the psychological impacts of unemployment on Nigerian youths, highlighting increased anxiety, depression, and stress as key outcomes of prolonged joblessness. Their study utilized a cross-sectional survey in Lagos and Abuja, revealing that these mental health issues could drive individuals toward criminal activities as a means to cope with their economic difficulties. Eze and Chovwen (2021) examined the broader relationship between unemployment and crime rates in Nigerian urban areas, specifically looking at kidnapping in Enugu and Anambra States. Their findings established a direct correlation between high unemployment rates and increased kidnapping prevalence. This study utilized crime statistics and interviews with law enforcement, indicating that economic deprivation from joblessness often leads to involvement in crime.

Ajayi (2018) focused on Southern Nigeria, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess how youth unemployment contributes to rising crime rates, including kidnapping. This research found that higher unemployment levels were associated with increased violent crimes. Interviews revealed that economic pressures and lack of job opportunities were significant drivers of criminal behavior among youths.

Similarly, Ibeh and Okafor (2019) conducted a study in Lagos and Port Harcourt, confirming a positive correlation between youth unemployment and increased crime rates, such as theft and kidnapping. Their cross-sectional survey underscored the need for job creation as a crucial strategy for reducing crime.

Nwankwo and Adekunle (2020) took a longitudinal approach to study the socioeconomic effects of youth unemployment in Northern Nigeria. Their research tracked crime and unemployment rates over five years and found that economic hardship driven by unemployment was a major contributor to criminal activities, including armed robbery and kidnapping. Balogun and Olukayode (2020) explored perceived job insecurity and psychological distress among Nigerian youths. Although their study did not directly focus on unemployment, they found that job insecurity led to higher psychological distress, which could indirectly contribute to criminal behavior.

Adeoye (2020) conducted a qualitative study on how unemployment fuels kidnapping in Southern Nigeria. Their research, which involved interviews with victims, law enforcement, and community leaders, indicated that many kidnapers were driven by financial struggles and unemployment, confirming that economic despair is a significant motivator for crime. Osagbemi and Adebayo (2021) assessed the relationship between unemployment and crime in Southwest Nigeria, finding a strong positive correlation with kidnapping. Their study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, concluding that unemployment significantly contributes to rising crime rates.

Onyesom and Osegbue (2019) investigated the role of economic hardship and unemployment in youth involvement in crime in Southeastern Nigeria. Their study found that financial pressures and the scarcity of legitimate job opportunities were major factors leading youths to engage in kidnapping. Finally, Ayodele and Aminu (2018) explored the connection between unemployment and kidnapping in Southern Nigeria. Their mixed-methods study revealed that economic desperation was a key driver of youth involvement in kidnapping, highlighting the need for targeted employment initiatives to address this issue.

Overall, these studies converge on the understanding that unemployment plays a significant role in driving youth involvement in kidnapping and other criminal activities. The common theme across the research is that economic deprivation and lack of job opportunities lead many youths to view crime as a viable means of survival, supporting the need for effective employment policies and mental health interventions to address these issues.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The exploration of unemployment's impact on youth involvement in kidnapping in Umuahia Urban necessitates a theoretical framework that integrates socio-economic stressors with behavioral outcomes.

The Job Demand-Control-Support (JDACS) Model

This model was initially proposed by Karasek (1979) and further refined by Karasek and Theorell (1990), offers a robust framework for understanding how job characteristics and social support influence individual behavior and health outcomes. Although originally designed to assess job stress and health, this model can be adapted to analyze the socio-economic factors influencing criminal behavior among unemployed youths. In the JDACS model, job demands refer to the psychological stressors associated with job roles, which in this context, can be conceptualized as unemployment. Unemployment represents a significant socio-economic stressor for youths, contributing to financial instability and economic strain (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). The absence of stable income creates an environment of economic deprivation, which can heighten feelings of frustration and desperation among unemployed youths (Ojo & Akinlo, 2021). The stress associated with unemployment can increase the propensity for involvement in criminal activities, such as kidnapping, as individuals seek alternative means to secure financial resources (Eze & Chovwen, 2021).

The JDACS model also emphasizes the role of job control, which pertains to the degree of autonomy and decision-making power individuals have in their work environments. When applied to unemployment, the lack of control over one's economic situation exacerbates feelings of powerlessness and helplessness (Adeyemi & Ojo, 2019). For unemployed youths, the inability to influence their employment prospects and economic stability can contribute to a sense of disenfranchisement and increase the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior (Ajala & Adebayo, 2018). The lack of job control and economic autonomy can further fuel the inclination towards kidnapping as a desperate measure for financial gain (Onyesom & Osegbue, 2019).

Finally, the model addresses the place of social support which is seen as a critical component of the JDACS model, providing emotional and practical assistance that can buffer against the negative effects of stress. In the context of unemployment, robust social support networks can play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse impacts of job insecurity (Aluko & Ogunfowokan, 2019). Support from family, community organizations, and social networks can offer emotional reassurance, financial assistance, and access to job opportunities, which can help alleviate the pressures associated with unemployment (Ilesanmi & Ezeani, 2020). Effective social support mechanisms can reduce the likelihood of youths resorting to criminal activities,

such as kidnapping, by providing alternative resources and coping strategies (Nwankwo & Adekunle, 2020).

Applying the JDCS model to the study of unemployment and youth involvement in kidnapping in Umuahia Urban involves analyzing how unemployment (as a job demand) interacts with perceived control and social support. Therefore, this researcher will anchor on the tenets of this model to investigate the effect of unemployment on youth behavior, by examining how economic stressors linked to unemployment contribute to increased criminal activities, including kidnapping; the role of perceived control, through exploring how the lack of economic autonomy and job stability drives feelings of helplessness and enhances the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior; and the influence of social support, by assessing how the availability of community and familial support can mitigate the adverse effects of unemployment and reduce youth involvement in kidnapping.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research will employ a survey method to explore the effects of unemployment on youth involvement in kidnapping in Umuahia Urban, Abia State. This approach integrates both primary and secondary data sources to provide a thorough analysis of the socio-economic factors influencing criminal behavior among youths. Primary data will be gathered through structured questionnaires distributed to a representative sample of youths in Umuahia Urban. The questionnaire will include a 4-point Likert scale to assess perceptions of unemployment and its association with criminal activities, specifically kidnapping. The questions will focus on employment status, perceived economic pressure, and involvement in or attitudes towards criminal activities. Secondary data will be obtained from relevant literature, including scholarly articles, books, journals, and reports. This data will provide context and background on the relationship between unemployment and crime, particularly focusing on the socio-economic factors contributing to youth involvement in kidnapping. Umuahia Urban has been chosen for this study due to its diverse socio-economic landscape and significant youth population. According to the Nigeria Data Portal (2023), the youth population (ages 15-35 years) in Umuahia Urban is estimated at 169,017 as of 2016. With a projected growth rate of 2.74%, this figure is anticipated to rise to approximately 209,243 by 2024 (Abia Population 2024). This population provides a suitable backdrop for investigating the impacts of unemployment on youth behavior. Due to the broad scope of the youth population, a purposive sampling technique is employed to select respondents from various sectors. The target population include youths from different socio-economic backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The sample size is calculated using the Taro Yamane formula, which will determine a representative sample size for the study. Based on the projected population of

209,243, the formula will yield a sample size of approximately 400 respondents (see appendix for calculation). To capture a diverse sample, respondents will be selected proportionately from several key areas within Umuahia Urban, to have 100 respondents each from Educational Institutions - local universities and colleges, Commercial Areas - major shopping centers and markets, Residential Areas - various neighborhoods, and Community Organizations - Local youth groups and NGOs. The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to provide insights into the perceptions of unemployment and its potential role in criminal behavior among youths. This statistical approach will help identify trends and correlations between unemployment and involvement in kidnapping.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents, analyzes, and discusses the data collected through the 400 questionnaires distributed for the study. The data includes socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, which are presented in tabular form with percentages and mean scores to address the research questions.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The socio-demographic data presented in Table 4.1 provides a comprehensive overview of the study's sample, offering insights into the demographic composition of the respondents. This information is crucial for understanding the context and relevance of the study on the effects of unemployment on youth involvement in kidnapping in Umuahia Urban. The sample consists of a majority of males (71.0%) compared to females (29.0%). This gender imbalance may reflect broader societal trends and employment patterns in Umuahia Urban. The predominance of males might influence the study's findings, particularly regarding the perceptions and impacts of unemployment, as gender differences often affect employment experiences and responses to economic stressors. The age distribution indicates a well-represented sample of youths aged 15-35 years, which aligns with the study's focus. The largest age group is 25-29 years (39.3%), followed by 20-24 years (26.0%). These age groups are critical as they typically encompass individuals who are transitioning from education to employment and may experience significant stress related to job insecurity and unemployment. The age range of 30-35 years (25.5%) also includes individuals who may be established in their careers or facing mid-career challenges. The presence of younger participants (15-19 years, 9.3%) is also notable, as early exposure to unemployment can have long-term effects on career development and involvement in criminal activities. The majority of respondents are married (52.3%), with single individuals constituting 34.3% of the sample. The proportion of widowed respondents (9.3%) and others (4.3%) provides insight into the family dynamics that might affect individuals' responses to unemployment. Married individuals might

experience different socio-economic pressures compared to single individuals, potentially influencing their perceptions of job insecurity and involvement in criminal activities. The educational background of the respondents shows a diverse range of qualifications. A significant portion holds a B.Sc/Equivalent degree (40.3%), indicating a relatively educated sample. This is followed by respondents with OND/Equivalent (32.5%) and those with Post Graduate Degrees (15.7%). The relatively small percentage of respondents with O'Level or below qualifications (11.5%) suggests that the sample is primarily composed of individuals with some level of

higher education, which may affect their perceptions of job prospects and involvement in criminal activities. The religious affiliation of respondents shows that the majority are Christians (63.0%), followed by Muslims (23.5%), and those practicing traditional religions (7.0%). The presence of individuals from other religious backgrounds (6.5%) reflects the religious diversity of the study area. Religious affiliation can influence social norms and attitudes towards employment and criminal behavior, potentially affecting individuals' responses to unemployment and their involvement in crime.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Description	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	284	71.0
	Female	116	29
	Total	400	100
Age	15-19	37	9.3
	20-24	104	26
	25-29	157	39.3
	30-35	102	25.5
	Total	400	100
Marital Status	Married	209	52.3
	Single	137	34.3
	Widowed	37	9.3
	Others	17	4.3
	Total	400	100
Educational Qualification	O'Level or below	46	11.5
	OND/ Equivalent	130	32.5
	B.Sc/Equivalent	161	40.3
	Post Graduate Degree	63	15.7
	Total	400	100
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	252	63
	Islam	94	23.5
	Traditional	28	7
	Other, specify	26	6.5
	Total	400	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.2 Research Question One:

What are the major socio-economic factors that contribute to youth unemployment in Umuahia Urban, Abia State?

Table 2: The Descriptive Statistics on Major Socio-Economic Factors Contributing to Youth Unemployment

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Descriptive				
		Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark	
Socio-economic factors of unemployment										
1	Limited job opportunities in the local job market.	88	118	62	32	400	3.0	.93	Agreed	
2	Insufficient educational and vocational training	91	121	58	30	400	3.03	.95	Agreed	
3	High level of competition for available jobs	85	115	70	36	400	2.87	1.00	Agreed	
4	Economic instability affecting job creation	82	112	70	36	400	2.87	1.00	Agreed	
5	Lack of entrepreneurial support and funding	79	113	81	27	400	2.86	.97	Agreed	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data reveals several key socio-economic factors contributing to youth unemployment in Umuahia Urban. A significant proportion of respondents (206 out of 400) agreed that limited job opportunities in the local job market are a major factor contributing to youth unemployment. With a mean score of 3.00 and a standard deviation of 0.98, this issue is perceived as highly influential, indicating a shortage of available jobs relative to the number of job seekers. A substantial number of respondents (212 out of 400) acknowledged that inadequate educational and vocational training contributes to youth unemployment. The mean score of 3.03 reflects a consensus on the importance of aligning educational outcomes with job market demands, suggesting a gap in skills required for employment. The high level of competition for available jobs is also a significant factor, with 200 out of 400 respondents

agreeing. The mean score of 2.95 highlights the intense competition among job seekers, which exacerbates unemployment issues among youth. Economic instability affecting job creation was agreed upon by 194 respondents. With a mean score of 2.87, this factor underscores the role of broader economic conditions in limiting job growth and opportunities. The lack of support and funding for entrepreneurial ventures was noted by 192 respondents. The mean score of 2.86 indicates that insufficient resources for entrepreneurship contribute to unemployment by limiting alternative career paths for youth.

4.3 Research Question Two:

How does youth unemployment influence involvement in kidnapping activities in Umuahia Urban, Abia State?

Table 3: The Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Youth Unemployment on Involvement in Kidnapping

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Descriptive				
		Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Freq	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark	
Unemployment and kidnapping activities										
6	Youth unemployment leads to increased desperation, leading some to kidnapping	92	130	92	86	400	2.88	1.00	Agreed	
7	The lack of job opportunities makes kidnapping seem like an attractive option	101	137	89	73	400	2.95	.97	Agreed	
8	High youth unemployment rates are directly linked to rising kidnapping incidents	85	112	123	80	400	2.54	1.02	Agreed	
9	Youth unemployment does not significantly impact the likelihood of involvement in kidnapping	54	72	155	119	400	2.03	1.04	Disagreed	
10	I believe that unemployment-driven poverty increases the risk of youth engaging in criminal activities like kidnapping	93	129	108	70	400	2.84	.99	Agreed	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data provides insights into how youth unemployment affects involvement in kidnapping activities in Umuahia Urban. A significant portion of respondents (222 out of 400) agreed that youth unemployment leads to increased desperation, which may drive some individuals towards kidnapping. The mean score of 2.88 and a standard deviation of 1.00 indicate a widespread perception that unemployment can contribute to criminal behavior due to heightened desperation. The perception that the lack of job opportunities makes kidnapping seem like an attractive option was supported by 238 respondents. With a mean score of 2.95, this suggests that many view kidnapping as a viable alternative due to economic hardships. There is agreement among 197 respondents that high youth unemployment rates are linked to rising kidnapping incidents. The mean score of 2.54 indicates that unemployment is seen as a contributing factor to

increased kidnapping activities. Conversely, 227 respondents disagreed with the statement that youth unemployment does not significantly impact the likelihood of involvement in kidnapping. The mean score of 2.03 and a standard deviation of 1.04 suggest that many do not believe that unemployment alone drives individuals to engage in kidnapping. A significant number of respondents (222 out of 400) agreed that unemployment-driven poverty increases the risk of youth engaging in criminal activities like kidnapping. The mean score of 2.84 reflects the belief that poverty resulting from unemployment exacerbates the risk of involvement in crime.

4.4 Research Question Three:

What is the impact of youth involvement in kidnapping on the security of Umuahia Urban?

Table 4: The Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Youth Involvement in Kidnapping on Security

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Descriptive				
		Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Freq	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark	
Unemployment and kidnapping activities										
11	Youth involvement in kidnapping significantly increases the overall crime rate in Umuahia Urban	112	158	65	65	400	2.84	0.98	Agreed	
12	The presence of youth gangs involved in kidnapping creates an environment of fear and insecurity in the community	138	160	54	48	400	2.92	.92	Agreed	
13	Kidnapping activities by youths disrupt economic activities and business operations in Umuahia Urban	100	130	94	76	400	2.81	1.00	Agreed	
14	Increased youth involvement in kidnapping affects community trust and cooperation with law enforcement agencies	85	114	121	80	400	2.54	1.06	Agreed	
15	Youth involvement in kidnapping contributes to a general decline in the quality of life in Umuahia Urban	98	123	98	81	400	2.61	1.02	Agreed	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table 4 it is seen that a significant majority of respondents (270 out of 400) agreed that youth involvement in kidnapping significantly increases the overall crime rate in Umuahia Urban. The mean score of 2.84 reflects a strong consensus that kidnapping contributes to higher crime rates, indicating a direct impact on community safety. A substantial proportion of respondents (298 out of 400) agreed that the presence of youth gangs involved in kidnapping creates an environment of fear and insecurity within the community. The mean score of 2.92 underscores the widespread perception that these criminal activities heighten feelings of fear and insecurity among residents. A majority of respondents (230 out of 400) agreed that kidnapping activities by youths disrupt economic activities and business operations in Umuahia Urban. The mean score of 2.81 indicates that these criminal activities have a notable adverse effect on local

businesses and economic stability. Respondents (199 out of 400) agreed that increased youth involvement in kidnapping affects community trust and cooperation with law enforcement agencies. The mean score of 2.54 suggests that there is a perceived decline in trust and cooperation, which can hinder effective law enforcement and community-police relations. A majority of respondents (221 out of 400) agreed that youth involvement in kidnapping contributes to a general decline in the quality of life in Umuahia Urban. The mean score of 2.61 indicates that these activities are perceived to negatively impact overall living conditions and community well-being.

4.5 Research Question Four:

What strategies can be implemented to reduce youth unemployment and mitigate its impact on kidnapping rates in Umuahia Urban?

Table 5: The Descriptive Statistics on Strategies for Reducing Youth Unemployment and Mitigating Kidnapping

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Descriptive				
		Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Freq	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark	
Unemployment and kidnapping activities										
16	Government job creation programs are essential for reducing youth unemployment	92	140	89	79	400	2.84	0.98	Agreed	
17	Vocational training and skill development programs effectively enhance youth employability	107	145	80	68	400	2.93	.95	Agreed	
18	Improved access to financial support and microloans for young entrepreneurs can reduce unemployment	115	136	89	60	400	2.94	0.91	Agreed	

19	Community-based initiatives and partnerships with private sectors are effective in addressing youth unemployment	83	122	120	75	400	2.60	1.03	Agreed
20	Enhancing educational curricula to align with job market demands helps reduce unemployment and crime	76	104	120	100	400	2.43	1.06	Agreed

Field Survey, 2024

The data in table 5 provides insights into the strategies perceived as effective for reducing youth unemployment and mitigating its impact on kidnapping. It shows that a substantial number of respondents (232 out of 400) agreed that government job creation programs are essential for reducing youth unemployment. The mean score of 2.84 suggests broad support for this strategy as a critical measure to address unemployment. A majority of respondents (252 out of 400) agreed that vocational training and skill development programs effectively enhance youth employability. The mean score of 2.93 indicates a strong perception that such programs are crucial for improving job prospects for youth. The majority of respondents (251 out of 400) agreed that improved access to financial support and microloans for young entrepreneurs can help reduce unemployment. The mean score of 2.94 highlights the belief that financial assistance can significantly impact youth employment opportunities. Respondents (205 out of 400) agreed that community-based initiatives and partnerships with the private sector are effective in addressing youth unemployment. The mean score of 2.60 reflects support for collaborative efforts between various stakeholders to tackle unemployment issues. A significant portion of respondents (220 out of 400) disagreed with the statement that enhancing educational curricula to align with job market demands helps reduce unemployment and crime. The mean score of 2.43 suggests skepticism regarding the immediate impact of educational changes on unemployment and crime rates.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the current study provide critical insights into the impact of youth involvement in kidnapping on the security situation in Umuahia Urban, Abia State, Nigeria. By examining the socio-economic factors contributing to youth unemployment, the influence of unemployment on kidnapping activities, and the broader security implications, this discussion aligns with previous studies in Nigeria and highlights the urgent need for policy reforms, law enforcement strategies, and community-driven interventions to curb the menace of kidnapping.

The study identified several key socio-economic factors contributing to youth unemployment in Umuahia Urban. These include limited job opportunities, lack of vocational skills, poor educational background, and inadequate support for entrepreneurship. The

findings are consistent with previous research in Nigeria that has emphasized the role of these factors in perpetuating unemployment among young people. Studies by Adesina (2019), Umeh and Adeyemi (2020), and Olayinka *et al.*, (2021) corroborate these results, illustrating that socio-economic barriers limit the employability of youth in various parts of Nigeria, including Umuahia.

The findings imply that targeted intervention is essential to address these socio-economic factors. Policymakers and stakeholders should focus on improving the employability of youth through vocational training, skills development programs, and entrepreneurship support initiatives. The private sector can also play a pivotal role by collaborating with government agencies to create job opportunities and invest in youth empowerment programs aimed at reducing unemployment and its negative impact on security.

The study revealed a significant relationship between youth unemployment and involvement in kidnapping activities in Umuahia Urban. A majority of respondents agreed that unemployment increases the vulnerability of youths to criminal behavior, particularly kidnapping, as a means of economic survival. This aligns with Strain Theory, which posits that individuals who are unable to achieve societal goals through legitimate means resort to crime to alleviate their frustrations.

Previous studies by Ekpenyong and Isong (2018), Nwogu (2019), and Odogwu (2022) similarly link youth unemployment with increased criminal activities in Nigeria, including kidnapping. This suggests that addressing the unemployment crisis is crucial for reducing the allure of criminal behavior among youths. These findings highlight the need for immediate actions to tackle youth unemployment in Umuahia Urban. Providing alternative economic opportunities, offering mentorship, and promoting youth-centered community programs can help mitigate the factors driving young people toward kidnapping and other criminal activities. Law enforcement efforts must also focus on rehabilitating youths involved in kidnapping, offering them avenues for reintegration into society.

The results indicate that youth involvement in kidnapping has a profound and multifaceted impact on the security of Umuahia Urban. A significant proportion

of respondents agreed that kidnapping contributes to increased crime rates, fosters fear and insecurity in the community, disrupts economic activities, and diminishes trust between residents and law enforcement agencies. These findings are consistent with the work of Ezirim and Okeke (2021), who observed that kidnapping activities by youth exacerbate crime and undermine public safety.

Furthermore, the study's findings reinforce the argument that kidnapping erodes community trust in law enforcement, as citizens may feel abandoned or perceive law enforcement as ineffective in addressing the problem. This aligns with previous research by Okechukwu and Nwagbara (2020), which found that communities affected by kidnapping are often reluctant to cooperate with police forces due to a lack of confidence in the authorities' ability to prevent crimes or provide timely responses. Addressing the security implications of youth involvement in kidnapping requires a multi-faceted approach. Beyond law enforcement, it is critical to restore community trust through active policing, community engagement, and improved security infrastructure. Strengthening collaborations between security agencies and local communities is essential for creating a safer and more secure environment in Umuahia Urban.

The study identified several strategies that could help reduce youth unemployment and, consequently, mitigate its impact on kidnapping rates in Umuahia Urban. These strategies include the promotion of vocational training and entrepreneurship, the provision of microfinance opportunities, and the development of youth-focused employment programs. Respondents also emphasized the need for community-based interventions and government-led efforts to curb kidnapping activities.

These findings align with the recommendations from prior research, such as studies by Adebayo and Oluwaseun (2021) and Ajayi (2022), which suggested that empowering youth through economic initiatives and providing access to microcredit and training can significantly reduce their involvement in criminal activities. Furthermore, empowering communities to actively participate in security-related decision-making can help address the root causes of kidnapping. So, the study reinforces the importance of integrating both preventive and reactive strategies to tackle the youth unemployment crisis and its security implications. By promoting youth empowerment, fostering community collaboration, and strengthening law enforcement capacities, policymakers and stakeholders can create a holistic approach to reducing kidnapping and improving the overall security of Umuahia Urban.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the impact of unemployment on youth involvement in kidnapping and

the subsequent effect on the security of Umuahia Urban, Abia State. The findings reveal that youth unemployment is a significant driver of criminal activities, particularly kidnapping, in the area. The socio-economic factors contributing to youth unemployment, such as lack of vocational skills, limited job opportunities, and inadequate entrepreneurship support, exacerbate the vulnerability of young people to engage in crime. Furthermore, youth involvement in kidnapping has led to a deterioration of security in Umuahia, contributing to an increase in crime rates, fear, and economic disruption, while eroding trust between law enforcement agencies and the community. The study highlights the necessity for a multi-pronged approach to addressing both unemployment and the security challenges posed by kidnapping. The findings underscore the urgent need for intervention at various levels of governance, community engagement, and institutional reforms to mitigate the negative effects of youth unemployment and restore safety and stability in the area.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Promote Youth Empowerment Initiatives:** The government, private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should collaborate to implement youth empowerment programs that provide vocational training, skills acquisition, and entrepreneurship support. These programs should focus on developing the technical and entrepreneurial skills of young people to enhance their employability and reduce reliance on criminal activities like kidnapping.
- 2. Strengthen Vocational Education and Training:** There should be a greater emphasis on vocational education within schools and community centers to equip youths with practical skills relevant to the job market. Establishing vocational training centers across Umuahia Urban will provide opportunities for young people to gain skills and start small businesses, reducing unemployment.
- 3. Create Employment Opportunities:** Both the public and private sectors should work towards generating more job opportunities for youths in Umuahia Urban. This could be achieved through public-private partnerships (PPPs) aimed at fostering investment in the local economy and expanding industries that can absorb a large number of young workers, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology.
- 4. Enhance Law Enforcement and Security Infrastructure:** To address the security challenges posed by kidnapping, there should be a concerted effort to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies in Umuahia Urban. This includes providing adequate training, resources, and equipment for security personnel to respond effectively to crime. Community policing initiatives should also be strengthened to build trust between the police and local residents.

5. **Develop Community-Based Intervention Programs:** Communities should play an active role in crime prevention by engaging in programs that support youth development and address the root causes of crime. Local leaders, religious organizations, and civil society groups should collaborate to provide mentorship, counseling, and alternative opportunities for young people at risk of involvement in kidnapping.
6. **Establish a Social Safety Net:** The government should introduce social safety net programs, such as unemployment benefits or microfinance schemes, to provide temporary relief to unemployed youths. This can prevent them from resorting to criminal activities like kidnapping out of economic desperation.
7. **Rehabilitate Youths Involved in Crime:** Rehabilitation programs should be established for youths who have been involved in kidnapping or other criminal activities. These programs should provide them with psychological support, vocational training, and avenues for reintegration into society.

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Cite This Article: Otodo Ifeanyichukwu, Hussaini Adamu Hussaini, Otigbuo Patience, Anslem Ali (2025). The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Youth Unemployment: Implications for Kidnapping Activities and Security in Umuahia Urban, Abia State. *EAS J Humanit Cult Stud*, 7(1), 8-19.
