

## Youth unemployment and criminal activities in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study examines the relationship between youth unemployment and criminal activities in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. It explores the link between unemployment and youth involvement in property crimes, violent crimes, and cybercrimes. The study adopts Robert Merton's structural strain theory and employs a correlational research design. A sample of 800 respondents was selected using Taro Yamane's formula, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Multistage sampling, including stratified, simple random, systematic, and purposive techniques, was applied. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson's correlation at a 0.05 significance level. Findings reveal a significant relationship between youth unemployment and property crime, violent crime, and cybercrime. The study concludes that high unemployment drives youth criminality and recommends legislative efforts to boost agriculture and enhance rehabilitation programs equipping offenders with entrepreneurial skills.

**Keywords:** Youth unemployment, crime, property crime, violent crime, cybercrime.

### Introduction

Youth unemployment remains a critical socio-economic challenge affecting many nations, including Nigeria. It is a condition where individuals who are willing and able to work cannot find suitable employment. According to Ndzwayiba (2020), unemployment extends beyond the mere absence of jobs to include the failure of capable and willing individuals actively seeking employment to secure a suitable position. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2012) further expands the definition by including individuals who, despite being employed, actively seek alternative jobs due to dissatisfaction, low wages, or underemployment. Youth unemployment, in particular, has far-reaching consequences on economic development, social stability, and crime rates. Nigeria has experienced a persistent rise in youth unemployment due to factors such as rapid population growth, poor economic policies, corruption, inadequate vocational training, and a shrinking job market (Emeh, 2012; Adejumo, 2020). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021) reported that youth unemployment in Nigeria stood at 42.5% in recent years, highlighting the severity of the crisis. With a growing youthful population and limited employment opportunities, many young people face economic hardship, frustration, and social exclusion (Okafor, 2011). This situation often compels some individuals to engage in illegal activities as an alternative means of survival (Akinyemi & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014).

Crime has long been associated with economic deprivation, with unemployed youths being particularly vulnerable to criminal activities such as property crimes, violent offenses, and cybercrimes. Becker's (1968) economic theory of crime suggests that individuals engage in criminal behavior when the perceived benefits outweigh the risks of punishment. Property crimes involve unlawful possession or destruction of another person's property, often committed out of economic desperation (Ekpenyong & Asuquo, 2022). Violent crimes, such as armed robbery, assault, and kidnapping, involve physical force to inflict harm or gain financial advantage (Oluwatobi & Ogunrinola, 2011). Cybercrimes, including internet fraud (popularly known as "Yahoo Yahoo"), hacking, and identity theft, have become increasingly prevalent among Nigerian youths, facilitated by advancements in digital technology (Tade & Aliyu, 2021). The economic hardships resulting from unemployment create a fertile ground for these crimes, as young people seek alternative means of livelihood.

However, while the link between unemployment and crime is widely acknowledged, it remains a subject of debate. Some scholars argue that unemployment does not automatically lead to crime, as many unemployed individuals abstain from illegal activities (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). Conversely, some employed individuals engage in criminal behavior despite having stable jobs (Chukwuma & Ede, 2020). These inconsistencies suggest that while unemployment may be a contributing factor, it is not the sole determinant of youth involvement in crime. Other factors such as peer pressure, weak law enforcement, lack of moral upbringing, and societal values also play significant roles (Agboola & Longe, 2017). This study seeks to examine the relationship between youth unemployment and criminal activities in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. This study attempts to ascertain if youth unemployment is a key cause of criminal behaviour in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria, by examining several types of crime, including violent crimes, cybercrimes, and property crimes.

### **Statement of the problem**

Crime and criminal activities have remained persistent challenges in Calabar Metropolis, posing significant threats to security, economic stability, and social well-being. Despite various interventions by governmental and non-governmental organizations, criminal activities such as robbery, theft, and cyber fraud continue to thrive, especially among unemployed youths. One of the most concerning aspects of crime in the metropolis is the high prevalence of property and violent crimes, particularly in Calabar South Local Government Area. Business owners, in response to frequent robberies, have been compelled to modify their operations by barricading their shops and interacting with customers through secured openings to minimize risks of theft and armed robbery. This adaptation highlights the severe impact of insecurity on economic activities and the general livelihood of residents. Beyond physical crimes, Calabar Metropolis has also gained notoriety as one of the hubs for internet fraud in Nigeria (Ukwayi, Obafeye & Akintola, 2019; Nnabuaku, 2017). Cybercrimes such as phishing, identity theft, cyberstalking, and financial fraud have become widespread, affecting both residents and outsiders. Victims have lost significant sums of money through fraudulent online schemes, while many students have been scammed into making tuition payments to fake accounts. This has led to a decline in trust in online transactions and has negatively impacted business operations, financial security, and the tourism potential of the city.

Despite multiple efforts by local government authorities, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations—including sensitization programs, law enforcement crackdowns, and youth empowerment initiatives—crime rates in Calabar Metropolis remain alarmingly high. Unemployment, which is often cited as a major factor driving youth involvement in crime, continues to pose a significant challenge. While some scholars argue that joblessness directly contributes to criminal activities (Becker, 1968; Freeman, 1999; Fadaei & Barghandan, 2020), others contend that additional factors such as peer pressure (Agnew, 1992), weak law enforcement (Nagin, 2013), and social influences (Sampson & Laub, 1993) also play crucial roles. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between youth unemployment and criminal activities in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Aims and objectives**

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between unemployment and criminal behaviours among youths in Calabar metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives, stated to show the direction of the study include, to:

1. access the relationship between unemployment and property crime among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. determine the relationship between unemployment and cybercrime among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria.
3. analyze the relationship between unemployment and violent crime among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Statements of hypotheses**

These hypotheses were formulated to predict the outcome of the study. They are presented in null form.

1. There is no relationship between unemployment and property crime among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria
2. There is no relationship between unemployment and cybercrime among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria.
3. There is no relationship between unemployment and violent crime among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Literature review**

#### ***Conceptual review of youths' unemployment***

The concept of unemployment has been given many definitions, but all pointing to the same reality. From a holistic perspective, unemployment is the inability of a qualified person, willing and actively searching to find a suitable job. This definition underscores the fact that for an individual to be classified to be unemployed, they must be qualified to hold employment, willing to work and are actively in search of a job within a particular period. Therefore, for one to qualify as an unemployed youth, they must be seen to be within the legal of a youth within the society in addition to meeting the conditions for unemployment. This definition is in agreement with Wangmo (2012) who described youth unemployment to people who are between the ages of 15 to 24 years and are without work, available for work, and seeking work. Although some scholars classify youths to be persons between 15 and 24 years, the Second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009) describes youths as persons between the ages of 18 to 35 years.

The problem of youths' unemployment has assumed a global challenge affecting the stability of many governments across the world. The overindulgence of computer technology in the world of work, coupled with the rise in rural-urban migration among other factors especially in the developing world, has further exacerbated the problem of unemployment, globally. In Nigeria, the problem of youths' unemployment has become an issue of national security; not only that these youths do not contribute the gross domestic product of the economy, but the huge resource allocation to the security sector in a bid to fight insecurity caused by these redundant youths. According to Izuaka (2023) and Bailey (2023), the unemployment rate in Nigeria for the first quarter (Q1) of 2023 is 37%. This is a rise from 33.3% stated by the National Bureau of statistics (NBS) in 2020 (Bailey, 2023).

#### ***Youths' unemployment and property crime***

Youths' unemployment, especially among many graduates, remains a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the crucibles of the Nigerian economy (Ayinla & Ogunmeru, 2018). Due to its impact on the security of the nation and social wellbeing of the people, unemployment remains a serious issue requiring quick, practical and concrete solutions. According to Osakwe (2013), youths constitute the active labour force of a country. It is either they are contributing to the development of the country or contributing to the economic woes through crime and political instability. When youth' employment is high, they contribute positively to the

economy of the nation; but when a high percentage of the youths is unemployed for a long time, the economy is affected due to overdependence and impact of criminality on the economy. It is therefore imperative for the youths to be included in the economic plan of the nation (Ayinla & Ogunmeru, 2018).

As observed by Idike and Eme (2015), in recent times, the role of youths in nation building has generated serious discussions and clear cut policy agenda, which are necessary for the development, plan and policy action of any country. This indicates the importance of the youths in nation building and their capacity in nation building must not be underestimated as they remain Nigeria's future leaders. While huge resources are expended in training graduates yearly, the nation is unable to reap from the enormous potentials of the youths due to high rate of unemployment (Adebayo, 2013). In the quest to survive while unemployed, many graduates in Calabar metropolis have been inducted into criminal gangs; perpetrating criminal activities such as stealing around the neighbourhoods, pickpocketing around crowded places, being dishonest in social dealings, exhibiting fraudulent behaviours, and so on.

### ***Youths' unemployment and violent crime***

Many studies have shown the relationship between unemployment and violent crime. This is so due to the preponderance of many unemployed youths to alcoholism, drug abuse and engagement in other antisocial behaviours. According to Das, Salam, Arshad, Finkelstein and Bhutta (2016), "youths are the largest abusers of alcohol, cannabis, nicotine and opioids" in Nigeria. Okon (2016) argued that many youths indulge in substance abuse in order to feel good, stop feeling bad, or perform well in school, work and play. The frustration associated with the inability to find suitable a job is seen to motivate many youths into substance abuse. Although indulgence in substance abuse alone cannot be said to be the responsible for violent crimes and violent behaviours among youths (Boles & Miotto, 2003), recent study from Liakoni, Gartwyl, Ricklin, Exadaktylos and Krahenbuhl (2018) has shown the relationship between substance abuse and violent crimes. The apparent connection between substance abuse and violence lies in the employment and financial status of the individuals. This suggests that youths who are fully employed and financially stable are less likely to be engaged in violent crimes.

In their study to identify the causative factors to violent behaviours among youths, Idris (2016) found unemployment to be associated with gang and domestic violence. This study point reveals how unemployed youths often engage in domestic violence as well as committing crimes with members of criminal gangs. For married couples, there is a high chance of domestic violence and spousal abuse when one of the spouses, especially the man, is unemployed for a long time. A study from Guza, Musa and Elijah (2019) established a significant relationship between unemployment and criminal activities such as murder, armed robbery, assaults, rape, cultism, and so on. Since unemployment is associated with low standard of living (Bandyopadhyay, Bhattacharya & Sensarma, 2015; Entorf & Sieger, 2015), youths who are unemployed often indulge in violent crimes as a way of showing aggression and frustration towards the society and the unfavourable social system.

### ***Youths' unemployment and cybercrime***

It has been argued by many scholars that humans have the innate tendencies to deviate from expected norms and values, provided the anticipated behaviour will not incriminate them and the environment will protect them from being caught (Ozeh & Obajonu, 2019). The prevalence of crime and criminal activities in all human societies at all times despite the plethora of intimidating laws, codes, mores and folklores, justifies the assumption that deviant tendencies are inherent in all men. The decentralization of internet infrastructure in enhancing communication seems to have created a window for criminal activities using the internet. As noted by Umeozulu (2012), "cyber-crime connotes criminal activities, involving information

technology infrastructure, including the illegal access to computer data". The window of impersonation, identify theft and remote operation that the internet affords operators has helped many users to perpetrate cybercrimes for many decades. As observed by Ozeh and Obajonu, (2019), these windows of impersonation, identify theft, remote operation, and so on has facilitated the migration of criminals from the streets to the web.

To Okeshola and Adeta (2013), cybercrime is attributed to many factors; but in Nigeria and most parts of the developing countries, the prospect of financial gains during or after the crime sits atop the push factors. According to Mago (2014) and Alabi (2014), the fact that the unemployment level of youths in Nigeria is more than twice that of adults, serves as an indication why more young unemployed Nigerians are involved in cybercrimes. In the absence of government in rural areas, prompting rural-urban migration, many unemployed youths in urban areas are exposed to cybercrimes as the closest skills to earning a living. Since majority of cybercrimes activities are carried out in urban areas, and mostly perpetrated by graduates and undergraduates; it therefore suggests that unemployment and rural-urban migration are the factors pushing youths into cybercrimes in Nigeria.

### ***Knowledge gap***

Previous studies on unemployment and criminal activities have been carried out outside Calabar metropolis in Cross River State. However, the studies that have been carried out in the study area were made to investigate the causative factors to youths' involvement in cybercrimes, property crimes, violent crimes and other criminal activities. Therefore, this study brings to focus the relationship between unemployment and criminal activities in Calabar metropolis, considering the fact that not all youths who are unemployed have been involved criminal activities as well as the fact that not all youths involved in criminal activities are unemployed.

## **Theoretical framework**

### ***Structural strain theory***

The structural strain theory was developed by Merton (1938), who stressed that certain elements of the social structure in the society are responsible for the criminal behaviours of some members in the society. In simple words, Merton (1938) sees deviance or outright criminal behaviours as the inevitable reaction of certain members of the society to the social stressors shaping their integration and survival. The basic assumption of the structural strain theory holds that crime is inevitable in society when there are no enough legitimate opportunities and means for people to meet their goals and aspirations. In explaining the divide between opportunities and individual goals and aspirations, Merton (1938) noted that in every society, there exist institutional goals as well as cultural means for attaining the goals. Merton (1938) explained institutional goals as the values, goals and desires of men within the society, while the cultural means are the approved ways of acquiring the values, goals or desires.

Merton (1938) classified members of the society into five categories, such as the conformists, innovators, ritualists, retreatists and rebels. He explained that the conformists are members of the society who accept the institutional goals as well as the culturally approved means for acquiring the goals. Members of the society in this category are seen as law abiding citizens and unlikely to be involved in crime. The second category is the innovators who Merton describes as accepting the cultural goals but rejecting the means for acquiring them. Examples of innovators include drug dealers, thieves, rapists, internet fraudsters, etc. who employ unconventional and illegal means to acquire money and sexual gratification. Accordingly, the innovators are youths who are unwilling to work and earn legitimate income, but prefer to engage in criminal activities to acquire their desires.

Merton described the ritualists as members of the society who accept the cultural means but are less interested in acquiring the institutional goals. This represents modest and simple members who undertake all the education and training but are less interested in acquiring the certificates or taking up a paid job in spite of their qualification. The ritualists are less likely to be involved in criminal activities. The retreatists are members of the society who reject both the cultural goals and the means to acquiring them. In the process, they find a way to survive without complying or indulging in criminal activities. The retreatists are better seen as those who experience social withdrawal from social life or self-isolation. They are largely seen as deviants but certainly not criminals. The rebels are members of the society, who unlike the retreatists, reject both the cultural goals and the means to acquiring them and go a step further to establish a new set of cultural goals and new means to acquiring them. Cryptocurrency fraudsters can be classified as rebels who attempt to bring a new dimension to the way things are done in the society.

The inability of many youths to find suitable employment usually forces them into rejecting the cultural approved pattern of acquiring a particular desire. In attaining financial security for instance, many youths will jettison the culturally approved means of making money which is through employment or business. With this development, they will become involved in criminal activities in order to be able to make money needed to acquire their desires. It is on the basis of this development that Merton considers crime among certain categories of the society to be a response to social stressors imposed by the system upon its members.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design***

This study used the correlational research design. According to Stangor (2011) cited in Crawford (2014), correlational research involves the measurement of two or more relevant variables and an assessment of the relationship between or among those variables. Therefore, the correlational research design was used because the aim of this study is to determine the relationship between youths' unemployment and criminal activities.

### ***Area of study***

The area of this study is Calabar metropolis, comprising Calabar South Local Government Area and Calabar Municipality Local Government Area. The metropolis is largely an administrative settlement, which hosts the seat of government as the Capital City of Cross River State. Many of the residents of the metropolis are civil servants, students and traders. Due to limited industrial presence in the metropolis, it is difficult for many youths to find suitable jobs. However, a rise in criminal activities in the metropolis has remained stable over the years, especially in Calabar South Local Government Area and parts of Calabar municipality Local Government Area.

### ***Population of the study***

Youths resident in Calabar metropolis were the population of this study. This population consisted of males and females between the ages of 18 and 49 years. Being an administrative city, with two prominent universities and other tertiary institutions as well as population pull factors, Calabar metropolis has a huge population of young people, who are mostly students. Due to lack of updated official statistics of youths in Calabar metropolis, the study utilized the 2016 projected population of youths in Calabar metropolis, which is 371,022 (Okon, 2016). This population was used in determining the sample size for this study.

### ***Sample size***

The sample size for this study was 800 respondents determined using the Taro Yamane (1964) approach from a geographical population of 371,022 at 0.05 level of significance. To

achieve the desired sample size for the study, 400 respondents were selected each from Calabar Municipality Local Government Area and Calabar South Local Government Area.

### ***Sampling technique***

The study adopted the multistage sampling technique in identifying the selected respondents. Under this approach, the stratified sampling technique, the simple random sampling technique, the systematic random sampling technique as well as the purposive sampling technique were used. In stage one, the stratified sampling technique was used in separating the metropolis into two Local Government Areas (LGAs). This approach was necessary because of the infeasibility of studying the entire study area. Thus, Calabar municipality was placed in the first strata while Calabar South was in the second strata, with each having 10 and 11 electoral wards, respectively.

In stage two, the simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the desired number of wards for the study. To execute this approach, all the wards in Calabar municipality LGA were written on separate sheets and folded to conceal the names written in each of the papers. The researcher toggled the hat filled with the folded papers to pick one paper at a time. Four papers were picked in total from Calabar municipality LGA, and similar approach was used in selecting the same number of wards in Calabar South LGA.

In stage three, the simple random sampling technique was again used in selecting the desired number of streets from the electoral wards. To execute this approach, the major streets in Calabar municipality LGA were written on separate sheets and folded to conceal the names of the streets on the folded papers. Then ten papers were randomly picked, which means 10 streets were selected from each electoral ward. In total, 40 streets were selected from each LGA, bringing the grand total of streets selected for this study to 80 streets across the metropolis.

In stage four, the systematic random sampling technique was used in selecting the houses to administer the questionnaire from the selected streets. In carrying out this task, the researcher selected every 5<sup>th</sup> house on the street. To this end, houses numbered 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 & 50 were selected for the study. The justification for selecting every 5<sup>th</sup> house was to ensure that at least 10 houses were selected from each street, since observation has shown that some streets in the metropolis have less than 100 houses.

In stage five, the purposive sampling technique was used in identifying the appropriate respondent to be administered the questionnaire at the selected house. To do this, the researcher only administered the questionnaire to a member of the family who physically appeared to be a youths between 18 to 35 years of age.

### ***Instruments of data collection***

The data for this study were gathered using questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured in two parts, consisting of the demographic data of respondents and the phenomenal data gathering section. The later part was also structured in four segments, showing unemployment and property crime, unemployment and violent crime, unemployment and cybercrime as well as unemployment as a dependent variable of the study.

### ***Limitations of the study***

The researcher encountered considerable amount of limitations in the course of the study. One of the limitations was the inability of the researcher to meet young people in the selected houses at the time of the study. This constrain forced the researcher to reschedule the period of administration of questionnaire from daytime (8am – 6pm) to evenings (6pm – 8pm) daily. The impact of this constrain shifted the duration of the study from one week to 3 weeks,

as the research team was only able to administer a limited amount of questionnaire daily. Another limitation to this study was the willingness of the some respondents, especially in Calabar south LGA, to cooperate in the study. Notwithstanding these limitations, fieldwork was successful and the desired data were collected by the team.

## Data presentation and analysis

### Data presentation

Table 1 shows the distribution of responses revealing the demographic data of respondents. From the responses on sex, the table shows that 476 respondents were males while 334 respondents were females, representing 59.5% and 40.5%, respectively. This finding reveals that more males participated in the study than the females. The table also showed that 187 respondents (23.37%) were between the ages of 18 and 27 years old; 388 respondents (48.5%) were between the ages of 28 and 37 years old while 225 respondents (28.12%) were from the ages of 38 years and above. With this outcome, the study showed that respondents between the ages of 28 and 37 (388) recorded the modal frequency (48.5%), while those between 18 and 27 were the least participants for the study. On the employment status of the youths, the table showed that 43 respondents (5.37%) were fully employed and satisfied with their jobs; 232 (29%) were employed but not satisfied with their current jobs, while 525 respondents (65.62%) were unemployed. This observation shows that while only 5.37 percent (43) of the population is fully employed and satisfied with their jobs, 65.62 percent (525) of the population is fully unemployed. To observe the educational level of the respondents, the table showed that 15 respondents (1.87%) have been educated to the post graduate level; 407 respondents (50.87%) have been educated to graduate level, while 334 respondents (41.75%) were educated to school certificate level. Only 44 respondents, representing 5.5% were trained in vocational education. This section on level of education shows that while participants that have been educated up to post graduate level were the least (1.8%), first degree graduates recorded the highest number of participants.

**TABLE 1: Demographic data of respondents**

S/N		INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	(%)
1	Sex	Male	476	59.5
		Female	334	40.5
2	Age	18 – 27	187	23.37
		28 – 37	388	48.5
		38 & above	225	28.12
3	Employment status	Employed and satisfied	43	5.37
		Employed but searching for new job	232	29
		Unemployed	525	65.62
4	Level of education	Post graduate	15	1.87
		Graduate	407	50.87
		Secondary	334	41.75
		Vocational education	44	5.5

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

### Data analysis

Data collected for this study were analyzed based on the operational variables, which are property crime, violent crime and cybercrime. To test for the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables of this study, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient was used as the statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

### Decision rule



Accept alternate hypothesis if calculated Pearson value ( $p$ -n) is greater than the critical (table) value; otherwise, reject the alternate hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis.

***Hypothesis one: youths' unemployment and property crime***

Alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between unemployment and property crime among youths in Calabar metropolis

Null hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between unemployment and property crime among youths in Calabar metropolis

**TABLE 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis measuring unemployment and property crime among youths in Calabar Metropolis** **N = 800**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum XY$	$r$
	$\sum y$	430.36		
Youths' unemployment (x)	9420	401.33		0.22
Property crime (y)	9398		8517.64	

Significance level = 0.05;  $DF = 798$ ; Critical value = 0.069234;  $N = 800$

***Decision***

At 798 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated coefficient value of 0.22 predicts a positive correlation between unemployment and property crimes among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State. This outcome was established because the calculated value ( $P_c = 0.22$ ) is greater than the critical value ( $P_c = 0.069234$ ) obtained at 798 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level. With this outcome, the alternate hypothesis was accepted, while the null hypothesis was rejected. The alternate hypothesis states that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and property crimes among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State.

***Hypothesis two: youth unemployment and violent crime***

Alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between unemployment and violent crime among youths in Calabar metropolis

Null hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between unemployment and violent crime among youths in Calabar metropolis

**TABLE 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis measuring unemployment and violent crime among youths in Calabar metropolis** **N = 800**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum XY$	$r$
	$\sum y$	22.93		
Youths unemployment (x)	5702	25.01		0.21
Violent crime (y)	5982		27.55	

Significance level = 0.05;  $DF = 798$ ; Critical value = 0.069234;  $N = 800$

***Decision***

At 798 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated coefficient value of 0.21 indicates a positive correlation between unemployment and violent crimes among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State. This conclusion was reached since the calculated value ( $P_c = 0.21$ ) is greater than the critical value ( $P_c = 0.069234$ ) obtained at 798 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level. With this outcome, the alternate hypothesis was accepted, while the null hypothesis was rejected. The alternate hypothesis states that there

is a significant relationship between unemployment and violent crimes among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria.

***Hypothesis three: Youth unemployment and cybercrime***

Alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between unemployment and cyber crime among youths in Calabar metropolis

Null hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between unemployment and cyber crime among youths in Calabar metropolis

**TABLE 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis measuring unemployment and cybercrime among youths in Calabar Metropolis N = 800**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum XY$	$r$
	$\sum y$	929.16		
		$\sum y^2$		
Youths unemployment (x)	8804	933.09		0.90
Cybercrime(y)	8837		7135.75	

Significance level = 0.05; DF = 798; Critical value = 0.069234; N= 800

***Decision***

At 798 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated coefficient value of 0.90 predicts a positive correlation between unemployment and property crimes among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State. This outcome was established because the calculated value ( $P_c = 0.90$ ) is greater than the critical value ( $P_c = 0.069234$ ) obtained at 798 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level. With this outcome, the alternate hypothesis was accepted, while the null hypothesis was rejected. The alternate hypothesis states that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and property crimes among youths in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State.

***Discussion of findings***

The findings of this study reveal a significant relationship between youth unemployment and property crimes in Calabar Metropolis. This suggests that as youth unemployment rates increase, there is a corresponding rise in property crimes. This outcome aligns with the economic theory of criminal behavior proposed by Becker (1968), which asserts that individuals are more likely to engage in criminal activities when legitimate economic opportunities are scarce. Becker (1968) specifically argues that unemployment can predispose youths to property-related offenses such as theft, burglary, and arson, as they seek alternative means to meet their basic economic needs.

However, these findings contrast with studies conducted in developed economies such as the United States, Canada, and Europe. Research by Ha (2019) and Lundqvist (2018) suggests that in these regions, youth unemployment is more strongly associated with violent crimes and deviant behaviors rather than property crimes. Ha (2019) attributes this difference to the presence of strong social welfare systems and unemployment benefits, which mitigate economic hardship and reduce the likelihood of individuals resorting to property crimes. In contrast, in developing countries like Nigeria, where social safety nets are weak or nonexistent, unemployed youths often engage in property crimes as a means of economic survival. This supports the argument that economic deprivation in Third World countries pushes unemployed youths towards crime, primarily as a strategy to meet fundamental needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

Furthermore, this study found a significant relationship between youth unemployment and violent crimes in Calabar Metropolis. This finding aligns with research by Onwuka, Ugwu, and Chukwuma (2015), who argued that youth unemployment is a major driver of violent crimes in Nigeria, particularly in states like Anambra. According to their study, the rising cases of kidnapping, armed robbery, political thuggery, election violence, and terrorism in Nigeria can be directly linked to the persistent increase in youth unemployment. Similarly, Omboi (2020) found that high unemployment rates among youths in urban areas across Africa contribute significantly to rising violent crime rates. Omboi (2020) attributes this trend to social strain theory, which explains how widening economic inequality and the inability to achieve societal goals through legitimate means push individuals toward criminal activities. The findings of this study reinforce this perspective, indicating that unemployment-driven frustration and economic desperation often manifest in violent crimes.

Additionally, the study established a significant link between youth unemployment and cybercrime in Calabar Metropolis. This finding is consistent with research by Oluwaleye (2021), who identified unemployment as a key factor driving the increase in social media-related crimes and cyber fraud among youths in Nigeria's Southwest region. According to Oluwaleye (2021), advancements in communication technology, coupled with high unemployment rates, have created an avenue for many young people to engage in cybercrime as an alternative source of income. Similarly, Olofinbiyi (2021) found that youth unemployment is significantly linked to cybercrime in Lagos Metropolis, where financial desperation has driven many young people to engage in fraudulent online activities. The findings of this study corroborate these conclusions, highlighting how economic hardship and technological access intersect to create a surge in cyber-related offenses among unemployed youths.

## Conclusion

In order to determine the relationship between unemployment and criminal activities among youths in Calabar metropolis, the study found a significant relationship between unemployment and property crime. This shows that the involvement of many youths in property crimes such as stealing, vandalization of public and people's property, shoplifting, arson, and so on is attributed to their inability to find suitable jobs. The study also found a significant relationship between unemployment and violent crimes. On this, the finding reveals that the inability of many youths who are qualified and willing to work, but unable to find suitable jobs over a period is responsible for their involvement in violent crimes such as rape, fighting, murder, armed robbery, etc. Lastly, the study found a significant relationship between unemployment and cybercrime, which points to the impact of poverty and joblessness on youths' involvement in cybercrimes. Therefore, to reduce the rates of crimes such as property crimes, violent crimes and cybercrimes in Calabar metropolis of Cross River State, practical and genuine efforts must be taken to address the menace of youths' unemployment in Calabar, the entire state as well as the nation at large.

## Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Cross River State House of Assembly should work to enact laws that will boost the state's budget for agriculture as well as ensure the setting up of modalities for the incentivization of youths who are engaged in agricultural mechanization projects.
2. The Nigerian Police in collaboration with the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) and other agencies within the criminal justice system should intensify efforts towards improving rehabilitation services for offenders of property and other related crimes in

the state, such that rehabilitated youths are equipped with entrepreneurial skills and resources which will enable them to live a crime free life.

3. The federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (FMHADMD) in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and other relevant agencies should harmonize and introduce a robust conditional cash transfer package as a social welfare initiative for unemployed youths, especially university graduates, with a view to eradicating poverty, creating funds for small and medium scale businesses as well as pulling many youths out of crime. This initiative is aimed at creating jobs, boosting economic development, and sustaining national security.

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