

## UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTHS: A CORRELATE TO THE RISING LEVELS OF KIDNAPPING AND VIOLENT KILLINGS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The focus of this study was to investigate unemployment among youths: a correlate to levels of kidnapping and violent killings in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two hypotheses were generated to guide the study. Survey design was adopted for the study. The population adopted for the study was Rivers State. It further consisted of all youths in Rivers State. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 300 youth respondents for the study. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was face validated by professionals in the Department of Sociology, University of Port Harcourt, and Port Harcourt. Furthermore, the reliability value of 0.76 Correlation Co-efficient was obtained for the study. Statistics used for the study were percentage, frequency tables and Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ). Percentage and frequency tables were used to analyses biographical data of unemployed youth respondents while  $\chi^2$  was used to analyses the tested hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis revealed that relationships exist between unemployment among youths and the rising levels of kidnapping as well as violent killings in Rivers State of Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommend, among others that the state government should, through its traditional and social media outlets, inform, educate and communicate with the youths (particularly the unemployed ones), on the dangers of indulging in crimes and the benefits of venturing into legitimate employment in Rivers State.*

*Keywords: Unemployment, Youths, Rising Levels, Kidnapping, Violent killings, Rivers State, Nigeria*

### Introduction

For Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) and Okafor (2011), the statistics from Manpower Board and National Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, representing over 60 percent of the total population of the country. Of this 60 per cent most youths are unemployed besides 1.6 million who are under-employed (Adebayo, 2013). What is more today is the fact that Nigeria unemployment rate was recorded at 13.3 percent in the second quarter of 2016, up from 12.1 percent in the three months to March, reaching the highest since 2009 (Trading Economics, 2016).

These figures of unemployment rate are worrisome in Nigeria; hence their resultant effects such as crimes, vices and corruption on Nigerians in every state of the country may be adverse. Thus, in consideration of the aforementioned views, it became expedient for the

researcher to carry out this study. In doing so, the study first and foremost reviewed related studies on unemployment among youths and rising levels of kidnapping alongside violent killings, the world over.

### **Unemployment among Youths and the Rising Level of Kidnapping**

Based on the prevailing unemployment situation in the world, many youths have taken to kidnapping as a means of survival. Thus, in recent times, there have been notable adverse social, economic and political developments in Nigeria, a consequence of youth unemployment and under-employment, particularly exemplified by increasing militancy, violent crimes, kidnapping, restiveness and political instability (Ajufo, 2013). Furthermore, Adejumola and Tayo-Olayubulu (2009) contend that unemployment has been identified as the major cause of social vices like armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, political thugery, kidnapping and many more.

The foregoing is undoubtedly true, since there is evidence of high rate of unemployed youths in the Boko Haram sect, whose members engage in kidnapping in the North of Nigeria. Most of them who were caught confessed that they did so because there are hardly any employment opportunities in Nigeria. Thus, the only way they could survive is to join the Boko Haram sect, in order to kidnap for ransom, as well as fight against bad leadership and corruption which have denied them the opportunities of gainful employments and social welfare services in Nigeria. With regard to these facts today, there is widespread kidnapping in Nigeria, which is becoming a lucrative business in the country. Taking from these views, Nigeria Police Crime Records and Statistics show that from 2006 to the first half of 2012, a total of 2,184 cases of kidnapping were recorded over the past four and a half years (Nigeria Police Force, 2012; Olukayode, 2016). In affirmation of the foregoing, Onah and Okwuosa (2016) argue that, in many parts of the country, especially in the Southern part, kidnapping for ransom is now a lucrative business and the unemployed youths are mainly responsible for it.

Beyond Nigeria, HISCOX (2010:6) explains that:

*Control risks significant members of kidnaps-for-ransom in China annually, despite data collection being hindered by press censorship. Rising urban unemployment, rural to urban migration and a growing gap between the working and middle classes in China have contributed to the growth of criminal activity in the county in recent years. Kidnapping-for-ransom is carried out by both organized syndicates and small-scale amateur groups. Abductions frequently result from failed business deals and family disputes. Virtual kidnaps, threat extortions, product contamination and hostage situations are also common.*

In addition, the rising cases of unemployment in Pakistan have given rise to crimes, so that the local police explained that Sahil Saeed, from Oldham, Greater Manchester, was abducted in Jhelum, when his family members are on holiday (British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, 2010). Again a 65-year-old, who was staying with relatives in Saidabad, a city in the Punjab province, experienced kidnapping when five men wielding guns burst in on him, tied him up, drugged him and bundled him into the back of a van (Grady, 2010). Thus, this

Incidence of kidnapping in Pakistan can be traced to youth unemployment and social welfare insecurity in the country. This is so because Pakistan is associated with bad leadership, corruption and crimes in the world. Other countries where kidnap cases are rampant include Mexico, India, Iraq, Venezuela, Lebanon and Colombia (Nisha, 2015).

### **Unemployment among Youths and the Rising Level of Violent Killings**

The high rate of violent crime in Nigeria today has been blamed in many quarters on unemployment, especially of the youths (Onwuka, Ugwu, Chukwuma and Chijioke, 2015). In Nigeria, the youths comprise a very high percentage of unemployed persons and this has generated high rates of crime and violence in the society (Onah and Kowuosa, 2016). Furthermore, Onah and Okwuosa (2016:55) precisely delineate that:

*In Nigeria today, unemployed youths are the major threats in the society. The phenomenon has led to an atmosphere of lawlessness, high crime rate, poverty and insecurity of lives and property. This is reflected in the nature of criminal activities pervading Nigeria today which includes kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, oil bunkering, internet scam, car snatching, murder, cultism, abduction, rape, food and drug adulteration, drug trafficking and abuse, prostitution, burglary, human trafficking, political thugs, advanced fee fraud (419) and various forms of insurgency. There is no gainsaying that the violence situation in the country could discourage investors from investing in a society full of insecurity and uncertainty while the existing one could decide to relocate to more secure countries. This is a big setback to the socio-economic development in Nigeria.*

Thus, in some states in Nigeria, unemployment has been identified as a major cause of violent killings; hence the youths who are unemployed have become the 'devil's tools'. This is not far-fetched, since there are incessant killings on the streets of Nigeria, especially during and after political campaigns in the country. This seems true because the unemployed youths are often used as political thugs and assassins against political rivals of their paymasters.

Beyond Nigeria, Hibbert (2014), in a report of a study, reveals link between unemployment and crime, which he reported Lawrence as stating that 60 percent of the murder victims in 2013 aged between 15 and 24 years in Jamaica were either unemployed or unskilled labourers. In concordance with these findings, it is therefore obvious that most youths in Jamaica engaged in violent killings for money to fend for themselves; hence there are few jobs that could go round them. Similarly, Raphael and Winter-Ember (2001), in their study of identifying the effect of unemployment on crime in the United States of America (USA) found that property crime rates are the results that consistently indicate that unemployment increases crime. In like manner, Raphael and Winter-Ember (2001) further argue that for violent crime, however, the results are mixed, with some evidence of positive unemployment effects on robbery and assault and the puzzling findings of negative unemployment effects for murder and rape.

Sadly, the issue of xenophobia in South Africa was another major link with unemployment among youths in the country. This is so because Wilkinson in Guardian Africa reported that, in the instance of xenophobia shops are torched; streets are barricaded, types are set alight, people are stabbed, shot and burned to death ... in phobia that foreigners are taking jobs from them (The Guardian, 2015). Additionally, Gagne (2016), in using Mexico's national employment surveys, concludes that there is a positive and significant correlation between the rate of nines (a term used to describe youths who are neither in school nor active in the work force) and the number of murders between 2008 and 2013, when violence related to Mexico's drug war reached its peak. In fact, this is evidentially true in countries where the rate of unemployment is rising alongside crime rate.

### **Statement of the Problem**

During the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the unemployment rate was at the barest minimum because many parts of Nigeria were self-sufficient in agricultural produce; and thus crime rate was very low in that regard.

What is even more is that in the 1960s and 1970s when there was oil boom, Nigeria hardly experienced unemployment and crimes; hence there was a laundry list of employment opportunities, in addition to the boom of agricultural revolution (in cocoa, palm oil, groundnut, cotton, etc.) which also employed over 70 percent of Nigerians in the country.

Inversely, in the late 1980s and 1990s unemployment rate started rising with crime rate, so much which they spilled over into the 2000s in a 'crescendo'. Taking from these ugly scenarios, Nigerians could not address the challenges of unemployment and crimes (kidnapping and violent killings); hence the attendant issues of bad leadership and corruption in Nigeria. With regard to the rise in crimes, most states in Nigeria did studies to address the nexus between unemployment and crimes, but Rivers State did not, hence any empirical studies to show the foregoing in the state. Today there is an unprecedented rise in crime (kidnapping and violent killings, which ought to be curbed in Rivers State). It is, therefore, in the challenging circumstance that the study is spurred to investigate unemployment among youths: a correlate to kidnapping and violent killings in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives are set for the study:

- i. To investigate the relationship between unemployment among youths and the level of kidnapping.
- ii. To examine the relationship between unemployment among youths and the level of violent killings.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

The following null hypotheses are formulated for the study:

**Hypothesis I:** There is no significant relationship between unemployment among youths and the level of kidnapping.

**Hypothesis II:** There is no significant relationship between unemployment among youths and the level of violent killings.

## Research Methods

Survey design is used for the study. The population of the study is Rivers State in Nigeria. It covers all unemployed youths in Rivers State. A sample of 300 unemployed youth respondents is randomly selected for the study. The selection is done by the use of simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Thus simple random sampling technique is used to select one Local Government Area (L.G.A.) in Rivers State. In doing so, the 23 LGAs of Rivers State were written on papers and wrapped by the researcher. These were then put in a basket for picking. Someone was called to mix up the wrapped papers of the 23 LGAs for the purpose of picking one L.G.A. Through this process, the person called upon picked Port Harcourt L.G.A. of Rivers State for the study. Furthermore, respondents were independently selected using purposive sampling technique. In realizing this, 300 youth respondents were selected in Port Harcourt L.G.A. The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. It is structured into Section A: biographical data with multiple questions (items) based on age, marital status, educational status, religion and the level of crime rate in Rivers State. Section B: field responses based on the hypotheses are used in categorized items of 'high', 'average' and 'low' levels of crimes (kidnapping and violent killings) for the study, with special reference to youths' unemployment.

Face validity of the instrument is established by professionals in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, and Port Harcourt. Apart from this, test-retest method of reliability is used to ascertain the reliability value of 0.76 correlations co-efficient for the study. The researcher administered the copies of the questionnaire with the help of his paid personnel; and they collected same immediately the responses were completed by respondents. The statistical methods used for the study are percentage and frequency tables, as well as Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ). Percentage and frequency tables are used to analyses biographical data of respondents while  $\chi^2$  is used to analyses the tested hypotheses for the study.

## Results

**Table1: Biographic Data of Respondents**

Biographic Characteristics	No. of Respondents	Percentages
<b>Age</b>		
18-28	180	60
29-39	120	40
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	264	88
Married	36	12
<b>Educational Status</b>		
No Formal Education	120	40
First School Leaving (Certificates (FSLCs))	120	40
West African Senior School Certificates (WASSCs)	42	14
Degree Certificates (DCs)	18	6
<b>Religion</b>		
Christen Religion	180	60
Islamic Religion	30	10
Traditional Religion	30	10
Other Religions	60	20
<b>Level of Crime Rate</b>		
High Crime Rate	180	60
Moderate Crime Rate	90	30
Low Crime Rate	30	10

The results of age delineate that 180 respondents, representing 60%, were youths from ages 18-28 years, while 120 (40%) were youths from ages 29-39 years. For emphasis, there was no sex discrimination among the youths during the study. For marital status, the results depict that 264 respondents, representing 88%, were single youths, while 36 (12%) were married youths who were probably between the ages 29-39 years, and thus felt that age was no longer on their side. For educational status, the results show that 120 respondents, representing 40%, had no formal education, but by personal efforts can read and write; and thus can operate phones, especially when they want to reach a kidnapped person's relations who can pay them ransom for his or her release. Similarly, 120 (40%) of the youths had FSLCs, 42 (14%) of them had WASSCs, while 18 (6%) had DCs.

In addition to the foregoing views, the results for religion indicate that 180 respondents, representing 60%, were Christians, 30 (10%) were Muslims, 30 (10%) were adherents of traditional religion, while 60 (20%) were members of other religions. Finally, for the level of crime rate in the study area, 180 respondents, representing 60%, admitted that there is high rate of crime, 90 (30%) admitted that there is moderate rate of crime, while 30 (10%) admitted that there is low rate of crime. Of these responses, however, it is crystal clear that crime rate is really high, and will continue to rise in Rivers State if urgent measures are not taken to halt it now.

**Table 2: Analysis of the Relationship between Unemployment among Youths and the Rising Level of Kidnapping**

Respondents	Responses			Total
	High level of kidnapping	Moderate level of kidnapping	Low level of kidnapping	
Unemployed youths of Ages 18-28 years	80 (93.33)	75(63.33)	45(43.33)	200
Unemployed youths of Ages 29-39 years	60(46.6)	20(31.6)	20(21.6)	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>300</b>

**Table 3: Chi-square In-depth Computation of the Analysis of the Relationship between Unemployment among Youths and the Rising Level of Kidnapping**

Serial Number	Observed Frequency (OF)	Expected Frequency (EF)	OF -EF	(OF-EF) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(OF-EF)^2}{EF}$
1	80	93.33	-13.33	177.68	1.90
2	75	63.33	11.67	136.18	2.15
3	45	43.33	1.67	2.78	0.064
4	60	46.6	13.4	179.56	3.85
5	20	31.6	-11.6	134.56	4.25
6	20	21.6	-1.6	2.56	0.11
<b>Total</b>					<b>12.32</b>

Calculated  $\chi^2 = 12.32 >$  table value = 5.99; level of significance = 0.05

The level of the analysis as presented in Tables 2 and 3 shows that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 12.32 is higher than the table value of 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom (df) of 2. In view of this, the result of the analysis can be said to be significant, since the calculated value is higher than the table value. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on the foregoing facts, it means that there is a relationship between unemployment among youths and the rising level of kidnapping in the study area.

**Table 4: Analysis of the Relationship between Unemployment among Youths and the Rising Level of Violent Killings**

Respondents	Responses			Total
	High level of violent killings	Moderate level of violent killings	Low level of violent killings	
Unemployed youths of Ages 18-28 years	95 (106.66)	85(70)	20(23.33)	200
Unemployed youths of Ages 29-29 years	65(53.33)	20(35)	15(11.66)	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>300</b>

**Table 5: Chi-square In-depth Computation of the Analysis of the Relationship between Unemployment among Youths and the Rising Level of Violent Killings**

Serial Number	OF	EF	OF -EF	(OF-EF) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(OF-EF)^2}{EF}$
1	95	106.66	-11.66	135.95	1.27
2	80	70	15	225	3.21
3	20	23.33	-3.33	11.08	0.47
4	65	53.33	11.67	136.18	2.55
5	20	55	-15	225	6.4
6	15	11.66	3.34	11.15	0.95
Total					14.85

Calculated  $\chi^2 = 14.857 >$  table value = 5.99; level of significance = 0.05.

The result of the analysis presented in Table 4 and 5 depicts that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 14.85 is higher than the table value of 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance with df of 2. In view of this, the result of the analysis can be said to be significant, since the calculated value is higher than the table value. In congruence with the above result, the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on the foregoing facts, it means that there is a relationship between unemployment among youths and the rising level of violent killings in the study area.

**Discussion of the Findings**

The result of the first hypothesis indicates that there is a significant relationship between unemployment among youths and the rising level of kidnapping in Rivers State of

Nigeria. This result is in concordance with Onah and Okwuosa (2016), who argue that, in many parts of Nigeria, especially the Southern part, kidnapping for ransom is now lucrative business and the unemployed youths are mainly responsible for it. This is undoubtedly true; hence in the South East of the Southern part of Nigeria, kidnapping has become a daily challenge that has made people sell their property, in order to pay for the release of loved ones.

In the same vein, the result of the second hypothesis reveals that there is a significant relationship between unemployment among youths and the rising level of violent killings in the study area. In congruence with the result of the second hypothesis, Hibbert (2014) in a report of a study reveals link between unemployment and crime, cited Lawrence who said that 60 percent of the murder victims in 2013 aged between 15 and 24 years in Jamaica were either unemployed or unskilled labourers. Again, in support of the foregoing result, Gagne (2016), in using Mexico's national employment surveys, concluded that there is a positive and significant correlation between the rate of nine (a term used to describe youths who are neither in school nor active in the work force) and the number of murders between 2008 and 2013, when violence related to Mexico's drug war reached its peak.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the in-depth findings of the study, it is abundantly clear that unemployment among youths has relationship with the rising levels of kidnap cases, alongside violent killings in the study area. Thus for the purpose of protecting the society from imminent dangers of crimes, and their causes, the study suggests precise researches on the relationship between unemployment among youths and political thuggery; as well as the relationship between illicit drug abuse among youths and violent crimes in Rivers State and indeed in other states in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

In tandem with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The State Government should, through its traditional and social media outlets, inform, educate and communicate with the youths (particularly the unemployed ones), on the dangers of indulging in crimes, and the benefits of venturing into legitimate employment.
2. The State Government should rejuvenate the school-to-land venture, Songhai farm and fish farm, with the aim to improve on its revenue, as well as train unemployed youths who may have taken to crimes for gainful skills.
3. The State Government should also establish craft centers in the three senatorial zones of the state to train unemployed youths different skills (carpentry, pot making, dyeing, sewing, weaving, sculpturing, picture painting, etc.), in order to redirect them from crimes to legitimate earnings.
4. The State Government should help equip the law enforcement agencies for the purpose of arresting and prosecuting youths who indulged in criminal activities.
5. The State Government should deliberately fund the judiciary to independently adjudicate on criminal matters concerning the youths, in addition to providing administrative logistics to its administrative legal system for proper rehabilitation and reintegration of those who have completed their sentences into the society.



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