UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTHS: A CORRELATE TO POLITICAL AND PUBLIC VIOLENT CRIMES IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to investigate Unemployment among Youths: a Correlate to Political and Public Violent Crimes in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Two hypotheses were generated to guide the study. Survey design was adopted for the study. The population adopted for the study was the Niger Delta Region. It covered all unemployed youths in the Region. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 600 unemployed 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, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Choba. Furthermore, the reliability value of 0.82 Correlation Co-efficient was obtained for the study. Statistical methods used for the study were percentage, a frequency table and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Percentage and a frequency table were used to analyze biographical data of unemployed youth respondents while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the tested hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis revealed that relationships exist between unemployment among youths and political crimes as well as public violent crimes in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. In line with the findings, the study recommended, among others, that the state governments in the Niger Delta Region should, through their traditional and social media outlets, inform, educate and communicate with unemployed youths on the dangers of indulging in political and public violent crimes, and why they should have a new lease of life by engaging in self-reliance economic activities in the

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Introduction

Numerous studies argue that youth unemployment and underemployment are threats to the social, economic and political stability of nations (Urdal, 2013). In Nigeria, youth unemployment rate has been staggeringly high in the last ten years compared to the national unemployment rates (Alabi, 2014). There were rising rates in some years, but on the average,

the youth unemployment rate is consistently about three times higher than the national average of population of youths (Alabi, 2012). This is undoubtedly a fact; hence, Nigeria's unemployment rate was recorded at 13.3 per cent in the second quarter of 2016, up from 12.1 per cent in the three months to March, reaching the highest since 2009 (*Trading Economics*, 2016).

Consequently, the foregoing unemployment rate seems the reason for the army of unemployed youths roaming the streets and creeks of Nigeria. Thus, this army of unemployed youths can be referred to as 'endangered species' due to the political and social crimes they may commit, since they are not gainfully employed. In concordance with the above views, Sa 'id Mohd (2015:1) also argues that:

Political thuggery or violent acts caused in the society, especially during political campaigns have caused Nigeria a lot of set back as a results of unnecessary killings and destruction of property worth billions of naira. The act is believed to be executed by youths, through the backing or sponsorship of their masters who are behind the scene.

Additionally, youth unemployment exposes the youths to social crimes, so much so that those who make so much money from committing them hardly disengage themselves from same for legitimate jobs in Nigeria. Thus, taking from the volcanic dangers of youth unemployment in Nigeria, 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 political crimes as well as public violent crimes, the world over.

Unemployment among Youths and Political Crimes

Youth unemployment is a serious menace that can truncate genuine political progress in any country. In fact, unemployment has been identified as a major social, economic and political problem in Nigeria (Njoku, 2015). What is truly worrisome is the fact that unemployment and its associated economic deprivation, frustration and helplessness have lured many youths into political thuggery which is not only a criminal act, but a dangerous misadventure (Njoku, 2015). This is so because most politicians in Nigeria see getting into elective positions as 'do or die'; hence, they use unemployed youths to commit electoral crimes such as snatching of ballot boxes, falsification of voters' cards, killing of electoral officers who are suspected to be in favour of opponents, killing of electoral rivals or opponents as well as collaboration with venal electoral officers to falsify results in favour of their political pay masters. When these politicians come into elective offices through 'political crimes and diabolism' they deify themselves so that their thugs refer to them as 'political gods (fathers to be worshiped) or political goddesses (mothers to be worshiped)' in the polity.

Taking from the above scenario, *Human Rights Watch* (HRW) (2007) reports that one Engineering graduate student in Anambra State told the HRW personnel that he had been paid N 25, 000 (twenty five thousand naira) equivalent of \$ 190 (one hundred and ninety dollars) by the campaign office of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate, Andy Uba, to help organize thugs that chased elected delegates away from polling areas on the day of the PDP gubernatorial primaries in late 2006. In addition to the HRW's (2007) report, it is also obvious that the elite are responsible for arming the youths (specifically the unemployed youths), who are mostly political thugs to manipulate electoral outcomes, kidnap or kill political

opponents, threaten and intimidate the electorate, destroying lives and properties, as electoral processes are disrupted (*The Lawyers Chronicle*, 2017). What is worse is the fact that political elites also mobilize unemployed youths, often along ethnic, religious and party affiliations, as a vital violent arsenal (*The Lawyers Chronicle*, 2017). With regard to the political threats in political struggle for positions, there were selfish mobilizations of thugs by politicians in some immature democracies. Nwankwo and James (2016: 22) posit that this is why,

Assassination has been a major cause of deaths in Nigeria. About 676 persons were assassinated in 35 states in Nigeria and Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Assassinations are often targeted at prominent persons especially politicians and perpetuated by thugs and hooligans. Many people were assassinated during general elections.

Today, the resultant effects of the foregoing on any democracy where rules of electoral process are not obeyed, are usually enormous, in that there will be socio-economic downturn, because the politicians who came into elective offices through the back 'doors and windows' of political thuggery, killing of political opponents, payment of bribe to electoral officers, etc. tend to be a disappointment in government, since it behooves them to satisfy their political compradors, alongside the unemployed youths, who brought them into political power.

Also, in Zimbabwe, a group was formed and caused sleepless nights to the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU – PF) during the February Referendum, the June general elections both of the year 2000 (Fair, 2005; Dado, 2012); idle youths are also easily mobilized for violence and other riotous activities. Similarly, Peter (2013) explains that the unemployed youths have become political thugs and blood – thirsty hoodlums at the disposal of the politicians in Tanzania. The implication here is that no democracy has strived and stabilized in the atmosphere of lawlessness, political thuggery, intimidation, killings, maiming and unabated destruction of lives and property like the type witnessed in the 2001 Zanzibar killings when opposition party members demonstrated on the streets (Peter, 2013). Then, it was not different in most African countries; hence, South Africa, with a youth unemployment rate of 48.2% (Business report, 2013), is sitting on a 'ticking bomb' because the patience of the young people seems to be running out. This is undoubtedly true; hence, the recent demonstration of the youths for the resignation of Jacob Zuma the president of South Africa. With regard to the foregoing literature, it is pertinent to avoid crimes, in order to maintain the body-politic of any nation for its governance and development.

Unemployment among Youths and Public Violent Crimes

Unemployment has affected the youths from a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups both the less educated and well-read among them (Olukayoda, 2016). The resultant effects of the foregoing is explained by Ajaegbu (2012), in his study of "Rising Youth Unemployment and Violent Crime in Nigeria" in which found that there is a rising association between urban youth unemployment and violent crimes such as murder, kidnapping and armed robbery. These findings also confirm the reason why 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). More elaborately, Onah and Kowuosa (2016; 55) 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 include kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, oil bunkering, internet scam, car snatching, murder, cultism, abduction, rape, food and drug adulteration, drug 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 ones could decide to relocate to more secure countries. This is a big set back to the socioeconomic development in Nigeria.

In line with the above findings, unemployed youths have also been linked with xenophobia and its associated public crimes in South Africa (*The Guardian*, 2015), in which it was made clear by Wilkinson in *Guardian Africa*, who reported that in the instance of xenophobia shops are torched, streets are barricaded, tyres are set alight, people are stabbed, shot and burned to death ... in phobia that foreigners are taking jobs from them. Hibbert (2014), in a report of a study by Lawrence, reveals a link between unemployment and crime, and also explains that 60 per cent of the murder victims in 2013 aged between 15 and 24 years in Jamaica were either unemployed or unskilled labourers. In the same vein, it was found that over the last three years, 60 per cent of murder perpetrators were between 15 and 24 years, and were the unemployed in Jamaica (*Jamaica Observer*, 2017). 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 consistently indicate that unemployment increases crime. Apart from this, Out-water, Mgaya, Msemo, Helgesson and Abraham (2015: 3), in a study of *Youth Unemployment, Community Violence Creating Opportunities in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: a Qualitative Study* found that:

All in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) respondents who specifically spoke about "lack of employment" as a key factor in homicide death were included in the analysis. 13 of the 29 IDI respondents who had experienced community violence as a recipient, relative or witness spontaneously spoke of lack of employment. Nine of these respondents were relatives of youth killed by community violence; two were witnesses to community violence; and two had personally experienced community violence.

In like manner, Gagne (2016), in using *Mexico's National Employment Surveys* (NES) concludes that there is a positive and significant correlation between the rate of *ninis* (a term used to describe youths who are neither in school nor active in the workforce) and the number of murders between 2008 and 2013, when violence related to Mexico's drug war reached its peak. In view of the foregoing premise, it is undoubtedly clear that, in most countries of the world, unemployment can drive idle youths into public violent crimes.

Statement of the Problem

In the 1960s, the unemployment rate was very low because of the agricultural revolution of the time. This was so because cash crops such as palm oil/kernels, cocoa and groundnuts were the mainstay of the economy, and moreover over 80% of youths were

engaged in the sector. Thus, the benefit of the agricultural revolution then was that it closed the social space for crimes in Nigeria. As years went by, in 1970s and 1980s, there was oil boom, during which youths and others were trained and employed by oil companies to explore crude oil for export. During the aforementioned years, the military were in charge and there was no question of do-or-die politics as decisions were mostly forced down the throat of Nigerians.

Unfortunately, however, in the 1990s when Federal Government lost its grip of planning and implementation of policies on youth employment, unemployment rate increased such that Nigeria was exposed to an army of unemployed youths. The latter became a major threat, in that there was a rising incidence of crime in Nigeria. The youth unemployment and its cancers (crimes) spread to the Niger Delta Region as well, such that State Governments in the Region engaged the unemployed youths in politics, and few paid civil service employments. But the foregoing attempts only scratched the reduction of the unemployment rate in the Region, thereby leaving many youths still unemployed. In the circumstances of the above situation, unemployment rate became high alongside rise in political and social crimes which became difficult to manage in the Region. Thus, it is based on the above ugly trends that the study investigates *Unemployment among Youths: a Correlate to Political and Public Violent Crimes in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are delineated for the study:

- i. To investigate the relationship between unemployment among youths and political crimes.
- ii. To ascertain the relationship between unemployment among youths and public violent crimes.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses are formulated for the study:

- There is no significant relationship between unemployment among youths and political crimes.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between unemployment among youths and public violent crimes.

Research Methodology

Survey design is used for the study. The population of the study is the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Again, the population covers all unemployed youths in the Region. A sample of 600 respondents is randomly selected for the study. The selection is done through the use of simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Thus, simple random sampling technique is used to select one state in the Niger Delta Region. In doing so, Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Cross River, Ondo, Imo and Abia States were written on papers and wrapped by the researchers. These were then put in a basket for picking. A research assistant was called to mix up the wrapped papers of the nine Niger Delta States for the purpose of picking one state. Through this process, the person called upon picked Rivers State for the study. In addition to this, respondents were independently selected using purposive sampling technique. In achieving this, 600 respondents were selected in Rivers State. The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. It is structured into Section A: biographical data

with multiple questions (items) based on age, sex, religion, types of education acquired and duration of unemployment. Section B is based on the field responses on the relationships between unemployment among youths and political/public violent crimes in the Niger Delta Region, using the modified four-point Likert Attitude Scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) rated four, Agreed (A) rated three, Disagreed (D) rated two and Strongly Disagreed (SD) rated one.

Face validity of the instrument is established by professionals in the Departments of Sociology, Economics and Political and Administrative Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Choba. What is more is the fact that test-retest method of reliability is used to determine the reliability value of 0.82 Correlation 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 a frequency table, as well as Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Percentage and a frequency table are used to analyze biographical data of respondents while Pearson Product Moment Correlation is used to analyze the tested null hypotheses for the study.

Results

Table 1: Biographical Data of Respondents

Biographic Characteristics	Number of Respondents	Percentages
Age		
18 – 29 Years	372	62
30 – 41 Years	228	38
Sex		
Males	300	50
Females	300	50
Religion		
Christian Religion	300	50
Traditional Religion	204	34
Islamic Religion	72	12
Other Religions	24	4
Types of Education Acquired		
Non-formal Education	504	84
Formal Education	96	16
Duration of Unemployment		
1 – 5 Years	324	54
6 – 10 Years	216	36
11 – 15 Years	36	6
16 – 20 Years	24	4

Source: Authors' Field Work, 2018

The results of age prove that 372 respondents, representing 62% were unemployed youths from ages 18 - 29 years, while 228 (38%) were those from ages 30 - 41 years. For sex, the results depict that 300 respondents, representing 50% were unemployed males, while 300 (50%) were unemployed females. In this regard, the respondents were not discriminated based on sex; hence, there is equal representation in the study. For religion, the results indicate that

300 respondents, representing 50% were Christians, 204 (34%) were members of traditional religion, 72 (12%) were Muslims, while 24 (4%) were members of other religions. Furthermore, for types of education acquired, 504 respondents, representing 84% were those who have acquired non-formal education in different craft skills, but had no money to set up their businesses, or being supported by government through donation of tools and machines to engage them in skilled earnings. However, 96 respondents, representing 16% had formal education; sadly they are unable to get paid unemployment with private companies and government-own ministries and agencies in the Niger Delta Region. Finally, for duration of unemployment, the results show that 324 respondents, representing 54% were those whose duration of unemployment falls from 1 - 5 years, 216 (36%) were those whose duration of unemployment falls from 6 - 10 years, 36 (6%) and 24 (4%) of them were those whose durations of unemployment fall from 11 - 15 years, and 16 – 20 years respectively in the Region.

Table 2: Analysis of the Relationship between Unemployment among Youths and Political Crimes

Variables	εχ	εx^2	εχγ	r
	εy	εy^2		
Unemployment among Youths	10978	22234		
			267740	* 0.41
Political Crimes	10989	56454		

Significant at 0.05 level, critical r value = .062, degree of freedom (df) = 598.

The statistical result of analysis as presented in Table 2 reveals that calculated r-value of 0.41 is higher than the critical value of .062 at the significant level of .05 with 598 df. With regard to this result, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between unemployment among youths and political crimes is rejected. This result, therefore, implies that there is a significant relationship between unemployment among youths and political crimes in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Table 3: Analysis of the Relationship between Unemployment among Youths and Public Violent Crimes

Variables $\varepsilon x \\ \varepsilon y$	εχ	$\frac{\varepsilon x^2}{\varepsilon y^2}$	εху	r
	εy			
Unemployment among Youths	10977	22234		
Delitical Michael	40000	FC4F4	267666	* 0.41
Political Violent Crimes	10989	56454		

Significant at 0.05 level, critical r value = .062, df = 598.

The statistical result of analysis as presented in Table 3 reveals that calculated r-value of 0.41 is higher than the critical value of .062 at the significant level of .05 with 598 df. Based on the foregoing result, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between unemployment among youths and public violent crimes is rejected. This result, therefore,

proves that there is significant relationship between unemployment among youths and public violent crimes in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the first hypothesis proves that there is a significant relationship between unemployment among youths and political crimes in the study area. This result is in congruence with *The Lawyers Chronicle* (2017) which explains that it is also obvious that the elite are responsible for arming the youths (specifically the unemployed youths), who are mostly political thugs, to manipulate electoral outcomes, kidnap or kill political opponents, threaten and intimidate the electorate, destroying lives and properties, as electoral processes are disrupted.

Furthermore, the result of the second hypothesis reveals that there is a significant relationship between unemployment among youths and public violent crimes in the study area. This result is in consonance with Ajaegbu (2012), who in his study of "Rising Youth Unemployment and Violent Crime in Nigeria", found that there is a rising association between urban youth unemployment and violent crimes such as murder, kidnapping and armed robbery. In line with the above findings, unemployed youths have also been linked with xenophobia and its associated public crimes in South Africa (The Guardian, 2015), in which it was made clear by Wilkinson in Guardian Africa, who reported that, in the instance of xenophobia shops are torched, streets are barricaded, tyres are set alight, people are stabbed, shot and burned to death in phobia that foreigners are taking jobs from them.

Conclusion

In concordance with the findings of this study, it is crystal clear that Unemployment among Youths is a Correlate to Political and Public Violent Crimes in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Thus, for the purpose of halting the wildfire rise in unemployed youths along with volcanic dangers of political and public violent crimes on youths and others, the study suggests specific researches on the relationship between youth unemployment and rising levels of vices; alongside the relationship between crimes among unemployed youths and political leadership questions in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The State Governments in the Niger Delta Region should, through their traditional and social media outlets, inform, educate and communicate with unemployed youths on the dangers of indulging in political and public violent crimes, and why they should have a new lease of life by engaging in self-reliant economic activities.
- ii. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or non-state actors (NSAs), should organize conferences for political leaders (Politicians), with a view to educating them on the effects of engaging the unemployed youths in political crimes before, during and after elections, and their adverse effects on governance and the socio-economic life of people in the Region.
- iii. The State Governments of the Niger Delta Region should establish farm settlements/craft centres in all senatorial zones of their various states to train the unemployed youths (specifically the illiterate ones) who were not trained before in different farming skills

- and/ or craft skills (carpentry, pot making, dyeing, sewing, weaving, sculpturing, picture painting, soap making, etc) while the unemployed, but formally educated ones, can be trained in high technical skills in computer repairs/ processing, modern farming, chemical production, paper production/ publishing and others, in order to redirect them from political and public violent crimes to legitimate earnings.
- iv. The State Governments in the Niger Delta Region should help equip the law enforcement agencies for the purpose of arresting and prosecuting unemployed youths who indulged in political and public violent crimes, alongside funding the administrative legal system for proper rehabilitation and reintegration of those who were sentenced for committing the foregoing crimes, and have completed their sentences into the society.

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