

LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND CRIMINALITY AMONG YOUTHS IN JOS METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Youth criminality is increasingly becoming a serious and unbearable situation in Nigeria, but little is known about some of the crucial factors responsible for it. In this research, we examined level of education and criminal behaviour among youths in Jos metropolis. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design using simplerandom sampling method to recruit 100 youths who had indulged in various acts of criminality within Jos metropolis. A questionnaire containing measures of demographics (which includes level of education) and Criminal Behavior Scale (CBS) were utilized to collect data. One hypothesis was formulated and tested using One-way Analysis of Variance at $p < .05$ level of significance. Results indicated that criminal behaviours exhibited by the youths in Jos metropolis varies as with their level of educational attainment ($F_{(2,98)} = 10.88$ $p < .05$). Further results on the variations revealed that youths with the least educational qualification (i.e. primary school level) committed higher crimes ($X = 19.41$; $SD = 5.32$) compared to those who have secondary ($X = 15.10$; $SD = 4.83$) and tertiary education ($X = 13.20$; $SD = 4.03$). These results imply that youths criminality varies across their educational level and those with the least education tend to indulge more in crime. Therefore, government and other stakeholders to provide educational and employment opportunities of the youths, especially those with elementary education so as to tame criminality in Jos and Nigeria in general.

Keywords: Level of Education, Criminal Behaviours, Youths.

Introduction

The menace of crime and criminality among the youths has emerged as one of the disturbing phenomena of the 21st century. It has been estimated that over 200,000 crimes are committed almost daily by youths between 15 to 29 years (World Health Organization, WHO, 2020), making youth criminality the fourth leading cause of death among young people (World Health Organization, 2020). The situation has become more precarious and prevalent in unrestrained societies like Nigeria where criminal behaviours among youths have reached unimaginable proportion (Michael, Iyang & Ojeka, 2016). Within the last four

years, rate of youth criminality in the country has become worrisome and disturbing. This is evident in daily news report of various crime such as robbery, pilfering, burglary, car theft, rape, kidnapping, internet scam and other social media crimes (Ibrahim, 2019; The Punch, 2019). Although crime and criminality in Nigeria is pervasive and cut across different age groups, emerging reports have attributed most criminal behaviours to youths (Osawe, 2015; John, Andrew & Alexander, 2020).

According to Walter and White (1988), criminality is a behavioural life pattern of irresponsible, self-indulgent, interpersonally

intrusive, social rule-breaking behaviour. Crime or criminality is a legal term used in defining a certain behaviour with respect to violation of stated norms and laws of a particular society. This could be in form of misdemeanor or felony and may include examples such as rape, murder, aggravated assault, kidnapping, theft, arson amongst others. Presently, Nigeria is experiencing one of the most disturbing moments in crime and criminality index. Since 2018, crime and criminality amongst Nigerian youths have reached a worrisome level as evident through increasing act of robbery, pilfering, burglary, rape, internet scam and kidnapping (Ibrahim, 2019). This has led to unwarranted consequences, including pain, general anxiety, loss of lives and property and a threat to the security, stability and national unity (Ibrahim, 2019). Thus, Nigeria which was known for its peaceful and tranquil atmosphere has suddenly become chaotic and volatile.

In Jos metropolis, the spate of youth criminality has reached an unimaginable proportion. Criminal activities such as kidnapping, rape, gang killing and most recently “operation Shara” have become very common among the youths (Ibrahim, 2022). For instance, the ever-busy Jos-Bauchi road in Jos North local government area have become endangered route for travelers who are usually ransacked, robbed and even killed (Ibrahim, 2022). This is in addition to many other crimes perpetrated amongst Shara boys, including rape, sexual and drug abuse that have become highly prevalent and a serious threat to peace and development of the area.

Surprisingly, despite its increasing prevalence and consequences, little has been done in area of empirical investigation to unravel associated risk, particularly on whether education may play a role in youth criminality in Nigeria. Although previous research have linked several risks factors, such as unemployment, personality differences and socio-demographic characteristics to crime (Adebayo, 2013; Ajaegbu, 2012), the role of educational level in youth criminality is not well researched. Education has been acknowledged as a powerful tool in the development of human capital, including moral and intellectual knowledge. Scholars such as Kyalo and Kyalo (2011) and Fountain (2000) opines that education promotes the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that eventually lead to behaviour change and harmonious coexistence in society. It is through the transformation of personal characteristics that enable children and youth to curb overt and structural conflicts and violence that ensure conducive and crime-free society. Thus, it is expected that, differences in educational attainment among the youths would impact differentially, their sense of morality, attitudes and sense of reasoning that ultimately influence criminality in the society.

More specifically, disparities in educational attainment has been reported to be among the causes of youths' exclusion from the labour market, which increases frustration and subsequent indulgence in violence and criminality. According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD], 2015), low educational qualifications has remained a serious threat

to the peace and stability in many countries as it declines employment opportunities for the youths, making them vulnerable to crime. Literature also indicates that the education acquired by individuals plays a big role in shaping their perceptions regarding their interaction with the world and further instilling values of citizenship, responsibility and Cooperation (Senga & Kiilu, 2022). A survey carried out in the United States of America (USA) and Britain to establish the level of conflict among the youth indicated an escalating rates of crime. In the USA for example, 188,000 criminal cases reported among youths were linked to low level of educational attainment (Nourollah, Fatemeh & Farhad, 2015). Similarly, Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza. (2002); Anderson (2012) research findings have linked criminal behaviours such as theft to educational level, with higher educational levels being associated with less crime. In contrast, a survey of 1,357 adults in the West Bank and Gaza found that the better-educated groups who included secondary school graduates and professionals supported terrorism activities against Israeli citizens compared to labourers and illiterate communities (Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2001; cited in Senga & Kiilu, 2022).

Therefore, given that most criminal activities in Nigeria and Jos in particular are perpetrated by youths (Ibrahim, 2022) whose educational levels may differ, and considering some inconsistent findings on the role of educational level on criminality, further research is needed, especially in this study area. Consequently, our main objective was to examine the disparity in criminal

behaviours among youths in Jos metropolis, based on their educational levels. This study was guided by one research hypothesis, which stated whether there would be any significant differences in criminal behaviours among youths in Jos based on their level of education.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present research was a cross-sectional survey conducted among youths in Jos metropolis. Jos metropolis comprised three local government areas, namely; Jos North, Jos South and Jos East respectively. Participants comprised 100 youths aged 17-53, who reported indulgence in criminality and also met other criteria for inclusion. Further analysis of their demographic information revealed that a total of 51 (51%) were Muslim, while 49 (49.0%) were Christians. Majority 39 (39%) were sampled from Jos North, 31 (31.0%) from Jos South, while 30 (30.0%) were recruited from Jos East local government area. Majority of the youths 56 (56.0%) recruited were from polygamous family, while about 61 (61%) are currently unemployed. Information on participants' level of education indicated that a total of 28 (28%) had primary education, 48 (48%) had education up to secondary school level, while 24 (24%) had tertiary educational qualification.

Participants were sampled at six different locations in the three local government areas where criminality has been on the increase. These six locations were randomly picked from several other locations that have been a hub of criminality in the metropolis.

Participants who met inclusion criteria were then selected from the locations after obtaining their consent. Data collection was conducted in adherence with the ethical provisions of Helsinki, which guaranteed voluntariness, confidentiality and anonymous data gathering to the respondents.

A total of 120 questionnaires were administered to eligible participants across the six randomly selected locations in the three local governments. At each location, the researchers approached eligible and available participants, informed them about the study and sought their consent for participation. Respondents who consented to participate in the research were then issued a questionnaire that contained measures of demographic characteristics and criminality. The first section on demographic characteristics also assessed the main independent variable of the study, as it required participants to indicate their level of education. All participants took approximately 5 minutes to personally respond to the questionnaire which was compiled in simple and straightforward English. In order to enhance clarity and validity of data collection, the researchers were always on ground to provide clarification whenever necessary. Although 120 questionnaires were administered, only 100 returned with usable data, representing 83.3% return rate.

Measures

Level of education: Participants' level of education was assessed in the first section of the questionnaire, which was on

demographic characteristics. The first item of the section requested them to indicate their educational level, whether they had primary, secondary or post-secondary qualification.

Criminality: Youths' criminal behaviour was measured using the Crime and Violence Scale (CVS) developed by (Conrad, Barth, Riley, Conrad, et al. 2010). This scales measures the types of drug-related, property, and interpersonal crimes that respondent has committed in the past year. The CVS also includes serious crimes such as homicide and rape (White 2005). The CVS consists of four conceptually distinct subscales with a total of 31 dichotomous items. Its subscales are the: 12 item General Conflict Tactic Scale (GCTS), 7-item Property Crime Scale (PCS), 7-item Interpersonal Crime Scale (ICS), and the 5-item Drug Crime Scale (DCS). The items for the GCTS reads: "During the past 12 months, have you done the following things?" Response format is Yes/No (coded: no=0, yes=1). The items for the other scales reads: "During the past 12 months, how many times have you committed a particular crime as indicated" While the response set is in "times", it is dichotomized to as 0 for none and 1 for one or more times for this scale. In the present research, we computed the total scores for all the subscales to obtain a composite scores of criminality.

The Crime and Violence scale has been widely used among youths and found to be a good measure of criminal behaviour, with acceptable psychometric properties (Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 (Conrad, Barth, Riley, Conrad, et al. 2010). In the present study, we obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.78, which makes is acceptable, usable and

suitable for gathering data on youths' criminality in the study area.

significant difference in criminality among the youths based on their level of education.

Data Analysis

The research hypotheses were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-Version 23). Specifically, we made use of simple percentages to analyse demographic data, while One-Way analysis of Variance was used to determine the

Results

The first hypothesis of the study stated that there is a significant difference in criminal behaviour manifested by youths in Jos metropolis based on their level of education. This hypothesis is tested and result is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Summary of a One-way Analysis of Variance Showing Significant Difference in Criminal Behaviour by Youths in Jos Metropolis based on their Level of Education.

Dependent	Source	SS	MS	df	F-ratio	P
	Between groups	497.563	248.78	2		
Youth Criminality	Within groups	2126.271	22.86	98	10.88	<.05
	Total	2623.833		100		

As shown in Table 1, there is significant difference in criminal behaviour exhibited by the youths in Jos metropolis due their level of educational attainment ($F_{(2,98)} = 10.88$ $p < .05$). However, in order to determine the level of

education that has greater association with criminality, the Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis was used as presented in Table 2

Table 2: LSD Summary table showing the Mean differences in Criminality based on Youth's Educational Level

Variable	1	2	3	Mean	SD	N
Primary	-			19.41	5.32	28
Secondary	.4.31*	-		15.10	4.83	48
Tertiary	6.20*	1.89	-	13.20	4.03	24

As shown in Table 2, there is a significant difference in criminal behaviour exhibited by the youths across their levels of educational attainment. Specifically, criminality mean scores for youths who have primary educational level is significantly higher ($\bar{X}=19.41$; $SD= 5.32$) compared to those who have secondary school ($\bar{X}= 15.10$; $SD= 4.83$) and tertiary education ($\bar{X}=13.20$; $SD= 4.03$). This result means that youths with low education (primary) reported higher indulgence in criminality than those who had advanced education. Also looking at the mean differences, it can be observed that there is a significant mean difference on criminality between youths with primary and secondary educational levels ($MD=4.31$; $p<.05^*$) as well as primary and tertiary educational levels ($MD=6.20$; $p<.05^*$), while the mean difference between secondary and tertiary educational level is insignificant ($MD=1.89$; $p>.05$). In all, youths' indulgence in criminal behaviour in Jos metropolis varies across their level of educational attainment and the most vulnerable of youths with primary education.

Discussion

The problem of criminality among youths has become very common and devastating. In spite of continuous research to identify risks and ameliorate the problem, youths criminal behaviour has continued to rise, especially in Nigeria. Therefore, in response to identified research gaps and inconsistent findings, we examined whether educational levels could explain variations in criminal behaviours exhibited by youths in Jos metropolis. This research was guided by one hypothesis, which examined whether the reported criminality among the youths varies across

their level of educational attainment. One-way analysis of variance was utilized to test the research hypothesis.

Research findings confirmed the hypothesis that criminal behaviours exhibited by the youths significantly varies across their level of education. In other words, educational attainment of the youths related significantly with their level of education. More specifically, youths with the lowest educational level (.i.e. primary education) committed the highest level of criminal activities, followed by those with secondary school education. However, youths with post-secondary education were the least to indulge in criminality in the metropolis. This result has shown that there are disparities in criminality among the youths, and this is due to their level of education. This support the research findings of Nourollah, Fatemeh and Farhad (2015), which linked youths' criminality with low educational attainment. According to these researchers, more than 188,000 criminal cases reported among US youths were linked to low level of educational attainment. Relating this with the views of Kyalo and Kyalo (2011), education provides and promotes the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and values that transform an individual and influence his peaceful co-existence in the society. It is through such changes that a sense of sound judgement and morality is developed, which tend to discourage crime. Therefore, lack or little educational attainment is likely to deprive youths in this category of such resources, making them more vulnerable to crime.

Similarly, the current finding aligns with

Anderson (2012) results which indicated that most criminal behaviours are mostly linked with youths with lower educational levels. Our research finding is however at variance with a survey of 1,357 adults in the West Bank and Gaza which found that the better-educated groups who included secondary school graduates and professionals supported terrorism activities against Israeli citizens compared to labourers and illiterate communities (Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2001; cited in Senga & Kiilu, 2022). In all, this research has shown that when young people progressively acquire western education, the possibility of them indulging in criminal behaviours is diminished.

In conclusion, our research has clearly indicated that educational level or qualification of the youths in Jos has significant implication for the crime in the metropolis. Youths who lack adequate formal education are also more likely to have deficiency in understanding the consequences of indulging in crime and therefore tend to commit more crime. On the other hand, those with advanced education may acquire more positive knowledge and attitudes against indulging in criminal activities. It is also possible that, as a result of little education, youths with lower level of education may have limited employment opportunities which could further increase their frustration tendency to involve in crime. Based on this, our study recommends that more educational opportunities should be created and made free for youths to facilitate academic and moral training that ameliorates both criminal intentions and behaviours. The paper recommends also that government and

other stakeholders should provide employment opportunities for the youths, especially among those with lower educational qualifications, so as to discourage their involvement in crime within Jos and beyond.

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