Assessing the relationship between employment opportunities and criminal tendencies of educated youth

Bhargavi Deshpande\textsuperscript{a} \textsuperscript{e} | Sarita Goswami\textsuperscript{b} | Sushim Shukla\textsuperscript{c}

\textsuperscript{a}ATLAS SkillTech University, Mumbai, India, Assistant Professor, School of Design & Innovation.
\textsuperscript{b}IIMT University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India, Professor, College of Education.
\textsuperscript{c}Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, India, Associate Professor, Department of Law.

Abstract This research examines the hypothesis that criminal activity has increased behavior among knowledgeable young people in Lagos state, Nigeria, in response to the unequal employment opportunities in the public sector. The tool that was used for the purpose of data collection was the questionnaire. Through the use of techniques including simple random sampling and sophisticated sampling, 1900 individuals overall and four geographical regions were selected accordingly. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences analyzed the acquired data. According to the study, uneven access to work prospects is a key factor contributing to the rise in juvenile delinquency in Lagos. The study's findings indicate that the disparity in hiring practices for open positions in the broader public sector is the cause of the rise in criminal activity among educated Nigerians in Lagos. Consequently, the report recommends that the hiring process in various government entities follows legal procedures and that a supportive business climate that promotes small and medium-sized firms be created.

Keywords: job opportunity, criminal behavior, unemployment, educated youth, education

1. Introduction

The rates of property crime and violent crime normally rise with age throughout adolescence, reach their highest point during the latter years of teenage hood, and then begin to fall after that point. This overarching trend was first noticed by Quetelet in the late 18th century and continues to be consistent with both the official arrest rates and the self-reported offense rates today (Steffensmeier et al 2020). The age–crime characteristic is one of the correlations in criminology that has received the most attention and research. Even though it has received less attention, the connection between schooling and criminal behavior is just as intriguing. More than two thirds of the males who were arrested in the year 1993 had not completed their high school education. Self-reporting and arrest statistics show striking disparities across educational categories regarding rates of both property crime and violent crime (Weaver et al 2019).

Adolescence is a time when delinquent conduct is frequent, and a lot of it includes infractions like small theft and underage drinking. Which authorities may easily ignore and whose long-term impact is minimal. But teenagers are also engaged in significant delinquency, which may have unfavorable effects. Society's response to juvenile misbehavior might differ and lean more toward rehabilitation or punishment (Carter 2019). In the late 1990s, for example, moral panics about teenagers acting as violent super predators and tough-on-crime measures were prevalent. Educational institutions and companies established an emphasis on handling risks and a zero-tolerance stance toward law-violating conduct during this time, paralleling the punitive change in criminal justice policy (Hullenaar 2021).

When there is a higher level of employment, there is a proportionate reduction in the availability of acceptable targets since individuals have fewer opportunities to snip. The leading cause of a rise in crime is unemployment, especially long-term unemployment that lasts for an extended period across an economy. There will be fewer chances for legitimate work if the unemployment rate rises, and there will be more criminal activity since jobless individuals find it more affordable to engage in illicit activities. The eradication of human pleasure in countless spaces and the widespread, long-term impact it has on society is both caused by unemployment (Kassem et al 2019).

In addition, several studies have shown a connection between unemployment, criminal activity, and other forms of social dysfunction in Nigeria and other nations. For instance, researchers discovered a connection between the overall percentage of unemployment and the number of possibilities and motivations for criminal activity. Additionally, the study found that a higher unemployment rate is positively correlated with an increase in property offenses (Lee 2018). The paper (Javdani 2019) aims to (a) advance by conducting a systematic review of social science literature with a focus on peer-
reviewed studies about education, psychology, and juvenile justice; (b) develop an approach for evaluating the efficiency of schools law enforcement training courses; and (c) develop a framework for evaluating the performance of school police departments.

The study Cameron et al (2018) provides a comprehensive evaluation of quantitative research on the same subject. The information that has been accumulated as a consequence of these quantitative investigations being carried out in a variety of nations is dispersed and incomplete. To provide evidence-based recommendations to educate policymakers, services, and future research, reviews and synthesis of the previously conducted research are required.

Based on earlier studies in Iran, the study examines the link between crime and unemployment. It compiles findings from 20 researches on the connection between unemployment and crime using meta-analysis methods. It has been utilized to explain the diversity in study results to employ categorized studies and contextual variables in the shape of moderators. In times before and after 2006, the moderator of various periods examined the impact of unemployment on crime (Mir Mohamad Tabar and Noghani 2019). The study Britto (2022) makes use of in-depth individual-level data that links employment paths, criminal histories, and welfare registries for the whole population of male workers in Brazil to examine the effects of job loss on crime and the mitigating function of unemployment benefits. Workers laid off in large numbers have a 23% higher chance of committing a crime on average than their sons who live with them. The study estimates how a worker’s lack of employment will affect criminal behavior. The study (Bennett and Ouazad 2020) constructs each employee’s history of job segregation, unemployment, and criminality using a matched employer-employee continuous data set on joblessness, criminal activity, and taxes for all citizens of Denmark. The article’s main concern is displaced workers: high-ranking employees who get laid off. The paper (Hazra 2020) proposed a linear regression model with panel-corrected standard errors is used since there is evidence of both heteroscedasticity and cross-sectional dependency. According to the finding of the study Parida (2023), the government of Punjab should take measures to reduce levels of unemployment and population density while also working to increase the number of remittances that are invested in industrialization and social infrastructure. This would help bring about a drop in criminal activity.

The study (Jawadi 2021) shows a strong relationship between unemployment and crime in a four-variable time-varying VAR framework, taking into account both violent and non-violent crimes through the identification of four shocks: joblessness and output, migration anxiety, and crime shocks. According to the paper Wajim (2020), a lack of economic possibilities encourages young people to participate in racial strife and illegal acts like theft and armed robbery. The research suggests that the government increase employment possibilities and industries so that young unemployed may also benefit and help satisfy their immediate requirements. The paper significantly reduces ethnic strife and youth unemployment-related criminal activity.

The rest of the essay is available here, the suggested approach is explained in Section 2, the results are presented in Section 3, discussion is discussed in section 4 and the paper is concluded in Section 5.

2. Materials and Methods

In this section, we discuss in detail about assessing the relationship between employment opportunities and criminal tendencies of educated youth. For educated adolescents, in particular, a lack of work prospects may cause dissatisfaction and despair. When people put in the time and effort to get an education but have trouble finding a job that suits them, it may make them feel despondent. Some people may turn to criminal activity to escape this dissatisfaction to satisfy their social or financial requirements.

Even with education, there may still be a gap between the abilities that educated young possess and what the labor market requires. Despite holding a degree, there may be underemployment or unemployment if there is a large skills mismatch. This mismatch’s frustration might lead to emotions of discontent and desperation, which could increase the likelihood of being involved in illegal activities.

2.1. Study area

Lagos State is located in the southwest of Nigeria. It had boundaries with the Ogun state in the northeast and east and the west with the People's Democratic Republic of Benin. Lagos has a total area of 3,577 square kilometers, of which lagoons and creeks occupy 787 square kilometers. From an administrative standpoint, it is divided into five divisions comprising 20 Local Government Areas. The commercial center of Nigeria has traditionally been regarded as the state of Lagos. This study focused on four areas of Lagos where youth unemployment and criminal activities are prevalent. The study’s participant audience for this study consists of all educated teenagers between the ages of 25 and above who are unemployed (or underemployed) and who reside in the specified areas.

2.2. Sampling technique

With intention, a straightforward random sampling approach was adopted. Using the sample that was the intended method, four Lagos areas where juvenile criminality has been extensively publicized were selected. In comparison, 1,019
individuals were chosen from the chosen locations using simple sampling. The characteristics used include age, educational level, and employment status.

2.3. Data collection

Primary as well as secondary sources of data were used in the investigation. A cross-sectional survey study approach served as the main source. The study tool utilized to gather data submitted by the people who participated was a structured questionnaire. Three experienced research assistants helped with the questionnaire administration. The additional sources include earlier scholarly work, statutes and legal documents, news articles, and internet resources. The difficulties of unemployment, uneven work prospects, and the pervasiveness of crime in Nigerian communities were clearly understood by evaluating these sources.

2.4. Data analysis

This study’s approach to data analysis focused on a combination of descriptive and inferential techniques. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was implemented to test how much impact an uncorrelated variable has on an associated variable, and simple percentages, as well as frequency measurements, were used to analyze the demographic data of the people who participated and responses relating to the goal of the study.

2.5. Ethical Consideration

It has become essential for social scientists to respect ethical principles while doing research. Research ethics consequently set boundaries for this study. As a result, participation in this study was optional. The permission of the respondents was requested, and they were all given sufficient information regarding participating in the research as well as the objective(s) of the investigation. These enabled students to comprehend the consequences of their involvement and their freedom to leave the research if they choose.

Additionally, the information’s confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. The questionnaire that was employed was not designed in any way to include questions that may identify the identities of the people who responded or be able to be traced to any of them. Additionally, the researcher had no access to the respondents’ personal information. As a result, all data gathered was anonymous. Additionally, respondents received a promise that the information they supplied would be kept private and only be utilized for this research project and, maybe, it’s publishing.

3. Results

The outcomes of the main data acquired via the used questionnaires are presented and analyzed in this part. One thousand nine hundred questionnaires were distributed, and 1792 were returned and filled out. The 1792 returned surveys were the focus of the study and debate. The even distribution of respondents’ demographics is shown in Table 1. Figure 1 shows the respondents’ perceptions of creating employment in the country distributed. It is clear that 38% of responders were female, and 62% were men. Additionally, 24% of respondents were between the ages of 26 and 30, 38% were between the ages of 31 and 35, and 21% were between the ages of 36 and 40. This implies that most responders were between the ages of 31 and 35.

Table 1 Results of respondents’ perception of job creation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, 56% of people were widows or widowers, and 50% were single. Additionally, 32% had a university bachelor’s or higher degree. Additionally, 36% of people were underemployed, and 68% were jobless. These findings show that single, educated, and jobless respondents comprised most of the sample. Table 2 displays respondents’ perceptions on the degree of employment creation in the government sector (at the level of the federal, state, and municipal governments). Figure 2 shows the allocation of participants’ perceptions of equal opportunity in the civil service employment procedure. The findings suggest that 38% of respondents believed that generating jobs in public service was moderate, while 16% and 21% said it was very high and high, respectively. Meanwhile, 19% and 6% believed it was low or very low. These findings indicate that the vast majority of those polled believed the degree of job creation in the civil service was around average. In other words, it is neither high nor low.
The respondents’ impressions of equal opportunity throughout the recruiting process for the Nigerian public service are shown in Table 2. According to the data, 22% of respondents are unsure, 43% of individuals completely disagree, and 38% of individuals are somewhat skeptical that there are no equal opportunities in the hiring process. According to the results, most respondents said that Lagos State’s competent Nigerians did not face an equal opportunity to compete for available posts in government-affiliated organizations (civil service) at all levels. Figure 3 depicts the respondents’ perceptions on the major factors contributing to their unemployment and insufficient employment. Table 3 displays the replies provided by respondents to the query on the main cause of their unemployment and underemployment. The results showed that 23% of respondents believed that the lack of appropriate jobs in the nation's economy was a major factor, 38% said that unequal recruitment opportunities in the civil service were to blame, 10% that the poor economic situation and unfavorable business environment were to blame, 4% that poor policy formulation and execution were to blame, and 8% and 17% that inadequate government agencies independence and the lack of private enterprises in the country were to blame.
Figure 3 Respondents’ perceptions on the major factors contributing to their unemployment and insufficient employment.

Table 3 Results of Joblessness and Underemployment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This implies that many respondents thought that uneven job opportunities in public service were a contributing factor. The respondents’ perceptions of the degree of juvenile crime in Lagos City are shown in Table 4. Figure 4 shows the respondents’ views on the amount of youth crime in Lagos City. Results indicated that all respondents considered that juvenile crime in Lagos was low or very low, whereas 35% and 41% thought it was very high and high, respectively, while 24% thought it was moderate. This suggests that a higher proportion of respondents thought Lagos City had a high rate of juvenile crime. In answer to the inquiry of whether the rise in youth crime in Lagos is a result of uneven job possibilities throughout the hiring process, the respondents’ views are shown in Table 5. Figure 5 depicts the respondents’ views on the rise in youth crime as a reaction to unequal chances for employment in the civil service. It can be seen that 19% additionally disagree or agree. In comparison, 38% and 24% partially agree and strongly agree that the rise in youth crime in Nigeria’s Lagos State was a consequence of or reaction to the inequitable possibilities for employment in the civil service. 6% and 13% of respondents completely disagree and slightly disapprove of this statement, respectively.

Figure 4 Respondents’ Views on the Amount of Youth Crime in Lagos City.
Table 4 Results of perception of the level of youth criminality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate jobs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal recruitment opportunity</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor economic conditions and a conducive business environment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor policy and implementation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate government empowerment program</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate private establishments</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Results of unequal job opportunities in Civil Service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5 Respondents’ views on the rise in youth crime as a reaction to unequal chances for employment in the civil service.

4. Discussion

The goal of the current research was to determine if the spike in young crime in Lagos State, Nigeria is a reaction to the uneven job prospects in the country’s public service recruiting process at all levels. The majority of respondents, according to the data in Table 1, believed that the civil service was creating modest amounts of new jobs. This implies that some Lagos residents believed that the government had contributed to creating certain employees in the public sector. However, the widespread perception is that the hiring procedure for these positions is discriminatory. That is, qualified Nigerians do not have an equal chance to apply for these positions. However, there are a variety of viewpoints among the respondents about the main cause of their unemployment (and underemployment). However, as shown in Table 4, most respondents believed that uneven job opportunities in the public sector were a significant influence.

In addition, respondents believed that Lagos’s juvenile crime rate was high (Table 5). The degree of unemployment seen in recent years may have influenced this impression. Aside from that, salutations. Additionally, many respondents blamed this on the uneven career possibilities in the public sector. In essence, the findings revealed that some young educated Nigerians in the city of the port of Lagos widely believe that there is a disadvantageous environment for them to compete for available positions in the government workforce, which is believed to be one of the most likely places for an average Nigerian to find employment. It is accepted that this uneven opportunity reduced their prospects of landing a job or made it challenging for individuals to get work. Many of them continued to be jobless (or underemployed) as a consequence. Many people seem to have been compelled to take up menial and humiliating tasks (the underemployed) to meet their daily necessities, while others (the jobless) are dependent on their family members.

5. Conclusions

The Nigerian government has diligently addressed poverty and unemployment as key socioeconomic issues for decades. These issues have been addressed in a number of employment creation and empowerment projects. In spite of this, statistics from recent data indicate that a higher percentage of Nigerians are now living in poverty and that most young, trained Nigerians are unemployed or working part-time. Although it is true that there are not enough qualified Nigerians to
fill all the open positions in the public sector, analysts have asserted that corruption among those in positions of authority (government) is a major contributing factor to the rise in unemployment (and poverty) in Nigerian states. These individuals use their positions to favor those who support them by giving their friends, family, and other acquaintances access to employment and perks for advancement that are meant for all eligible Nigerians. Therefore, in a culture where success is determined by work status, educated Nigerians who are without a link to or affiliation with any political organization that cannot get a fulfilling job will find it extremely challenging to survive. This group shares neighborhoods with people who, through associations or other means, have landed jobs with respectable pay that enable them to support their families, send their children to school, purchase automobiles, and meet other needs. These people typically share the same educational background as them or were once their classmates.

**Ethical considerations**

Not applicable.

**Declaration of interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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**References**


