THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

ISSN: 0331-4111
E-ISSN: 2736-075X
Volume 24, No. 2 (November, 2026)
DOI: 10.36108/NJSA/6202.42.0290

Youth Unemployment and Crime Rates in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria

Jacob E. Adaah, Musa Abdullahi, Patricia Taiwo and Grace Egwu
Department of Sociology, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract
Youth unemployment and its attendant consequence of increased crime rates have consistently remained a global and scholarly concern. The study examines the incidence of youth unemployment and crime rates in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja. Its specifically investigated the prevalence of unemployment, the extent of youth involvement in crime and commonly perpetrated crimes in the study area. Descriptive survey design involving a mixed-methods approach was adopted by administering questionnaire on 376 youth and key informant interview with 10 community leaders and 10 police officers. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the qualitative data was content analyzed. Majority of the respondent (67.3%) are males, nearly half (44.9%) are single and a quarter are aged 18-31. While 44.7% of the youth reported never been employed, 60.4% reported been currently unemployed. All the youth (100%) attested to youth involvement in crime, while 62.8% reported a high extent of youth involvement. The types of crimes reported by a large majority of youth due to unemployment include cybercrime (97.9%), stealing/theft (96%), burglary and house breaking (94.1%), thuggery (93.9%), robbery (93.1%), alcohol, drugs and substance abuse (90%), kidnapping and abduction (85.1%) etc. The study concludes that high youth unemployment contributes to the upsurge in crime rates in the study area and recommends a wholistic approach that promotes development of infrastructures for informal, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors, as well as empowerment programmes, entrepreneurship, revision of educational system, provision of credits and loans and career guidance to tackle youth unemployment in order to mitigate crime rates.

Keywords*:* Crime prevalence, unemployment rate, incidence of youth criminality

Introduction

Crime has been an enduring phenomenon throughout human history and remains an inevitable aspect of every society. Sociologists such as Durkheim and

Moynihan (1998) view crime as a necessary evil that plays a role in maintaining the regular functioning of society. Nonetheless, crime continues to threaten the socio-economic and political wellbeing of individuals and disrupt societal peace and security. Across different societies, the nature, frequency, and intensity of crime vary across groups, spaces, and times (Havi, 2014). One common trend, however, is the consistent relationship between crime and age. Criminological research has long established that criminal behaviour is more prevalent among young people (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983). Selim and Kizilgol (2017) note that criminal activities typically peak during the late teenage years and decline as individuals grow older.

Globally, there is rising concern that the proportion of crimes committed by young people is increasing both in frequency and severity. A plausible explanation often advanced for this trend is the prevalence of youth unemployment. Young people are more likely to be unemployed than adults (Farrall, Gray, & Mike Jones, 2020), and unemployment tends to lower the opportunity cost of engaging in criminal acts (UNODC, 2016; United Nations, 2017). Economically, unemployment leads to income loss, frustration, and anger, which may escalate into violent or deviant behaviour (Steffensmeier, Lu, & Na, 2020). Consequently, unemployment not only provides idle time but also a psychological trigger that may push youths toward criminal activities. Thus, understanding the link between youth unemployment and crime has become both a theoretical and public policy necessity.

Youth crime is now recognized as a global challenge that transcends national and continental boundaries. The problem is particularly severe in developing regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where social instability, economic deprivation, and political unrest are prevalent (Hartjen, 2008; ILO, 2020). In these regions, weak economies fail to provide adequate employment and livelihood opportunities, leaving large segments of the youthful population idle and vulnerable to criminal tendencies.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, typifies this crisis. The country's population is largely youthful, with high unemployment and underemployment rates (Abatta, 2023; Onuba, 2019). Consequently, youth-related crimes have become a persistent feature of Nigerian society. Daily reports of armed robbery, kidnapping, cultism, cybercrime, vandalism, drug abuse, and other violent offenses dominate media discourse and highlight the extent of the menace. The situation reflects a multidimensional security, socio-economic, and political problem. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to empirically investigate the influence of youth unemployment on crime rates, focusing on Gwagwalada Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Globally and nationally, the challenge of youth unemployment has gained significant attention because of its far-reaching implications for peace, security, and sustainable development. High youth unemployment rates often correlate with increased crime levels, a trend visible across many parts of Africa, including Nigeria. While national statistics on youth unemployment and crime abound, there remains a dearth of localized empirical studies that explore this

relationship at the community or council level. Specifically, there is limited empirical evidence examining how youth unemployment relates to crime rates in Gwagwalada Area Council. This study therefore seeks to fill that gap and answer the critical question: *What is the relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates in Gwagwalada?*

Gwagwalada, described by Balogun (2001) as the industrial hub of the FCT, has witnessed rapid urbanization, socio-economic transformation, and population growth in recent years. Such urban expansion often brings both opportunities and challenges, one of which is the rise in criminal activities. The area provides an ideal environment for crime due to its mixed population, rapid commercialization, and high level of social interaction. It hosts major institutions such as the University of Abuja and the FCT College of Education, as well as busy markets and transport hubs like Anagada Animal Market, Zuba Fruit Market, Wazobia Park, and Zuba Park. These centres attract large numbers of people, especially youths seeking economic opportunities. However, the limited job availability in the area leads to widespread unemployment, underemployment, and idleness conditions that foster criminal behaviour.

Moreover, the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Gwagwalada, including poverty, nightlife, and entertainment spots, contribute to its reputation as a hotspot for youth crime. Studies have shown that neighbourhood characteristics such as economic deprivation, population heterogeneity, and social disorganization are strong predictors of crime rates (Adebayo, 2013; Ajimotokin, Haskins & Wade, 2015; Ebu, 2020; Kennedy, Caplan & Piza, 2015; Kochel, Burrus & Weisburd, 2015; Paul, 2018). These factors align closely with Gwagwalada's urban profile. The daily influx of people in search of opportunities combined with widespread unemployment has created an environment where youth crime is not only prevalent but also increasing in complexity and intensity.

Observations and media reports confirm that incidents of theft, cult clashes, assaults, and cybercrimes involving youths occur almost daily within the area. The frequency of such occurrences has generated public anxiety and intensified the demand for research-based interventions. Hence, this study becomes timely and necessary, as it aims to provide empirical evidence on how youth unemployment influences crime rates in Gwagwalada. Understanding this relationship is crucial for developing targeted policies and programs that can mitigate youth crime and promote socio-economic stability within the Federal Capital Territory and beyond.

The study emerges from the growing realization that youth unemployment is not merely an economic problem but a security and developmental issue. The persistent rise in youth-related crimes in Gwagwalada underscores the urgent need to empirically examine how unemployment fuels criminal behaviour among youths. By exploring this relationship, the research seeks to contribute to the formulation of effective policy strategies that address both unemployment and youth crime as interrelated social challenges in Nigeria.

Theoretical Frameworks

The study anchored its theoretical analysis on three theories and adopted general strain theory as the most suitable for the study.

1. Social Disorganization Theory

Social Disorganization Theory, one of the foundational theories of crime and delinquency, provides an ecological explanation for the variations of crime across neighbourhoods and time. Developed by Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay in their landmark study Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas (1942), the theory emerged from the Chicago School of Criminology, which focused on understanding the relationship between social environment and criminal behaviour. The central premise is that crime is not randomly distributed but is concentrated in certain neighbourhoods characterized by poverty, population mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity (Akers, 2008; Kubrin, 2007).

According to Shaw and McKay, crime rates are higher in areas undergoing rapid industrialization, urbanization, and social change. Such environments experience the breakdown of traditional institutions family, schools, and community organizations that normally regulate behaviour. This breakdown leads to a weakening of social cohesion and informal social control, producing what they termed "social disorganization." In socially disorganized neighbourhoods, residents are unable to collectively maintain order or enforce norms, creating fertile ground for delinquency and criminal activity.

The theory emphasizes that structural and environmental conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and residential instability erode community stability. When people frequently move in and out of neighbourhoods or lack common values, social networks weaken, and the ability to exert informal control diminishes (Wickert, 2019). Consequently, social disorganization generates conditions that foster criminal behaviour by undermining shared norms and promoting individual survival strategies. Shaw and McKay's empirical research revealed that even when immigrant populations moved to new areas, crime remained high in certain neighbourhoods, suggesting that the neighbourhood's conditions not the residents' backgrounds were key determinants of crime.

In essence, the Social Disorganization Theory links high crime rates to the failure of social institutions and the absence of communal bonds. It implies that to control crime, societies must strengthen social structures, reduce poverty and unemployment, and enhance community organization and participation.

2. General Strain Theory

General Strain Theory (GST), proposed by Robert Agnew (1992), builds upon earlier classical strain theories by Merton (1938), Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1960). While traditional strain theories focused on the disjunction between societal goals and legitimate means to achieve them, Agnew's revision expanded the concept to include a broader range of negative experiences and social relationships that produce strain. His theory explains crime as an outcome

of emotional responses to strain or stress that individuals experience in their daily lives.

Agnew (1992) defines strain as a product of negative relationships with others, where individuals feel unjustly treated, deprived, or blocked from achieving valued goals. He distinguishes between objective strains (events or conditions disliked by most members of a group) and subjective strains (events perceived as negative by specific individuals). Both types of strain contribute to feelings of frustration, anger, and resentment, which may push individuals toward deviant or criminal behaviour as a coping mechanism.

The theory identifies three major types of strain:

1. Strain resulting when individuals are prevented from achieving positively valued goals (e.g., educational success, employment).
2. Strain caused by the removal or loss of positively valued stimuli (e.g., loss of a job or loved one).
3. Strain generated when individuals are exposed to or threatened with negative stimuli (e.g., abuse, discrimination, or harsh treatment).

Agnew further explains that individuals may respond to strain through both legitimate coping strategies (such as problem-solving, emotional regulation, or seeking support) or illegitimate coping strategies (such as crime or delinquency). The likelihood of choosing criminal coping increases when strain is perceived as unjust, severe, and coupled with low social control and limited legitimate opportunities.

General Strain Theory is significant because it integrates emotional and psychological dimensions into the understanding of crime. It recognizes that crime can be an adaptive response to stressful life experiences and that preventing crime requires addressing sources of strain, such as unemployment, inequality, and social exclusion. In this context, the theory provides valuable insights into youth criminality, as young people often experience intense strains due to limited opportunities, peer pressure, and social expectations.

3. Differential Association Theory

Differential Association Theory, developed by Edwin H. Sutherland in *Principles of Criminology* (1924–1947), is one of the most influential sociological explanations of criminal behaviour. Sutherland argued that crime is a learned behaviour, not an inherited trait or the result of biological abnormalities. The theory emphasizes that individuals learn criminal values, motives, and techniques through interactions with others, particularly within intimate personal groups such as family, friends, or peers (Cullen & Agnew, 2011).

Sutherland presented eight key propositions, the most notable being that:

1. Criminal behaviour is learned through communication and interaction.
2. The most significant learning occurs within close personal relationships

rather than impersonal settings.
3. Learning includes both the techniques of committing crimes and the rationalizations that justify them.
4. A person becomes delinquent when exposed to an excess of definitions favourable to law violation over definitions unfavourable to law violation.

According to the theory, associations vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity meaning that the more frequent and emotionally intense an individual's exposure to criminal definitions, the more likely they are to adopt criminal behaviour. In essence, people learn both the "how" and the "why" of crime through their social networks.

Sutherland's theory implies that crime results from cultural transmission within groups that hold favourable attitudes toward law-breaking. This learning process uses the same mechanisms as learning any other behaviour through imitation, reinforcement, and communication. Thus, crime is seen as a social product rather than an individual pathology. The strength of Differential Association Theory lies in its ability to explain why crime persists in certain environments or social groups. If young people are surrounded by delinquent peers or live-in communities that tolerate or even reward criminal behaviour, they are more likely to engage in similar acts. Therefore, reducing crime requires altering the social context promoting positive associations, strengthening pro-social networks, and reducing exposure to criminal influences.

Conceptual Framework

The three theories Social Disorganization, General Strain, and Differential Association offer complementary perspectives on the causes of crime. Social Disorganization Theory focuses on community-level breakdown and environmental factors; General Strain Theory emphasizes the role of individual stress and emotional responses to social pressures; while Differential Association Theory highlights the learning process through social interaction. Together, they suggest that crime is not merely an individual moral failing but a social phenomenon shaped by structural conditions, psychological strains, and interpersonal influences. Addressing crime, therefore, requires comprehensive strategies that rebuild community cohesion, alleviate social and economic strain, and foster positive social learning environments, particularly among the youth.

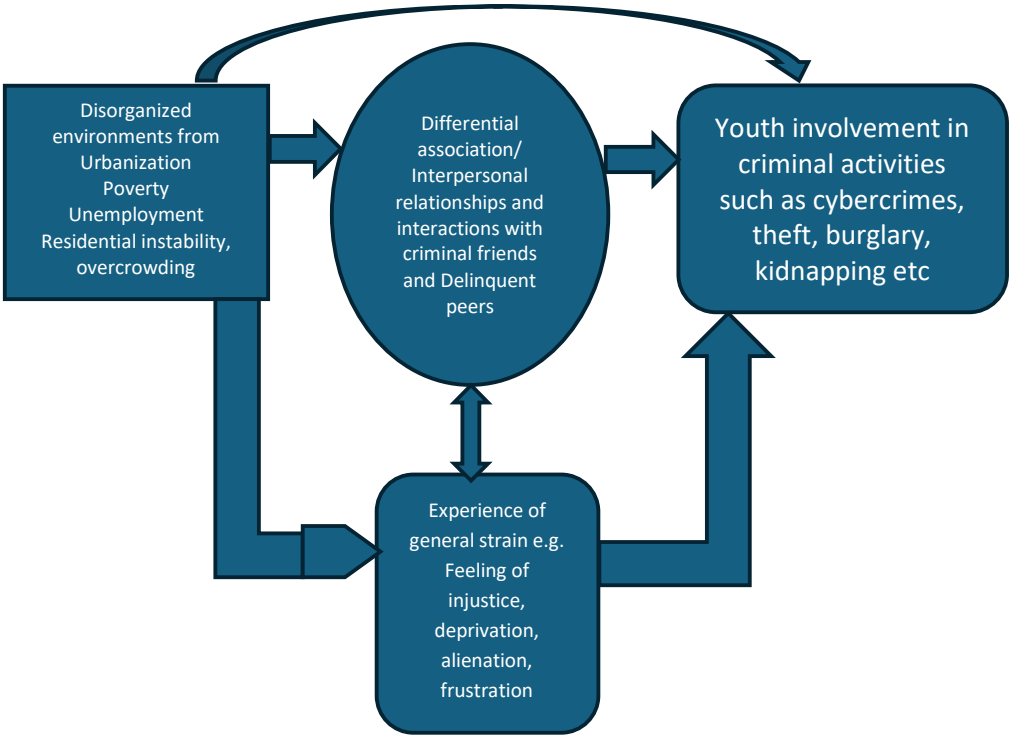


Fig 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the explanation of the incidence of youth involvement dues to unemployment and other factors using the theory of social disorganization, general strain and differential association theories

The above diagram clearly illustrates how youth unemployment in a disorganized environment which is highly urbanized and characterized by residential instability, poverty, overcrowding and so on, can serve as a breeding ground for criminal activities such as cybercrime, burglary, theft, kidnapping etc as explained by social disorganization theory. Such disorganized environments with those characteristics and features can aggravate and result in a feeling of injustice, frustration, alienation and stress as explained by the general strain theory, thereby making youth in these environments vulnerable to engaging themselves in interactions with criminal and delinquent friends. The consequence of such interaction is the learning and exhibition of deviant and criminal behaviours as explained by differential association theory. A lot of youth are therefore observed and reported to have been involved in criminal activities because they felt unjustly treated by the system which has not provided the employment needed for them even after learning trades of graduating from formal education. As the going says “an idle man is the devil’s workshop” some find solace in interacting with criminal friends in the process and then learn criminal acts and become criminals themselves.

Materials and Method

Descriptive survey design involving a mixed-methods approach was adopted by administering questionnaire on 376 youth and key informant interview with 10 community leaders and 10 police officers. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the qualitative data was content analyzed. The study examines the incidence of youth unemployment and crime rates in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja. Its specifically investigated the prevalence of unemployment, the extent of youth involvement in crime and commonly perpetrated crimes in the study area

To select the respondents, various sampling techniques were used to arrive at the representative sample size. For the quantitative part of the study, a four-phase multistage sampling technique that involves cluster and simple random was used in selecting respondents for the study. First, cluster sampling method was used to divide the study area into ten (10) clustered units wards based on the existing political wards, namely: Dobi, Gwagwalada Centre, Gwako, Ibwa, Ikwa, Kutunku, Paiko, Staff Quarters, Tungan Maje, and Zuba. And, these wards were further divided into eighty-five (85) based on the existing communities/villages.

Second, from these political ward, five (5) were randomly selected by balloting given a sampling fraction of 50% coverage of the study area. The selection was done by writing names of all the political wards on equal sheets of paper and later folded and put in a container and after shaking the container several times; five political wards were eventually selected as the sampled political wards. The political wards selected were Gwagwalada Central, Ibwa, Kutunku, Paiko, and Tunga-Maje.

Third, was the random selection of two (2) communities in each of the selected political ward using the same balloting method indicated above; giving a total of ten (10) communities in the five political wards which indicate 8.5% coverage of the study area. The communities selected in each political ward are as follows: Gwagwalada Central ward: Ungwan Azara and Ungwan Bassa; Ibwa ward: Dukwa and Wuna; Kutunku ward: Anguwan Gade and Old kutunku; Paiko ward: Lukuku and Passo; and Tunga-Maje ward: Anagada and Tunga maje.

Lastly, was the selection of respondents using purposive sampling method which created equal opportunity for selecting the respondents. For the purpose of convenience, the sample size was shared equally among the twenty (20) selected communities. Thus, 20 respondents were selected from each community. To select the respondents in each community, the existing administrative unit (community heads) were consulted to assist in identifying reliable youths to fill the questionnaires. In each community, youths were randomly selected by balloting method. The selection was done by writing YES and NO on equal sheets of paper and later folded and put in a container and after shaking the container several times to allow the youth to make random choices. Those that choose "YES" were considered while those with "NO" were ignored. This process was repeated until the already determined number per each community was obtained. Thus, a sample size of 400 respondents was drawn

from across the 10 communities in 5 political wards.

Research Findings

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (N=376)

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Male	253	67.3
Female	123	32.7
Age (Year)		
18 – 22	90	23.9
23 - 27	105	27.9
28 - 31	94	25.0
32 – 35	87	23.1
Marital status		
Single	169	44.9
Married	79	21.0
Divorced/Separated	94	25.0
Widow/Widower	34	9.0
Educational qualification		
No formal education	10	2.7
Primary	19	5.1
SSCE	100	26.6
NCE/OND/Diploma	109	29.0
HND/First degree	74	19.7
PGD/Master/PhD	50	13.3
Others	14	3.7
Religious affliction		
Islam	201	53.5
Christianity	167	44.4
Traditional religion	8	2.1
Length of Residency (Yrs.)	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Since Birth	101	26.9
Less than 5	68	18.1
6 – 10	83	22.1
11 – 15	79	21.0
Above 15	45	12.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 1 above indicates that 67.3% of the respondents were male while 32.7% were female. This implies that there were more male respondents than female respondents in the study; and may be due to the nature of the study area which is patriarchal where men are more responsive to discussing social issues than women. However, this distribution suggests a fairly gender representation provides a balanced perspective on the research questions posed in this study.

Regarding age, over a quarter (27.9%) of the respondents were aged between 23 - 27 years, and between 28 - 31 years (25%), while less than a quarter (23.9%) were aged between 18 - 22 years, and within age group of 32-35 year (23%). It

is clear that the four age categories of youth were effectively involved in the study and therefore enhancing data credibility. The marital status of the respondents indicated that, majority 44.9% were single/never married, 25% were divorced/separated, 21% were married, while 9% were widowed. On educational qualification, 29% of the respondents had NCE/OND/Diploma certificate, 26.6% had secondary education level qualification, 19.6% had college level education and 42 (26.6%) had graduate level education, 13.3% had higher degree level certificate, 5.1% had first school leaving certificate, 3.7% were of adult literacy education program whereas 2.7% had no any type of formal education. This implies that the respondents had sufficient academic qualifications to understand and give significant response to the research questions. With regards to religious affiliation, 53.5% of the respondents Muslims and 44.4% were Christians, while the remaining 2.1% of the respondents were Traditionalist. This appears very consistent with the two dominant religions in the country. Finally, in terms of residency period in the area of the study, 26.9% of the respondents had been residents in their locality of stay as at the time of study for since birth, 22.1% had resided in their area between 6-10 years, 21% had been residents between 11-15 years, 18.1% of the respondents had been resident between less than 5 years while 12% had stayed above 15years. This shows that majority of the respondents had lived in the study area long enough to make significant contributions to the study subject.

Table 2: Factors contributing to youth unemployment in Gwagwalada Area Council

Factor contributing to youth unemployment	**A**		**N**		**D**	
Inadequate job opportunities	361	96.0	9	2.4	6	1.6
Low educational qualification	153	40.6.	18	4.8	205	27.3
Laziness/poor attitudes of the youth towards work	114	30.3	70	18.6	192	51.6
Education system is not job oriented	342	90.9	17	4.5	17	4.5
Nepotism/Tribalism in employment	343	91.2	24	6.4	9	2.4
Lack of entrepreneurial skills among many youth	265	73.1	50	13.3	61	16.6
Corruption/embezzlement of public funds	324	70.4	28	7.4	24	5.3
Rapid youth population growth	270	71.8	18	4.8	88	23.4
Lack of job experience	338	89.9	20	5.3	18	4.8
Lack of enough industries	322	86.6	18	4.8	36	9.5
Lack of capital	349	92.8	20	5.3	7	1.9
Rural-Urban migration	154	40.9	27	7.2	68	18.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2 shows the various reasons of high rate of youth unemployment in Gwagwalada. According to the table a large majority 96% of the respondents agreed that inadequate job opportunities is the cause of high rate of youth unemployment. On the other hand, 1.6% disagreed and none strongly disagreed while 2.4% were undecided. Thus, an inadequate job opportunity is a causal

factor of high rate of youth unemployment in the study area. This was further corroborated with the responses of almost all the key informants suggested that the primary cause of youth unemployment in the area is lack of job opportunities. One of the participants stated that:

> Life is devastating for many youth as most willing to work especially, those who have graduated from tertiary institutions but sadly there are no job opportunities in both formal sector informal sector as well. *(KII, Male, 32 years, 2025)*

Furthermore, over half, (54.5%) and 40.6% disagreed and agreed respectively to the view that low educational qualification instigates high rate of unemployment among youth, while and 4.8% were neutral; implying that low educational qualification is not perceived as a major cause of high rate of youth unemployment in Gwagwalada.

Surprisingly, over half (51.6%) of the respondents disagreed, to the view laziness/poor attitudes of the youth towards work is cause of high rate of youth unemployment. This suggests that, laziness/poor attitudes of the youth towards work is rarely perceived by youth as a predisposing factor to high rate of youth unemployment in Gwagwalada. This response again raises concern about a shift in orientation of youth about the essence of maintaining the virtue of hard-work and diligence which of course contributes to the highly level of impatience among youth in generating wealth through hard-work. A very large proportion of the respondents (90.0%) agreed to the impression that the educational system is not job-oriented. This implies that high rate of youth unemployment in Gwagwalada attributed to the education system that is not job oriented. In this regard, one of the participants argued that:

> The curriculum of educational system in the Nigeria is outdated and do not give youth adequate training required in the labour market. *(KII, Male, 35 years, 2025)*

Another had this to say,

> The nature of education impact on youth the skills that falls the expectations of employers leading to skill mismatches between the employees and employers. *(KII, Male, 38 years, 2025)*

Also, a large majority (91.2%) agreed to the view that nepotism and tribalism in employment process are strong contributors to the high rate of unemployment among youth. Evidently, nepotism and tribalism in employment processes is a predisposing factor that influence high rate of youth unemployment. This finding

concurred with that of qualitative data. Participants also cited and acknowledged the deep-rooted factor of tribalism, nepotism and god-fatherism influencing youth unemployment problem.

The table further shows that majority (73.1%) agreed to the view that lack of entrepreneurial skills among many youth contributes to high rate of youth unemployment in the area. This implies that, lack of entrepreneurial skills among many youth is an important factor contributing to high rate of youth unemployment in Gwagwalada. Some of the informants admitted that lack of entrepreneurial skills. As one participant remarked,

> Most of the youth prefer to work in the public services than embarking in entrepreneurship and personally, I don't blame them because there is no adequate vocational facilities and technical training support. *(KII, 2025)*

Meanwhile, majority (70.4%) agreed that corruption/embezzlement of public funds promotes rate youth unemployment and 7.4% of the respondents were undecided. This clearly revealed that corruption/embezzlement of public funds in the system is identified as an influencing factor to high rate of youth unemployment in the study area. The finding was supported by data collected from key informant interviews. There was a consensus that corruption in the system was primary risk factor contributing to unemployment among youths. On rapid youth population growth, 71.8% of the respondents agreed, while nearly a quarter (23.4%) disagreed, while 4.8% were neutral. This implies that rapid youth population growth is a contributing factor to the causes of high rate of youth unemployment.

About 90% of the respondents agreed lack of job experience leads to high rate of youth unemployment, only 4.8% that disagreed and none strong disagreed while 5.3% were undecided. This implies that lack of job experience is considered the cause of high rate of youth unemployment. Equally, key informant interviewees affirmed the lack of job experience which has contributed to youth unemployment. As one key interviewee remarked,

> Most job adverts in the country today required working experience; and youth who newly entered labour market do not have the relevant working experience. To be honest, the labour market is unfair to them. *(KII, Male, 32 years, 2025)*

The table also revealed that 42.8% and 42.8% respondents strongly agreed and agreed that lack of enough industries influences high rate of unemployment among the youth in the study area, against 4.8% of the respondents who strongly disagreed, disagreed and undecided each with this view. The results imply that lack of enough industries is referred a motivating factor for high rate of youth

unemployment.

> One of our challenges is that the community has very few industries and factories which would have help in reducing youth unemployment. *(KII, Male, 38 years, 2025)*

From table, 49.2% and 43.6% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively to lack of capital as a cause of high rate of youth unemployment while nearly a quarter (23.4%) disagreed, 5.3% of the respondents disagreed, while 4.8% were undecided implying that lack of capital is a significant cause of high rate of youth unemployment in Gwagwalada. This finding was confirmed by the key informants who shared their views on how lack of capital has rendered some youth unemployed in the study area. A participant asserts that:

> There is need for capital to be able to start a business and consider yourself employed in the midst of the serious high rate of unemployment affecting Nigerian youth. A lot of you have business idea it the fact that the funds are not just there can be so frustrating hence the turn to crime. *(KII, Male Youth leader, 41 years, 2025)*

Lastly, from table, the results displayed in table, 40.9% of the respondents agreed that rural-urban migration causes youth unemployment, implying that high rate of unemployment is linked to rural-urban migration in Gwagwalada.

Also, informants believe that lack of career guidance is contributing to the youth unemployment in the area. An informant expressed that,

> They lack career guidance. Imagine going to Lagos from Gwagwalada without knowing the way to Lagos. You definitely need to be directed. The youth are naïve and need mentorship to realise the best in them.

It is clear that, many factors are contributing to youth unemployment in Gwagwalada Area Council. The factors causing youth unemployment include inadequate job opportunity, lack of capital, nepotism and tribalism in employment processes, education system that is not job oriented, lack of job experience, corruption/embezzlement of public funds in the system, lack of enough industries, rural-urban migration, rapid youth population growth, lack of entrepreneurial skills, and lack career guidance among many youth. It is evident from the above that the youth unemployment in Gwagwalada is a socio-economic issue.

Table 3: Prevalence of youth crime in Gwagwalada Area Council

Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Youth involvements in crime	Involved	376	100
	Not involved	0	0
	Total	**376**	**100**
Extent of youth involvements in crime	Very high	75	19.9
	High	236	62.8
	Average	57	15.2
	Low	8	2.1
	Very low	0	0
	Total	**376**	**100**

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 3 show that all the respondents 100% affirmed youth involvement in crime. It can therefore be deduced that the respondents had experienced or witnessed the incidence. Hence, youth crime is a reality in Gwagwalada. Also, the data indicates that high prevalence rating by 62.8%, very high rating by 19.9%, an average rating by 15.2% and low rating by 2.1%.

The finding above was collaborated by all the key informant interviews in the area. The key informant describes a perceived increase in crime rates among the youth over the past year. One of the Participants responses opined that;

> Youth crime rates have increased over the past year; and to be honest, things have gotten worse over the past year or so. *(KII, Female, 43 years, 2025)*

In same vein, during the interview, a participant lamented that,

> Crimes committed by youths are becoming more worrisome and higher in recent times; in fact, I feel unsafe walking alone in my area at night. *(KII, Male, 38 years, 2025)*

This reveals a high rate of youth crimes in various communities of the study area.

Table 4: Effects of youth Unemployment on crime in Gwagwalada Area Council

Effects youth unemployment on crime						
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Due to idleness, unemployed youth end up engaging in criminal activities as an alternative way of acquiring an income	338	89.8	0	0	38	10.1
Lack of legal sources of income pushes youth to use illegal income sources	369	98.1	7	1.9	0	0
Gangstarism and thuggery has become a meaningful occupation for the unemployed youth	362	96.3	7	1.9	7	1.9
Youth without job are force to break the law and order for survival	333	88.6	35	9.3	7	1.9
Unemployed youth can easily participate in social vices and antisocial activities such as prostitution and sex trafficking as alternative way to generating income	235	62.5	5	1.3	36	9.6
Unemployed youth are prone to frustration that brings about aggressive behavior leading to violent crimes	302	80.3	11	2.9	62	16.5

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 4. presents results on the effects of youth unemployment on crime rates in in Gwagwalada Area Council. The data on table above indicates that 89.8% of the respondents agreed that unemployed youths end up engaging in criminal activities as an alternative way of acquiring an income. This implies that unemployed youth have a high risk of engaging in criminality than the unemployed youth who are idle. Furthermore, a large majority (98.1%) of respondents agreed that lack of legal sources of income pushes youth to use illegal income sources. Only 1.9% of the respondents were neutral, whilst and none of respondents disagreed to this assertion. Thus, implying that lack of legal sources of income turned unemployed youth to use illegal income leading to the engagement in illegal and illicit business activities. In addition, from table, 96.3% of respondents agreed that gangsterism and thuggery has become a meaningful occupation for the unemployed youth, whereas 1.9% of respondents each disagreed. Hence, youth unemployment is associated with gangs and thuggery related activities to engage in criminal activity; as they are vulnerable for manipulation and readily available for formation and recruitment into various criminal gangs, militia, rebel groups, insurgent groups, and terrorist groups.

Equally from the table, 88.6% of the respondents agreed that youth without job are forced to break the law and order for survival while 9.3% of the respondents were undecided. This implies that unemployed youth are vulnerable to breaking law and order as they are driven into living outside law and order to survive. Thus, engaging in behaviour that breach law and order which leads to criminal sanctions.

The table illustrates that 62.5% agreed that an unemployed youth can easily participate in antisocial activities such as prostitution and sex trafficking as alternative way to generating income. Thus, youth unemployment increases is seen to increase the vulnerability of youth to antisocial activities and social vices such prostitution and sex trafficking as alternative way to generating income.

Finally, majority (80.3%) of the respondents agreed that unemployed youth are prone to frustration that brings about aggressive behaviour which may lead to violent crimes, while only 2.9% of the respondents were not sure with this assertion. This implies that, unemployed youth are prone to frustration that brings about aggressive behaviour leading to violent crimes. The study findings underscore the high rate of youth unemployment as contributing factor to high crime rates in Gwagwalada Area Council. Unemployment is a primary risk factor contributing to the increased criminal activities among youths. Consequently, unemployment plays a significant role in driving youth criminality. Lack of legal sources of income turned unemployed youth to use illegal income leading to the engagement in illegal and illicit businesses, and antisocial activities and social vices prostitution, Illegal abortion and sex trafficking as an alternative means to acquire an income to earn a living and meet societal expectations. Additionally, unemployment has led to frustration among the unemployed youth which brings about aggressive, rebellious and restive behaviour promoting violence. Lastly, unemployment youth are drive into living outside law and order to survive; by forming and joining various criminal gangs, militia, rebel groups, insurgent groups, and terrorist groups.

The qualitative data responses buttress a strong link between youth unemployment and high crime rates. The participants further concurred that unemployment is a contributing factor to the increased criminal activities.

In view of the above a participant stated that:

> Recently, many graduates and school leavers turn to criminal activities after experiencing years of unemployment as a means of survival and as an alternative means of realizing their dreams and societal expectations. *(KII, 2025)*

Therefore, the consequential effects of youth unemployment on crime includes increased criminal and violent activities, breed social vices and antisocial activities, promote broad varieties of wrongdoing, breaching law and order, infiltration of criminal gangs, militia, rebel groups, insurgent groups, and terrorist groups and other associating problems that threatens the social, economic and political stability and undermining peace and security of individuals, families, communities and the nation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigates the influence of youth unemployment on crime rates in

Gwagwalada Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. On the basis of the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is a strong significant relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates.

The study also concludes that youth unemployment is influenced by a combination of interrelated and interdependent socio-economic factors.

The study further concludes, high rate of youth crime and high-risk of various socio-economic activities through which the youth earned their living remain prevalent in Gwagwalada Area Council.

More so, youth unemployment is key driver of youth involvement in criminal activities; with array of consequential effects that threatens the social, economic and political stability and undermining peace and security of individuals, families, communities and the nation.

Finally, it is concluded that tackling youth unemployment would help mitigate crime rates in Gwagwalada Area Council requires a comprehensive approach and collaborative efforts involving government, private sector, non-governmental organizations, civil societies and communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following were recommended.

1. Federal Government, Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) and Gwagwalada Area Council should focus on infrastructural development. These will include ensuring regular power supply, constant supply of water, road and communication networks to stimulate manufacturing sector.
2. Government at all levels should encourage the growth and development of the informal sector of the economy which have the propensity to create more jobs by streamlining regulations, providing incentives, and ensuring access to credit.
3. Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) and Gwagwalada Area Council to collaborate with the Bank of Agriculture, Bank of Infrastructure and similar financial institutions to provide user-friendly, low–interest loan schemes to youth and farmers.
4. The Government at all levels to should support the manufacturing sector through provisions of appropriate incentive packages to industries with high growth potentials so as combine the benefits of rising productivity with the net creation of new jobs.
5. Development of skills acquisition programmes and vocational training across the country, the Government at all levels, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), should come up with empowerment programs to equipped youth with skills, trainings and ideas for self-employment and self-reliance.
6. Federal Government should restructure and revise the educational system with emphasis being more on practical and market-driven education

incorporating technical know-how and vocational skills rather than theoretical paper qualification. Also, the restructuring should strengthen the connection and linkages between tertiary institutions and industries to ensure that educational curriculum content remains relevant to industrial needs.

References

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society,* 4(2), 139–158.

Aisha K. Gill, & Sundari Anitha. (2026). A matter of trust? Policing violence against women and girls. *Policing and Society*. Advance online publication. University of Bristol.

Alemika, E. E. O., & Chukwuma, I. C. (2019). *Criminal victimization, policing and police legitimacy in Nigeria*. CLEEN Foundation.

Amnesty International. (2020). *Nigeria: Time to end impunity: Torture and other violations by special anti-robbery squad (SARS).* Amnesty International.

Brown, Jennifer, & Marisa Silvestri (2020). *A police service in transformation: Gender and policing revisited.* Routledge.

Campbell, R. (2020). The neurobiology of sexual assault: Implications for law enforcement, prosecution, and victim advocacy. *National Institute of Justice Journal*.

Carrington, K., Hogg, R., Scott, J., & Sozzo, M. (2019). *The Palgrave handbook of criminology and the Global South*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Chan, J. (2013). *Changing police culture: Policing in a multicultural society*. Cambridge University Press.

CLEEN Foundation. (2021). *Police reform and public accountability in Nigeria*. CLEEN Foundation.

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2020). *Intersectionality* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.

Connell, R. W. (2006). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

Cordner, G., & Cordner, A. (2011). Stuck on a plateau? Obstacles to recruitment, selection and retention of women police. *Police Quarterly,* 14(3), 207–226.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage.

Field, A. (2022). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics* (6th ed.). Sage.

Francesca Gains, & Vivien Lowndes. (2022). Identifying the institutional micro-foundations of gender policy change: A case study of police governance and violence against women and girls. *Politics & Gender,* 18(2), 394–421. Cambridge University Press & Assessment

Human Rights Watch. (2016). *Tell me where I can be safe: The impact of Nigeria's Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act.*

Kelly, L. (2002). The wrong debate: Reflections on why force is not the key issue with respect to trafficking in women for sexual exploitation. *Feminist Review,* 73(1), 139–144.

Kimberlé Crenshaw. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, pp. 139–167.

Krook, M. L., & Mackay, F. (Eds.). (2011). *Gender, politics and institutions: Towards a feminist institutionalism*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Loftus, B. (2010). Police occupational culture: Classic themes, altered times. *Policing and Society,* 20(1), 1–20.

Mackay, F., Kenny, M., & Chappell, L. (2010). New institutionalism through a gender lens: Towards a feminist institutionalism? *International Political Science Review,* 31(5), 573–588.

Martin, S. E. (1999). Police force or police service? Gender and emotional labor. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 561(1), 111–126.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs,* 30(3), 1771–1800.

Prenzler, T., & Sinclair, G. (2013). The status of women police officers: An international review. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice,* 41(2), 115–131.

Rabe-Hemp, C. E. (2008). Female officers and the ethic of care: Does officer gender impact police behaviours? *Journal of Criminal Justice,* 36(5), 426–434.

Silvestri, M. (2017). Police culture and gender: Revisiting the cult of masculinity. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice,* 11(3), 289–300.

Sunshine, J., & Tyler, T. R. (2003). The role of procedural justice and legitimacy in shaping public support for policing. *Law & Society Review,* 37(3), 513–548.

Twinkal Dogra. (2026). Street-level bureaucracy and gendered policing: A study of Haryana's women police stations. *Social & Legal Studies*. Advance online publication. *Sage Journals*

Tyler, T. R. (2006). *Why people obey the law* (2nd ed.). Princeton University Press.

Tyler, T. R., & Jackson, J. (2014). Popular legitimacy and the exercise of legal authority. In J. Simon & R. Sparks (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of punishment and society,* pp. 79–97. Sage.

UN Women. (2020). *Women in law enforcement in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

United Nations Development Programme. (2018). *Gender equality in public administration.*

Uwineza, P., & Pearson, E. (2012). Sustaining gender equality? Experiences from Rwanda's security sector. *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin,* 43(4), 71–83.

Waylen, G. (2014). Informal institutions, institutional change and gender equality. *Political Research Quarterly,* 67(1), 212–223.

World Medical Association. (2013). *Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects.*