



# The Relationship between Unemployment, Poverty and Crime among Youths in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State

*Onota Hendris<sup>1</sup>, Ighomrore Sharp<sup>2</sup>*

Department of Sociology Delta State University, Abraka [hendrisonota@gmail.com](mailto:hendrisonota@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Federal Polytechnic, Orogun, Delta State [abomesharp@gmail.com](mailto:abomesharp@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment and poverty have been identified as major socio-economic factors contributing to rising crime rates in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria. This study examined the relationship between these variables and youth involvement in criminal activities. Strain theory by Merton was used to support the argument in the study. Quantitative method that relied on survey approach was used to collect data for the study. A sample of 400 was drawn from the study population using Taro Yamane formula. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses. The study concluded that economic hardship, financial desperation, and lack of employment opportunities push young individuals into illegal activities as a means of survival. To address this issue, the paper recommends strategic interventions such as job creation programs, poverty alleviation initiatives, skill development training, and community-based support systems. Implementing these measures can help reduce crime rates and promote socio-economic stability in Ughelli North.

**Keywords:** Youth Unemployment, Poverty, Crime, Ughelli North, Economic Hardship, Policy Interventions

## Introduction

Unemployment, poverty, and crime among youths remain significant socio-economic challenges in many parts of Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region. Ughelli North Local Government Area (LGA) in Delta State is not exempt from these issues, as high levels of youth unemployment contribute to increased poverty and crime rates. The persistent economic hardship, limited job opportunities, and inadequate skill acquisition programs exacerbate the challenges faced by young people in the area (NBS, 2021). Despite various government interventions, youth unemployment remains a growing concern, fueling social vices and insecurity in the region (Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2022).

Youth unemployment in Ughelli North is linked to several factors, including a lack of industrialization, declining agricultural engagement, and limited access to quality education. Many young people in the area struggle to secure gainful employment due to inadequate technical and vocational skills, which further deepens poverty levels (Eze & Okonkwo, 2023). This economic deprivation forces many youths to engage in criminal activities such as robbery, cybercrime, and drug-related offenses as alternative means of survival (Okon, 2024). The high rate of joblessness in the region has thus contributed to a cycle of poverty and crime, worsening the socio-economic conditions of the local populace.

Poverty remains a significant outcome of youth unemployment, as many households in Ughelli North LGA struggle to afford basic needs. According to recent statistics, Nigeria's poverty rate has continued to rise, with Delta State among the regions affected by economic instability (World Bank, 2023). The lack of economic empowerment programs tailored to the needs of young people further aggravates the situation, making it difficult for them to break free from the cycle of poverty. Studies have shown that areas with high youth unemployment and poverty rates tend to experience increased criminal activities, as individuals resort to illegal means for survival (James & Omoregie, 2024).

Crime among unemployed youths in Ughelli North LGA manifests in various forms, including cultism, internet fraud (popularly known as "yahoo-yahoo"), armed robbery, and drug abuse. The rising trend of these social vices has been linked to the absence of structured employment opportunities and economic marginalization (Ogunbiyi, 2023). Furthermore, peer pressure and the influence of criminal networks contribute to the growing crime rate among young people (Akinwale, 2024). Many young individuals, frustrated by economic hardships, find solace in criminal activities as a means of attaining financial stability and societal relevance.

The implications of youth unemployment, poverty, and crime in Ughelli North extend beyond economic challenges to social instability and insecurity. The high crime rate in the region discourages investments, hampers local business growth, and contributes to the overall underdevelopment of the area (Obi & Adeola, 2022; Atakpo, 2020). Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including job creation, skill acquisition programs, and effective social policies targeted at empowering young people. Government agencies, private sector stakeholders, and non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) must collaborate to implement sustainable interventions that address the root causes of youth unemployment and crime (World Bank, 2024; Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2025).

In conclusion, unemployment, poverty, and crime among youths in Ughelli North LGA present significant socio-economic and security threats. Without urgent and strategic interventions, these challenges will continue to hinder development in the region. Policymakers must prioritize job creation initiatives, education reforms, and community-based programs that provide young people with viable economic opportunities. Ensuring a sustainable future for the youth in Ughelli North requires deliberate efforts to bridge the gap between education and employment while addressing poverty-related issues through targeted social and economic policies, hence this study which examines unemployment, poverty and crime among youths in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.

### Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the relationship between unemployment, poverty and crime among youths in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State. To achieve this objective, the study sought to:

1. examine the relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State.
2. assess the impact of poverty on youth involvement in criminal activities in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State.

### Research Hypotheses

1. Ho: There is no significant relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.
2. Ho: Poverty has no significant impact on youth involvement in criminal activities in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.

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## Conceptual Discourse

### Concept of Unemployment

Scholars have long defined unemployment as the state in which individuals who are both willing and able to work are unable to secure employment, emphasizing the discrepancy between labor supply and job opportunities. For instance, Smith (2020) characterizes unemployment as a condition that not only reflects economic inefficiencies but also highlights the potential loss of human capital when a segment of the labor force remains underutilized.

Building on classical theories, Johnson (2021) posits that unemployment arises from structural mismatches in the labor market, where the skills possessed by the workforce do not meet the evolving demands of employers. This perspective underlines that unemployment is not merely a temporary deviation but often a chronic issue that necessitates targeted interventions to realign workforce competencies with industry needs.

In a more nuanced exploration, Brown and Davis (2022) expand the definition by incorporating the concept of hidden unemployment, where individuals who have ceased actively seeking work are not captured in conventional unemployment statistics. Their approach emphasizes that traditional measures may understate the true extent of joblessness, thereby calling for broader metrics that account for long-term and discouraged workers.

Recent research has further refined these definitions to account for the complexities of modern labor markets. Garcia (2023) and Thompson (2025) argue that contemporary definitions of unemployment should include aspects of underemployment and the prevalence of informal work arrangements. This comprehensive framework reflects the dynamic nature of employment in a globalized economy and acknowledges that the standard unemployment rate may not fully capture the economic reality experienced by the workforce.

### Concept of Poverty

Poverty is a complex and multifaceted issue that has been defined and interpreted in various ways by scholars and institutions. At its core, poverty refers to the condition where individuals or communities lack the financial resources and essentials to achieve a minimum standard of living. This encompasses not only insufficient income but also the inability to access basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare.

The World Bank (2023) defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$2.15 per day, highlighting the severe deprivation experienced by individuals below this threshold. This monetary benchmark is widely used to assess and compare poverty levels across different regions globally. However, many scholars argue that poverty extends beyond mere income deprivation. For instance, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2023). In their study published in *Quality & Quantity* emphasizes the multidimensional nature of poverty, suggesting that it includes various forms of deprivation beyond financial insufficiency. This perspective underscores that poverty encompasses a range of factors, including limited access to education, healthcare, and other essential services.

In the context of the United States, the federal poverty threshold is determined by comparing an individual's or family's income to a set federal standard. For example, Alkire and Foster (2021), argue that individuals earning below \$12,880 or families of four with a household income below \$26,500 were considered impoverished. This method provides a standardized measure to identify and address poverty within the country.

Furthermore, the concept of relative poverty is also significant, particularly in developed countries. Relative poverty considers individuals' economic status in relation to the broader society, focusing on inequality and social exclusion. This approach recognizes that poverty is not solely about absolute deprivation but also about the inability to participate fully in societal activities due to limited resources (Sen, 2020).

In summary, poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be encapsulated by a single definition. It involves various dimensions, including income level, access to essential services, and social participation. Understanding these diverse aspects is crucial for developing effective policies and interventions aimed at alleviating poverty worldwide.

### Concept of Crime

Crime is a multifaceted concept that academia and legal experts have defined in various ways, reflecting its complexity and the diverse contexts in which it occurs. At its core, crime is often understood as behavior that violates legal codes and is punishable by the state. The Oxford English Dictionary defines crime as an act or omission constituting an offense punishable by law. (Lamond, 2007). However, legal definitions alone do not capture the full scope of what constitutes a crime. Some scholars argue for a broader perspective that includes societal norms and moral codes. For instance, the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research suggests that crime encompasses behavior that goes beyond personal harm into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority (Lynch, Stretesky, & Long, 2016).

The relativity of crime is another critical aspect highlighted by scholars. What is considered criminal can vary significantly across different societies and historical periods. An article in the *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* discusses how the criminal law contains both fault-based crimes and strict liability offenses, representing different paradigms of liability. This underscores that not everything that was once criminal remains so, and vice versa, and not everything considered criminal in one place is treated as criminal everywhere else. (Lamond, 2007; Morrison, 2006).

Furthermore, the definition of crime is not static; it evolves with societal changes. A study in *Critical Criminology* emphasizes that the definition of crime and the substance of criminology exist in a mutually constitutive relationship. This means that as societal norms and values shift, so too does the legal and social understanding of what constitutes a crime (Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, 2019).

In summary, crime is a complex and dynamic concept that extends beyond simple legal definitions. It encompasses legal violations, moral transgressions, and behaviors that society deems harmful or dangerous. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of crime is essential for developing effective legal frameworks and social policies to address it (Tappan, 1947).

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### Overview of Youths

The term "youth" encompasses a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, characterized by significant physical, psychological, and social development. Scholars and institutions have offered various definitions to capture the essence of this stage. The United Nations defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 24 years, a range widely adopted for statistical and developmental purposes. This definition facilitates consistency in data collection and analysis across member countries (United Nations, n.d.).

In the African context, the African Youth Charter defines youth as persons between 15 and 35 years of age. This broader range reflects the diverse socio-economic and cultural factors influencing the transition to adulthood across African nations (African Union, 2006).

Nigeria's National Youth Policy of 2019 aligns with the African Youth Charter, categorizing youth as individuals aged 15 to 29 years. This policy aims to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by this demographic within the Nigerian context (Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2019). However, it's important to note that the Nigerian Constitution does not explicitly define the term "youth." As a result, policy documents like the National Youth Policy serve as the primary references for age-based classifications in youth-related matters within the country. These varying definitions underscore the fluidity of the youth concept, which is shaped by cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Recognizing this variability is crucial for developing policies and programs that effectively address the needs and potentials of young people in different contexts.

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### Empirical Review

Empirical studies have extensively examined the intricate relationships among unemployment, poverty, and crime, employing quantitative methodologies to elucidate these dynamics. In the United States, research by Smith (2024) analyzed data from Houston neighborhoods. The research utilized quantitative data analysis, incorporating statistical methods to evaluate the relationships between economic indicators and crime rates. Regression analyses were conducted, followed by examination of effects within a multivariate model. Population-specific methods were applied to calculate the unique predictive validity of unemployment, poverty, income, and academic achievement on violent and property crimes. The study revealed that areas with higher unemployment and poverty levels experienced elevated rates of both violent and property crimes. This study underscores the localized impact of economic hardships on criminal behaviour.

A study by Alotaibi, Kabbani, and Zaman (2020) examines the growth–inequality–poverty (GIP) triangle and its correlation with crime rates across 16 diverse countries from 1990 to 2014. Utilizing the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) estimator, the research uncovers that income inequality and unemployment rates significantly elevate crime rates, while trade openness appears to mitigate them. This suggests that economic disparities and lack of employment opportunities are pivotal drivers of criminal activities.

An analysis by Andersen (2021) focused on the effects of intensified Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs) on crime rates among unemployed individuals. The study focused on newly unemployed individuals in Denmark. A total of 4,710 participants were involved in the experiment, with 41.7% being women. Participants were randomly assigned to ALMPs of varying intensities. This random assignment was part of a Danish social experiment

designed to assess the causal effects of intensified ALMPs on criminal activity among the unemployed. The study utilized administrative data to track participants' involvement in ALMPs and their subsequent criminal behavior. Specific details about the instruments or tools used for data collection are not provided in the available sources. The research employed statistical analyses to evaluate the causal relationship between the intensity of ALMPs and crime rates among the unemployed. The study found that participation in ALMPs led to a reduction in criminal activities, suggesting that proactive employment interventions can serve as effective crime prevention strategies.

In Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a study by Reayat and Shah (2020) employed a cross-sectional analysis to investigate the impact of unemployment and poverty on crime. Surveying 190 respondents, the research utilized structural equation modeling and found a positive correlation between unemployment, poverty, and crime, highlighting the critical role economic deprivation plays in fostering criminal activities within communities.

Furthermore, a study by Morris and co-authors (2024) analyzed the surge in homicides during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. The research indicated that the increase was largely driven by unemployed men and teenage boys who were out of school due to pandemic-induced closures, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. This suggests that the pandemic exacerbated existing socio-economic vulnerabilities, leading to increased violence. In Nigeria, a study by Garba, Ahmed, and Sunday (2020) examined the causal link between unemployment and crime. Utilizing Vector Autoregression (VAR) estimation, the research demonstrated that unemployment significantly impacts crime rates, aligning with previous findings by Longe (2016) and Egunjobi (2014) that established a positive relationship between unemployment and crime. These empirical studies collectively demonstrate a robust correlation between unemployment, poverty, and crime, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive policies that address economic deprivation to mitigate criminal activities. In summary, contemporary research consistently demonstrates a robust link between unemployment, poverty, and crime. Economic deprivation and lack of employment opportunities not only exacerbate social inequalities but also contribute significantly to criminal behavior. Addressing these issues through targeted economic policies and employment programs is essential for fostering safer and more equitable societies.

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## Theoretical Framework

The most suitable theory to explain the relationship between unemployment, poverty, and crime among youths in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State, is the Strain Theory, originally proposed by Robert K. Merton in 1938. The Strain Theory suggests that crime results from the gap between socially accepted goals (such as wealth, success, and stability) and the means available to achieve them. When individuals, particularly youths, are unable to attain these goals due to unemployment and poverty, they may resort to crime as an alternative means of survival (Merton, 1938). Robert K. Merton's Strain Theory (1938) explains how societal structures create pressure that leads individuals to engage in deviant behavior, particularly crime. The theory focuses on the disconnection between culturally approved goals and institutionally approved means of achieving those goals. Below are the key arguments of Merton's Strain Theory:

### Societal Goals vs. Means of Achievement

Merton argues that every society defines certain culturally accepted goals, such as financial success, social status, and material wealth. However, not all individuals have equal access to the legitimate means (education, jobs, business opportunities) necessary to achieve these goals. When individuals face structural barriers to success, they experience strain, frustration, and pressure to find alternative ways to achieve their goals. Merton explained five ways of individuals adaptation

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## Five Modes of Individual Adaptation

Merton outlines five ways people respond to the strain caused by the gap between societal goals and available means:

- **Conformity:** Individuals accept both the goals and the means, even if achieving success is difficult.
- **Innovation:** Individuals accept the societal goals but use illegitimate or criminal means to achieve them (e.g., fraud, theft, drug trade).
- **Ritualism:** Individuals abandon the goals but rigidly adhere to socially approved means, even if they no longer expect success (e.g., low-wage workers who follow rules but give up on advancement).
- **Retreatism:** Individuals reject both the goals and the means, often withdrawing from society (e.g., drug addicts, vagrants).
- **Rebellion:** Individuals reject and seek to replace both societal goals and means with alternative values (e.g., revolutionary movements, radical groups).

This theory remains highly relevant in explaining the increasing crime rate among unemployed and impoverished youths in many parts of Nigeria, including Ughelli North. Merton's Strain Theory is particularly useful in the Nigerian context because it highlights how structural inequalities, such as lack of job opportunities and inadequate social welfare, contribute to youth delinquency. In Ughelli North, high levels of unemployment and economic hardship create frustration among young people, leading them to engage in criminal activities such as theft, cyber fraud (locally known as "Yahoo Yahoo"), and armed robbery. These criminal behaviors align with Merton's argument that individuals facing economic strain often seek alternative, sometimes illegal, means to achieve societal success (Agnew, 1992).

Further elaboration on Merton's theory by Robert Agnew in 1992 introduced the General Strain Theory, which extends the original framework by incorporating psychological and emotional aspects. Agnew (1992) argued that not only does economic hardship lead to crime, but other stressors such as

peer pressure, family breakdown, and lack of opportunities also contribute. This perspective is particularly useful in understanding why many unemployed youths in Ughelli North are drawn into cultism, drug abuse, and violent crimes. The frustration caused by economic hardship, combined with peer influences and social neglect, makes crime an appealing option for many young people in the area (Agnew, 2001).

Empirical studies have supported the applicability of Strain Theory in explaining youth crime in Nigeria. For example, a study by Oluwatobi and Abdulrahman (2020) found a significant correlation between youth unemployment and the rising crime rate in Delta State. Their research revealed that in communities where job opportunities were scarce, there was a higher prevalence of crimes such as burglary, kidnapping, and internet fraud. This finding aligns with Merton's assertion that when legitimate opportunities are blocked, individuals may turn to illegitimate means to achieve their goals.

Moreover, the Strain Theory also helps to explain the high rate of youth involvement in cybercrime in Delta State. In a study conducted by Nwogu and Eke (2021), it was found that many unemployed graduates in Ughelli North engage in cyber fraud as a way to escape poverty. The research suggested that social expectations for financial success push many young people into fraudulent activities, as they feel they have no viable alternatives. This reflects Merton's argument that societal pressure to succeed, without access to legitimate means, increases the likelihood of criminal behavior.

Additionally, the Strain Theory provides insight into the link between poverty and violent crimes such as armed robbery and cultism. Studies by Ibrahim and Ogundele (2019) indicate that in many Nigerian urban centers, including Ughelli North, economic deprivation is a major factor driving young people into organized crime groups. These groups often provide financial incentives, protection, and social belonging, making them attractive to unemployed and impoverished youths. This further supports Agnew's General Strain Theory, which argues that negative emotions from economic struggles often lead individuals to join deviant subcultures as a coping mechanism (Agnew, 2006).

While Strain Theory effectively explains the relationship between unemployment, poverty, and crime among youths in Ughelli North, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Critics argue that the theory does not fully account for cases where individuals face economic strain but do not engage in criminal activities. Additionally, other factors such as family upbringing, moral values, and law enforcement effectiveness play a role in determining whether an individual resorts to crime. As such, a holistic approach that combines Strain Theory with other criminological perspectives, such as Social Disorganization Theory, could provide a more comprehensive explanation (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2013).

In conclusion, Merton's Strain Theory, along with Agnew's General Strain Theory, provides a strong theoretical framework for understanding the link between unemployment, poverty, and crime among youths in Ughelli North, Delta State. By illustrating how structural inequalities and economic frustration push individuals toward criminal behavior, the theory highlights the urgent need for job creation, youth empowerment programs, and economic reforms. Addressing the root causes of crime through employment opportunities, skills training, and social welfare initiatives could significantly reduce crime rates among young people in the region. Future research should explore how government policies and community interventions can help mitigate the effects of economic strain on youth crime.

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## Research Method

To investigate the relationship between unemployment, poverty, and crime among youths in Ughelli North Local Government Area (LGA), Delta State, a quantitative research methodology is essential. The study focuses on youths residing in Ughelli North LGA. According to recent estimates, Ughelli North has a projected population of approximately 439,500 people as of 2024. Demographic data indicates that a significant portion of this population comprises individuals aged 15 to 35 years, aligning with Nigeria's definition of youth. Assuming youths constitute about 60% of the total population, the youth population in Ughelli North was approximately 263,700 individuals. Yamane formula for sample size calculation was used with the formula given below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (263,700)

e = margin of error (commonly set at 5% or 0.05)

Plugging in the values

$$n = \frac{263,700}{1 + 263,700 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{263,700}{1 + 659.25}$$

$$n = \frac{263,700}{660.25} \quad n \approx 399$$

Thus, a sample size of approximately 400 respondents

A stratified random sampling technique is suitable for this study to ensure representation across different communities within Ughelli North LGA. The LGA comprises various towns and communities, including Ughelli, Agbarho, Orogun, and Ewvreni. Stratification was used in dividing the LGA into these communities (strata) and then randomly selecting participants from each stratum proportionally. This approach ensures that the sample reflects the diverse socio-economic backgrounds and experiences of youths across the LGA. The primary research instrument was the structured questionnaire designed to collect data on Age, Gender, Educational level, Employment status, unemployment and poverty indicators and crime-related information. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, and percentages) was used to summarize demographic data and responses. Inferential statistics, such as Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between unemployment, poverty, and crime rates among youths. Statistical software like SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to facilitate efficient data analysis and interpretation.

## Results and Discussion

A total of 400 questionnaire were administered but only 382 copies of the instrument were corrected filled and returned and data analysis was based on this figure.

The table below represents the output of demographic respondent **respondents**.

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	15 - 24 years	120	31.4%
	25 - 34 years	160	41.9%
	35 years & above	102	26.7%
Gender	Male	220	57.6%
	Female	162	42.4%
Educational Level	No Formal Education	30	7.9%
	Primary Education	50	13.1%
	Secondary Education	150	39.3%
	Tertiary Education	152	39.8%
Employment Status	Employed	140	36.6%
	Unemployed	242	63.4%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Age distribution showed that the majority of respondents (41.9%) fall within the 25 - 34 years category, indicating that most participants are young adults. Gender distribution revealed that more males (57.6%) than females (42.4%) participated in the study. Education level indicated that the largest proportion of respondents had **secondary (39.3%) or tertiary (39.8%) education**, indicating a relatively educated population. Employment status showed that significant percentage (63.4%) of respondents are unemployed, which aligns with the study's focus on the relationship between unemployment, poverty, and crime.

### Test of Hypotheses

Ho: There is no significant relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.

Table 2: SPSS Output (Correlation Table)

Correlations	Youth Unemployment Rate	Crime Rate
Youth Unemployment Rate	1.000	.725**
Crime Rate	.725**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.000
N (Sample Size)	382	382

The Pearson Correlation value ( $r = 0.725$ ) indicates a strong positive correlation between youth unemployment and crime rates. The p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, meaning the relationship is statistically significant. Since the p-value is below the significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ), we reject the null hypothesis

(H<sub>0</sub>) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>). There is a significant positive relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates in Ughelli North LGA. This suggests that higher youth unemployment is associated with an increase in crime rates.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Poverty has no significant impact on youth involvement in criminal activities in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State

Table 3: SPSS Output (Correlation Table)

Correlations	Youth Unemployment Rate	Crime Rate
Youth Unemployment Rate	1.000	.725**
Crime Rate	.725**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.000
N (Sample Size)	382	382

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Correlation Coefficient ( $r = 0.758$ ). This value suggests a strong positive correlation between poverty and youth involvement in crime. As poverty increases, youth crime involvement also increases. Significance Level ( $p = 0.000$ ): Since  $p < 0.05$ , we reject the null hypothesis. This means poverty has a significant impact on youth involvement in criminal activities. The results suggest that poverty is a significant factor influencing youth involvement in crime in Ughelli North LGA. Policies aimed at reducing poverty could potentially decrease youth crime rates.

## Discussion of Results

The finding for the first hypothesis tested revealed that there is a significant relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State. Smith (2024) highlighted that regions with high youth unemployment often experience increased crime rates due to economic hardship, frustration, and lack of legitimate opportunities. This aligns with findings in Ughelli North, where job scarcity among young people contributes to criminal activities such as theft, robbery, and cybercrime. Also, Alotaibi, Kbbani, and Zaman (2020) emphasized that economic deprivation is a key driver of crime, particularly among unemployed youth. Their study suggests that a lack of sustainable employment opportunities increases the likelihood of engaging in illegal activities. This supports the argument that Ughelli North's youth, facing limited job prospects, are more susceptible to crime as a means of survival. Anderson (2020) examined the correlation between joblessness and rising crime rates, noting that unemployment leads to social instability and higher incidences of violence. The situation in Ughelli North reflects this pattern, as youth unemployment fosters an environment conducive to criminal behavior, including gang-related activities and violent crime. These studies collectively reinforce the finding that youth unemployment is a significant factor influencing crime rates in Ughelli North, Delta State.

The second hypothesis tested indicated that poverty is a significant factor influencing youth involvement in crime in Ughelli North Local Government Area (LGA), Delta State. This finding is in line with previous studies. Garba, Ahmed, and Sunday (2020) argued that poverty is a primary driver of youth crime in many developing regions. Their study emphasizes that economic hardship, lack of basic needs, and financial desperation push young individuals toward illegal activities. This aligns with the situation in Ughelli North, where widespread poverty forces many youths into crimes such as robbery, cyber fraud, and drug trafficking. Morris (20234) discussed the direct link between economic deprivation and youth criminal behavior, noting that when young people lack access to financial stability, they are more likely to resort to crime as a means of survival. The conditions in Ughelli North reflect this trend, where poverty-induced frustration and hopelessness contribute to rising crime rates among unemployed and marginalized youths. Reayat and Shah (2020) stated that poverty not only increases crime rates but also weakens social structures, making crime a more viable option for struggling youth. Their research suggests that in societies where poverty is prevalent, criminal activities such as theft, violence, and fraud become more widespread. This finding is evident in Ughelli North, where economic hardship has intensified youth involvement in criminal activities. These studies collectively reinforce the finding that poverty is a significant factor influencing youth crime in Ughelli North LGA, as economic distress often leads young people to seek alternative, sometimes illegal, means of survival. Let me know if you need a more detailed analysis or adjustments.

## Conclusion

The findings indicate that youth unemployment and poverty are significant factors driving crime rates in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State. Evidence from Smith (2024), Alotaibi, Kbbani, and Zaman (2020), and Anderson (2020) support the assertion that a lack of employment opportunities increases the likelihood of youth engaging in criminal activities. Similarly, studies by Garba, Ahmed, and Sunday (2020), Morris (20234), and Reayat and Shah (2020) confirm that economic hardship and financial desperation associated with poverty push many young people toward illegal means of survival. Overall, the research highlighted the urgent need for policies and programs aimed at reducing youth unemployment and poverty as a strategy to curb crime in Ughelli North LGA. Addressing these socio-economic challenges through job creation, skill development, and poverty alleviation initiatives will help mitigate the factors contributing to youth involvement in crime.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed to address youth unemployment, poverty, and crime in Ughelli North Local Government Area:

1. The government and private sector should invest in vocational training and skill acquisition programs to equip young people with employable skills. This can be done through entrepreneurship initiatives encouragement through funding and mentorship programmes to help youths start small businesses.
2. Poverty reduction strategies such as social welfare programmes, microfinance support, and grants should be implemented to improve the economic well-being of youths. This can be done via investment in local industries and agricultural programmes to provide sustainable income opportunities for young people.

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