

Impact of Crime Control and Youth Empowerment: A Socio-Economic Discourse and Technological Implication

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Abstract: The study centred on the impact of youth empowerment on crime control, using Abuja as the case study. Crime which represents a threat to any society is on increase in the federal capital territory Abuja. Crime prevention and control are the primary duties of the Nigeria police. The fight against crime in Nigeria and other African countries has been exclusively tackled under the ambit of the criminal justice system. This strategy employed has not yielded the desired result in crime reduction and control in Abuja Federal Capital Territory. The methodology used for this study was a descriptive survey research design. This method was used to elicit information on the impact of youth empowerment on crime control in Abuja. The (350) questionnaires were distributed to youths in six area councils in Abuja. Data collected were analyzed using Chi-square statistical analysis. The findings revealed that despite the ranging debated over the effectiveness and appropriateness of different strategies for reducing crime in Nigeria, criminal justice system is inherently limited in its capacity to prevent crime in Abuja and other parts of the country. The study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between youth empowerment and crime control in Abuja FCT. The study recommends that alternative strategies of crime control through proactive youth empowerment programme should be practised in Abuja and other parts of the country. The study concludes that if youths in Abuja are adequately empowered, the crime rate in Abuja and its environ would be reduced to its barest minimum.

Key words: Crime, criminal justice, empowerment, crime control, youth, Chi-square

INTRODUCTION

Crime prevention and control is the primary duty of the Nigeria police. The “fight against crime” in Nigeria and other developing countries has been exclusively tackled under the ambit of the criminal justice system, hence, the strategies employed have not yielded the desired result in crime reduction and control (Dennis, 1988). Jacob and Limeberry (1982) found that the primary response to crime by governmental agencies over the past three decades has been to increase the budgets and personnel rosters of criminal justice agencies. The public image especially, the youths on the criminal justice system is currently somewhat negative. Some youths in our society find little evidence of deterrence of criminal justice and they see inefficiency in catching lawbreakers. Others feel that informal plea bargaining defeats the goal of justice. The

police, court and prisons systems have all become part of the perceived problem of crime prevention in the country because if one examines traditional police practices, selective incapacitation of career criminals, deterrence through criminal sanctions or rehabilitation, there have been widespread disillusionment and sometimes wholesale rejection of strategies that may be effective under certain condition (Cullen and Gilber, 1982). In this respect, this study will contribute to the increased understanding of an alternative means of crime prevention through youth empowerment.

Significance statement: Youth are important agents in the building of a nation and determining her future. Thus, nation-building is dependent on the wellbeing of the youth as they are the ones who will get the leadership baton from the seniors as successors. Empowerment of

youth is responsibility for you. Many youth are less sensitive to the management of themselves and their finances and may resort to crime for survival. The empowerment of female youth in particular can be done through health education and motivation improvement (Abdulhakeem, 2007). Empowerment programmes can improve community welfare and women's health and wellbeing (Hamka *et al.*, 2019; Veeragandham and Kamesh, 2019). Studies suggest that in order to attract talented people to have their career path developed, talent managers need to adopt empowerment strategies (Al-Janabi *et al.*, 2019). Youth leaders are expected to adapt to current technology development for improvement in their leadership skill and communication (Hamzah and Sabri, 2018) and empowerment programmes can provide them with opportunity of achieving this technological adaptation. In order to ensure the sustainability and the achievement of nation-building, the youth must be nurtured to develop effective leadership skills. Despite the raging debates over the effectiveness and appropriateness of different strategies for reducing crime in Nigeria, there is a consensus that the criminal justice system as generally conceived is inherently limited in its capacity to prevent crime in Abuja and other parts of the country. It is against this background that an alternative strategy towards crime prevention needs to be sought since, the crime rate is high among the youths of this country. The alternative strategies towards combating crime and other criminal behaviours are to embark on proactive and people-oriented youth empowerment programmes because if the youth are empowered adequately, crime rate shall be reduced drastically in Abuja and other parts of Nigeria. In the face of the issues raised above and guided by the desire to probe the root causes of crime in Nigeria and to unearth their prevention through youth empowerment the study draw sample from six area council of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

Conceptual clarification: The interpretation of criminality or criminal behaviour has continued to confused scholars. Chambliss (1999) Opined that “engaging as it seems, the controversy surrounding the concept of criminality has raised substantial intellectual dust that will take a while to settle”. There is a measure of consensus among scholars that what is defined as “criminal is a reflection of the super-ordinate class increase on society” Crime then refers to a special type of rule breaking the breach of the criminal laws enacted by the state.

Clerk (1997) also contends that “crime is often thought of as a moral threat, a sign of moral degeneracy”. He further states that “crime reflects the character of a

people”. It exposes their capacity to injure one another, to covet and destroy, their inability to control themselves, their cunning and insensitivity and want to love”. Crime does not only reflect human weakness. It also contributes to that weakness by lessening trust among members of the society. Matthew (1993) “an advocate of the new left realist perspectives has noted that crime in all its varieties is a complex social phenomenon not easily attributable to one factor”. Hence, he comments that “crime is an important sense, a socially-constructed phenomenon”. Its meaning is profoundly influenced by considerations of time and space. Its construction is based on the interaction of four key elements-victims, offenders, the state and the public. These four dimensions constitute what realist criminologists have termed “the square of crime” (Mathew, 1993).

Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines, “crime as an offence which goes beyond the personal into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached which requires the intervention of a public authority”, hence, for crime to be known as such it must be reported and recorded by the police (or other investigator) it may then become part of the criminal statistics, may or may not be investigated and may or may not result in a court cases through judiciary procedures.

In a similar vein, all crime (not solely that committed by or against members of ethnic groups) can be seen as a complex form of behaviour-a multi-dimensional process of meaningful intended and unintended action, interaction and labelling. In this sense, crime is a product of the interaction between the state, the offender, the victim and the informal mechanism of social control which operate in society. Akeredolu (1978) on the causes of crime in society propose that corruption has the effect of aggravating the common crimes in the country. The sudden wealth of anybody who comes into power or near power, the fact that most transaction comes to involves giving and taking of bribes the fact that bribes go unpunished most of the time all these tend to create and sustain the belief that crime pays and encourage criminality in the general population. Unemployment among school learners constitutes serious crime causing a problem, especially, in Nigeria and Africa. In most cases, the frustration of young school leavers often leads to juvenile delinquency, prostitution, poor health, mental illness, drug addiction and violence.

Ikeamaka (2002) stated that in a capitalist society like ours with a high rate of unemployment and underemployment, lack of social welfare scheme the high-class distinction between the haves and have not wealth is considered a more credible yardstick for

according respect than reputation. One need not wonder much why crime, like cheating, forgoing, burglary, impersonation, ritual killing, armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency and militancy abound in Nigeria on a daily bases irrespective of criminal justice system operational in the country.

The inability of the Nigeria police mechanism to effectively tackle the problem of crime has made people to sometime question the competence of the police (Soyonbo, 2003). These inadequacies of the police, court and the prison service to control crime effectively has led to the advocacy for alternative means of crime control through youth empowerment programme. It is the programme that addresses the challenge of poverty and economic deprivations among Nigerian youths. Youth empowerment manifest in different ways through which the youth could be facilitated to bring about changes in their way of life. These are schemes geared towards empowering the youth economically through training and skills acquisition. It also involves different ways youth can be exposed to different trades that could help them to engage in sustainable paid and self-employment which will keep them busy, hence, their attention would be off from criminalities.

Statement of the problem: It is stating the obvious to say that there is an upsurge in crime rate in Nigeria. The police statistic on the crime committed show drastic increase in all form of crimes, especially, armed-robbery, theft, burglary, arson, murder, kidnapping, militancy and insurgency. Others are white collar crime like corruption, fraud, mismanagement and delinquent offences. Daily report from the press also shows that crime has become a concern in Abuja and other parts of the country. There are independent complaints of criminal violation occasioned by robbers operating at homes and high ways. Most of these crimes are perpetrated by the youths. However, the increase rate of criminal behaviour is not in consonance with its control or prevention measures that can be derived from the criminal justice system in Nigeria. Youths are disproportionally susceptible to poverty in comparison with other age groups primarily because of the fluid nature of the challenges, particularly in relation to the labour market. This study, therefore, examined the impact of youth empowerment on crime control.

This study was conducted with the broad objective of identifying the effectiveness of crime reduction through youth empowerment in Abuja. The specific objectives include to examine the causes of high rate of crime among the youths in Abuja to examine the relationship between crime reduction and criminal justice system, to determine the relationship between crime

reduction and youths empowerment and to offer recommendations on how to use instrumentality of youth empowerment to reduce crime in Abuja and Nigeria.

Research hypothesis:

- H₁: there is a significant increase in crime among youth in Abuja
- H₂: there is no significant relationship between crime reduction and the criminal justice system in Abuja
- H₃: there is no significant relationship between youth empowerment and crime control in Abuja

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study in order to unravel information on youth empowerment and crime control in Abuja. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample from the population. In doing this, the six area council in Abuja was stratified along the axis of the existing youth groups within the six area council at the time of the study. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select sixty respondents from youth groups in each area council. Thus, 360 respondents were selected. The main instrument used for data collection was structured close-ended-questionnaire tagged youth empowerment and crime control in Abuja FCT, carefully designed for the respondents. The questionnaires were administered by members of the research team. The data were collected and analyzed with 320 responded questionnaires, using percentage and Chi-square statistical analysis. 0.05 level of significance was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results were discussed under the research hypothesis:

- H₁: there is a significant increase in crime among youths in Abuja

Table 1 shows that there is a significant increase in crime-related cases in Abuja. The null hypothesis is therefore, rejected ($X^2_{\text{calculated}} = 64.80 > X^2_{\text{critical}} = 3.841$ at 0.05 level of significance). The findings indicate that there is a significant increase in crime-related cases among youths in Abuja and its environs. This is also supported by different crime cases domiciled in Nigeria police FCT command between 2008-2017. Following the influx of youths into the Abuja capital territory

Table 1: χ^2 analysis of the significant increase in crime among youths in Abuja

Responses	Observed frequency (fo)	Expected frequency (fe)	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /Fe
Yes	232	160	5184	32.40
No	88	160	5184	32.40
Total	320	320	10368	64.80

χ^2 calculated = 64.80 while χ^2 critical = 3.841 with 0.05 at the degree of freedom of 1

Table 2: χ^2 analysis of the relationship between the criminal justice system and crime reduction in Abuja

Responses	Observed frequency (fo)	Expected frequency (fe)	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /Fe
Yes	192	160	1024	6.40
No	128	160	1024	6.40
Total	320	320	2048	12.80

χ^2 calculated 12.80; χ^2 critical = 3.841 with 0.05 at the degree of freedom of 1

in search of employment, there is high tendency for youths to commit crime when they lack the basic things of life such as employment opportunities, food, shelter, education etc. this is supported by Idoko who asserts that “youths who are poverty stricken have higher rate of juvenile delinquency, high crime records and their proximity to drug and alcohol abuse is equally high”. The study also confirmed that due to idleness, most youths in Abuja get involved in various criminal activities like stealing, pick-pocketing, raping, robbery, kidnapping, ritual killing, etc:

- H_2 : there is no significant relationship between the criminal justice system and crime reduction in Abuja

Table 2 shows that there is no significant relationship between the criminal justice system and crime reduction in Abuja. The study reveals that bureaucracies and delays occasioned by the criminal justice system most often affect crime reduction. The study supported Olaleye (2010) and Alabi (2014) who contends that “the incidences of delay in court proceedings and unnecessary adjournment which delays or denies justices and punishment is not significant towards crime reduction”:

- H_3 : there is a significant positive relationship between youth empowerment and crime control in Abuja

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between youth empowerment and crime control (χ^2 calculate = 110.46 > χ^2 critical = 3.841 at 0.05 level of significant). The null hypothesis is therefore, rejected. The study confirmed that when youths are economically empowered, there will be a drastic reduction in criminal activities among youth. This empowerment can

Table 3: χ^2 analysis on the relationship between youth empowerment and crime control

Responses	Observed frequency (fo)	Expected frequency (fe)	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /Fe
Yes	254	160	8836	55.23
No	66	160	8836	55.23
Total	320	320	17672	110.46

χ^2 calculated = 110.46, χ^2 critical = 3.841 with 0.05 at the degree of freedom of 1

also come through the development of entrepreneurship skills among the youths in the Abuja through their Agents called Abuja Enterprise Agency. These skills will develop and strengthen youth capacity as agents of social and economic transformation. The study also reveals that youth empowerment programme should not only be for those at the city centres but youths at the satellite towns and villages also ought to be involved, otherwise, youth crimes at the satellite towns could transcend to the city centres.

The findings of this study indicate that youth empowerment programmes are alternative strategies towards crime control in Abuja and its environs. This could come in the form of skill acquisition, school to land programme, youth employment and vocational skill development scheme the small-scale industrial and graduate farmers programme, open-apprenticeship scheme. This study also have implications for community development planners, policymakers, non-governmental agencies and other stakeholders participating in development planning and design, sociologists, criminologists and service delivery system to start advocating for alternative and proactive crime control measures through economic empowerment, production empowerment, marketing empowerment, technological innovations, skill development empowerment of the Abuja youths in particular and Nigerian youths in general. These schemes if properly handled will have a positive effect on controlling crime in Abuja and other parts of the country. The growth in communication technology, particularly in the utilization of electronic devices, the internet and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Blog can help provide effective ways of empowering youths to become effective leaders instead of indulging in crimes.

CONCLUSION

The study has established that there is a positive relationship between youth empowerment and crime control in Abuja and its environment. The study also established that youth empowerment could reduce crime faster than the criminal justice system of police, court and prison services in Nigeria. The study has equally established that youth empowerment programme in Nigeria should be restructured or re-designed and should

be centred on the participatory approach. "This approach emphasized the importance of involving the beneficiaries in all stages of the programme".

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following. There should be political will by Nigerian leaders in combating crime among youths. This could come by creating an environment which discourages crime of any kind, by having appropriate legislation and under the independent judiciary.

Youth empowerment programme should be people oriented in nature. This entails making the programme youth-friendly and accessible to the people. The programme should be packaged in such a way that it will build the capacity of the beneficiary, thereby building the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit in youths. This will go a long way in keeping them from criminal behaviour.

Creation of jobs to jobless youths, provision of infrastructures and making policies that can put food on the table for the poor masses could help in a drastic reduction of crime in Abuja and its environ.

There should be training and retraining of Nigeria police and equipping them with the modern technique of crime prevention and control, especially, in the areas of crime detection and investigation.

Nigeria prison should be reformed adequately to attain the world best practices, through decongestion of prisons and making prison yards a rehabilitation centres where prisoners could learn various trades that will help them cope economically when they are out from the prison custody.

More judges and lawyers should be employed in the court, so that, there will be a speedy dispensing of judgment on criminal cases which will act as a deterrence to others who might contemplate into criminal activities.

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