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THE PROBLEMS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND RURAL CRIME

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ABSTRACT

This research project was carried out in Ekiti West Local Government of Ekiti State, Nigeria to determine the problem of youth unemployment and how it influences crime in rural areas. The research is aimed at providing vivid and adequate insight on a wide range of the fundamental aspects of youth unemployment and rural crime.

The study adopted a Descriptive Survey research design and structured questionnaire as instrument of data collection. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated. The population and sample size for the study was two hundred (200) youths, farmers, and security personnel in Ekiti West Local Government Area. Data collected was statistically analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentages and frequencies. The findings of the study revealed that, there is positive and high correlation between youth unemployment and rural crime.

Keywords: Youth Unemployment, Crime, Rural Crime

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

One of the most critical problems of development confronting largely developing countries, the African continent of Africa and Nigeria in particular is youth unemployment. According to America Encyclopedia (1974:27), unemployment is the state of having no job; joblessness. It is a type of joblessness, due to a particular economic mechanism. Unemployment according to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) is said to mean those people who are able and eager to work, but for whom no suitable works are available. It can be seen as a structural problem, where the production of capacity of the economy is far below the level of absorbing the available manpower.

Youth unemployment is a social problem; this is because it is undesirable to the society and also the inherent nature of youth unemployment has posed a threat to society as a whole, and to the individuals who live in that society (Otu, Eja, Eko, & Josephat, 2011; Angioha, Nwagboso, Ironbar, & Ishie, 2018; Owan, Ayuk, Tiku, & Nwankwo, 2019). The types of youth unemployment commonly found in urban and rural society especially in Nigeria include, structural, frictional, and seasonal. One of the common characteristics of structural unemployment for instance, is when the skills set of a worker does not match the skills demanded by the jobs available, or alternatively when workers are available but are unable to reach the geographical location of the jobs. The seasonal unemployment on the other hand, comes and goes with the seasons of the year that dictates the demand of certain jobs, and this is commonly found in the rural setting because the demand for agricultural labour increases during the rainy season- planting, cultivation and harvesting, and in addition, road construction is always out of place in the rainy season, albeit it depends on the

terrain of the areas. Therefore, some workers are relieved of their work during the prevailing season.

Unemployment has been a great social problem in the world from time immemorial. For some decades, youth unemployment has been a serious economic problem in the society, particularly in Nigeria as a whole. The growing and persistent youth unemployment has negatively impact on the rise of political unrest and anti-social behaviour. The increase of 34.52% of crime from 2016-2020, according to World Bank, 2019; Ojong-Ejoh, Bassey & Angioha, 2021; Ojong, Agba, Njirinze, & Angioha, 2021 are notable factors. Antisocial behavior such as riots and protests in Nigeria are the effects of youth unemployment. The lack of productive engagement of young people in wider society, underlined by high levels of unemployment and under-employment, only serves to add to this feeling of disenfranchisement.

In Nigerian rural communities, persistent effects of youth unemployment are drug abuse, burglary, and armed robbery. According to Barclay, Donnermeyer, Doyle and Talary (2001), drug abuse is the most prevalent social problem related to crime in rural areas. This can be also supplemented by the consumption of alcohol, and the possession of weapons and vehicles which can be so-called crime facilitators (Felson & Boba 2010; Pesch & Neubacher, 2011; Ukwaiyi, Ojong, Austin, & Emeka, 2012; Ayuk, Emeka, Chibuzo, & Omono, 2013, Achu, Owan, Uyang., & Francis, 2013; Ayuk, Owan, Ekok, & Odinka, 2012). Similarly, Ajaegbu (2012) observed that the accelerating level of prostitution, armed robbery, rape, terrorism and all facets of violence in rural areas can be largely attributed to the incidence of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

In Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State, many cases of drug abuse, violence, armed robbery, and burglary are recorded or reported as observed by this study. This is because, most of the employers rely deeply on seasonal jobs, and most workers do not match the skills demanded by the jobs available. Moreover, there has been shortage of research on this very important topic and

it is therefore from this backdrop that a research on the effect of unemployment on rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State is initiated.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The basic aim of this study is to examine the problems of youth unemployment and rural crime in Nigeria. Specific objectives include:

- i. To investigate the problems of youth unemployment and rural crime with particular reference to Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State.
- ii. To describe the extent of youth unemployment and crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State.
- iii. To determine crimes that is traceable to unemployment.
- iv. To proffer solutions and recommendations to the problems of youth unemployment and rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions which are in line with the objectives will be answered in this study:

- i. What is the extent of youth unemployment and rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State?
- ii. To what extent does youth unemployment contribute to rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

For the successful completion of the study, the following research hypotheses were formulated by the researcher;

- i. There are no problems of youth unemployment and rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State.
- ii. Youth unemployment does not contribute to rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is believed that at the completion of the study, the findings will be of benefit to the government of Nigeria, Ekiti State Government and the unemployed youth in particular. The study comes up with recommendations to settle unemployment issue in Ekiti West Local Government. The study will also be of great benefit to the researchers who intends to embark on research on similar topics as it will serve as a guide. Finally, the study will be of great importance to academics, lecturers, teachers, students and the general public.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study covers the problems of youth unemployment and rural crime. The researcher encounters some constrain which limited the scope of the study;

- a) *Availability Of Research Material*: The research material available to the researcher is insufficient, thereby limiting the study.
- b) *Time*: The time frame available for the study does not enhance wider coverage as the researcher has to combine other academic activities with the study.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Youth: Youth is the time of life when one is young, but often means the time between childhood and adulthood (maturity). It is also defined as "the appearance, freshness, vigor, spirit, etc., characteristic of one who is young"

Unemployment: Unemployment is a phenomenon that occurs when a person who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work. Unemployment is often used as a measure of the health of the economy. The most frequently measure of unemployment is the unemployment rate,

Rural: Rural is the official description of a settlement that cannot be described as a town or a city. Generally, rural areas are characterized by low population, low standard of living and inadequate infrastructural facilities.

Crime: An action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable by law

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

There are so many literatures written on the subjects of social disorganization and social control. However, the following three relevant theories were reviewed in this paper: Social Disorganization Theory, Social Control Theory and the Marxist Theory of Unemployment.

2.1.1 Social Disorganization Theory

Two researchers from the Chicago School of Criminology, Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay in 1942 developed Social Disorganization Theory through their research. The theory of social disorganization states that a person's physical and social environments are primarily responsible for the behavioral choices that a person makes. The core of social disorganization theory is that location matters when it comes to predicting illegal activity. Shaw and McKay noted that neighborhoods with the highest crime rates have at least three common problems, physical dilapidation, poverty, and higher level of ethnic and culture mixing. Shaw and McKay claimed that delinquency was not caused at the individual level, but is a normal response by normal individuals to abnormal conditions. Social disorganization theory is widely used as an important predictor of youth violence and crime.

2.1.2 Social Control Theory

In 1973, Walter Reckless developed the Social Control Theory. According to him, an individual's behaviour is determined by what he or she wants or desires the most at any given time. His inner and outer controls dissuade him from deviant tendencies. Social control theory gained prominence during the 1960s as sociologists sought differing conceptions of crime. It was during this period that

Travis Hirschi put forth his innovative rendering of Control Theory, a theory built upon existing concepts of social control. Hirschi's Social Control Theory asserts that ties to family, school and other aspects of society serve to diminish one's propensity for deviant behaviour. According to Hirschi, these bonds are based on attachment to those both within and outside of the family, including friends, teachers, and co-workers; commitment to activities in which an individual has invested time and energy, such as educational or career goals; involvement in activities that serve to both further bond an individual to others and leave limited time to become involved in deviant activities; and finally, belief in wider social values.

Social Control Theory thus posits that crime occurs when such bonds are weakened or are not well established. Control theorists argue that without such bonds, crime is an inevitable outcome (Lilly, 2018:12). Unlike other theories that seek to explain why people engage in deviant behaviour, control theories take the opposite approach, questioning why people refrain from offending (Akers and Sellars, 2018). Social control theory is of the view that people engage in criminal behavior because diverse factors control their impulses to break social norms. As a result, criminality is seen as a possibility for all individuals within society, avoided only by those who seek to maintain familial and social bonds.

As it is related to this study, social control theory assumes that the existence of crime among unemployed youths in Ekiti West Local Government Area and Nigeria in general can be reduced or controlled through conventional agencies. These important conventional agencies include the government, police, family and community at large, who must play active roles towards educating citizens on the consequences of youth unemployment and crime. The aspects of social control are thought to interact and separate an individual from criminal involvement (Siegel and McCormick, 2016).

2.1.3 Marxist Theory of Unemployment

According to Karl Marx (1976:24), unemployment is inherent within the unstable capitalist system and periodic crises of mass unemployment are to be expected. The function of the proletariat within the capitalist system is to provide a “reserve army of labour” that creates downward pressure on wages. This is accomplished by dividing the proletariat into surplus labour (employees) and under-employment (unemployed). This reserve army of labour fight among themselves for scarce jobs at lower and lower wages. At first glance, unemployment seems inefficient since unemployed workers do not increase profits. However, unemployment is profitable within the global capitalist system because unemployment lowers wages which are costs from the perspective of the owners. From this perspective low wages benefit the system by reducing economic rents. Yet, it does not benefit workers.

Capitalist systems unfairly manipulate the market for labour by perpetuating unemployment which lowers laborers’ demands for fair wages. Workers are pitted against one another at the service of increasing profits for owners. According to Marx, the only way to permanently eliminate unemployment would be to abolish capitalism and the system of forced competition for wages and then shift to a socialist or communist economic system. For contemporary Marxists, the existence of persistent unemployment is proof of the inability of capitalism to ensure full employment.

2.2 Empirical Review

An individual is typically considered unemployed when he or she has not worked for a specific period of time but would like to and is, hence, actively searching for work. Yet, the definition of unemployment can also vary from country to country. Gorlich, Stepanok and Al-Hussami (2013) postulated that, in some countries, students who are actively looking for a job is counted as part of the work force while, in others, they are not. The number of inactive youth, that is, those not actively searching for work and not being in the labour force or in

education can also exhibit quite a variation across countries. Such data of the non-employed, which comprises of both unemployed and inactive individuals, can be more meaningful as it gives a clearer idea of the real magnitude of the problem. It is, however, less viable due to differences in definitions and problems with the availability.

There are a number of causes of youth unemployment on many of which there is a fair amount of consensus. The findings of Coenjaerts, Ernst, Fortuny, Rei and Pigrim(2009) revealed the mismatch between the demand and supply of skills possessed by young workers has been mentioned to contribute to higher youth unemployment rates. Similarly, Manacorda and Petrongolo (1999) exposed that there is a relationship between skills mismatch and total unemployment across OECD countries. The skill mismatch issue is particularly important in the developing world.

O'Higgins (2007) found that youth unemployment early in life may have persistent negative consequences for the persons' subsequent career, as it may impair their productive potential and employment opportunities. Apart from scarring effects, O'Higgins (2007); Fougère, Kramarz, and Pouget (2009) discovered that youth unemployment has been found to be associated with drug use and crime. This is particularly severe as youth unemployment is typically concentrated among groups which have additional social problems.

Crime has been found to hamper development of rural areas in a serious way. Gerasimova (2008) notes that corruption alone is a serious obstacle in the development process of developing countries. Ceccato (2016) points out that "crime and safety are important dimensions of sustainable rural development". In other words, persisting crime in rural areas is likely to result in unsustainable development, depriving people of their livelihoods and promoting the outmigration of often younger household members to urban centers. This can have serious implications for foodsecurity in some developing countries: while the availability of workforce in rural areas decreases, and the environment gets

deteriorated by criminal acts, more food needs to be produced to feed the urban population.

Skaperdas, Soares, Willman and Miller (2009) state that violent crime like armed robbery that committed by unemployed youth in rural areas results in high costs on global development, and that it directly reduces economic growth. Fafchamps and Minten (2004) find for Madagascar that crime and insecurity result in a significant reduction in income and access to public infrastructure such as health care centers and schools. Indirect costs also occur as psychic cost and loss in work time if people affected by burglary or theft feel suspicious and unsafe at home (Barclay et al. 2001; Ceccato 2016). Furthermore, the findings of Grote and Neubacher (2016) revealed that in case of property crime, farming households are deprived of their livelihood income if livestock, field crops, or equipment and tools are stolen of their homesteads or fields.

A study by Alabi (2014) on youth's unemployment and crime control in Nigeria revealed that many social problems such as prostitution, robbery, alcoholism, domestic violence, social, religious and civil unrest and suicide to mention but few, become more severe in times of high unemployment. According to Alabi (2014) there is a linkage between unemployment, poverty and crime, when people cannot earn an income from legal, legitimate and social acceptable work/means; they turn to illegal activities. Similar study of Ugal, Nwagbrara and Ugang (2011) in Calabar Metropolis revealed that many social problems in study area in nature of crime, prostitution, hunger, poverty and general structural inadequacies are mainly the consequences of unemployment among the youths. Persisting crime in rural areas is likely to result in unsustainable development, depriving even more people of their livelihoods and promoting outmigration of often younger household members to urban centers. This can have serious implications for food security in some developing countries: while the availability of workforce in rural areas decreases, and the environment gets deteriorated by criminal acts, more food needs to be produced to feed the urban population.

Nwobodo carried out a study in 2017 on the various forms of youth unemployment and crime in Nkanu East Enugu State Nigeria. He adopted a mixed method design and used a sample size of 204 persons. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Analysis of the study revealed that majority (55%) of the respondents identified cyclical unemployment as the major form of youth unemployment in Nkanu East. The qualitative interview corroborated that cyclical unemployment is common in Enugu State but that it is not part of the natural unemployment rate. Some participants explained that it is caused by the contraction phase of the business cycle. That is when the demand for goods and services fall dramatically, forcing businesses to lay off large numbers of workers to cut costs. This type of unemployment tends to create more unemployment because the laid-off workers have less money to buy the goods and services they need, further lowering demand.

In addition, another study was conducted by Okoh (2017) to ascertain the forms of youth unemployment and crime prevalent in Aguata LGA, Anambra State. The study adopted a descriptive survey method, using a sample size of 200 respondents, and with the aid of Chi-square inferential statistics, the researcher found that various forms of youth unemployment are going on in Aguata LGA of Anambra State. Analysis of the findings revealed that underemployment is widespread (50%), followed closely by real unemployment, long term unemployment and natural unemployment. The study showed that underemployment is peculiar to the youths in Aguata LGA, and occurs when workers have jobs, but they are not working to their full capacity or skill level. This includes those who are working part-time, but would prefer full time jobs and those who are working in jobs where they are not being utilized.

CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS AND METHOD

3.1 Research Method

In this study, a survey was adopted, which is primarily based on quantitative data. Therefore, data collection was carried out through the administration of a

questionnaire instrument served to respondents residing in Ekiti West Local Government of Ekiti State. The instrument became appropriate for this study because of its relevance in the field of social research. Among others, it enables a wider audience to be reached, which helps in gathering authentic and detailed information on the topic under study.

3.2 Study Area

The study area is Ekiti West Local Government Area, situated within Ekiti Central Senatorial District of Ekiti State. The Local Government Area comprises communities such as Aramoko Ekiti, Erinjiyan Ekiti, Okemesi Ekiti, Ipole Ekiti, Ikogosi Ekiti, Ido Ile Ekiti and Erio Ekiti. Residents of these communities are predominant farmers, civil servants, traders and political office holders. Apart from the English language that is considered as the Linqua Franca in Nigeria, the native of this study area speak “Yoruba” as their ancestral language.

The study area is Ekiti Central. Residents of this area are predominant civil servants, traders and political office holders. Apart from the English language that is considered as the Linqua Franca, the native of this study area speak “Yoruba” as their ancestral language.

A sample size of 200 respondents was drawn from the population. Purposive sampling technique was adopted and found suitable for this study. This is because this technique allows the researcher the opportunity to identify respondents who have connection with the subject matter of the research and are qualified to respond on the issue. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire. This was used to ascertain respondents’ perception on the effectiveness of social media for political mobilization among voters in Ekiti State.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1: Analysis of Findings

This segment of the study focuses on the analysis of data about the research questions that were asked at the early stage of this investigation.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	120	60
Female	80	40
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows that out of 200 respondents, 120 (60%) were males while 80 (40%) of the respondents were females. Therefore, the number of male respondents was more than the number of female respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
15 – 30	50	25
31 – 35	45	22.5
36 – 40	55	27.5
41 - 45	25	12.5
46 and above	25	12.5
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the age distribution in Table 2 above, 50 respondents, representing 25% were within the age brackets of 15-25, 45 respondents, representing 22.5% were within 31-35 age bracket, 55 respondents, representing 27.5% were within 36-

40 age brackets, 25 respondents, representing 12.5% were within 41-45 age brackets, while 25 respondents, representing 12.5% were within 46 and above.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Students	55	27.5
Civil Servants	45	22.5
Traders	55	27.5
Farmers	45	22.5
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the distribution of Table 3 above, 55 respondents, representing 27.5% are students, 45 respondents, representing 22.5% are civil servants, 55 respondents, representing 27.5% are traders, whereas 45 respondents, representing 22.5% are farmers.

Table 4: Responses of Respondents on the Types of Youth Unemployment in Ekiti West Local Government Area.

Types of Youth Unemployment	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Structural Unemployment	64	32
Seasonal Unemployment	106	53
Frictional Unemployment	30	15
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the findings, 32% (64) respondents viewed structural unemployment as the type of youth unemployment in Ekiti West Local Government Area. According to them; there are no industries in Ekiti West Local Government Local Government Area, and more importantly, the youths in the area do not

have the skills needed for the available jobs. This concurs with the assertion by Onwuka (2015) that structural unemployment occurs when there is mismatch between jobs that are available and the people looking for work. This mismatch could be because job seekers do not have the skills required to do the available jobs.

Seasonal unemployment is another type of unemployment as identified by 53% (106) respondents. The demand for agricultural labour increases during the rainy season, that is, planting, cultivation and harvesting. In addition, road construction is always out of place in the rainy season, albeit it depends on the terrain of the areas. Therefore, some workers are relieved of their work during the prevailing season. This corroborates with the findings of Danjos and Ali (2014) among many others that this kind of unemployment is based on the dictate of the season.

The frictional unemployment was also identified as a type of youth unemployment by 15% (30) respondents. The implication of the findings is that when new graduates spend some period of time searching for the right job, it could lead them to frictional unemployment. The findings bore semblance to the study of Ojo (1998) that frictional unemployment persist as a result of the continuous flow of people from one job to another (in and out of employment).

Table 5: Responses of Respondents on the Effect of Youth Unemployment on Rural Crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area

Unemployment Effects on Rural Crime	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Burglary	84	42
Armed robbery	42	21
Drug abuse	74	37
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the findings of the respondents, 42% (84) identified burglary as the effect youth unemployment has on rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area. Burglary and theft, respectively, affect households not only by loss in property, but it also creates an indirect psychological cost of making people feel suspicious and unsafe at home. The findings has also coincided with the views of Grote and Neubacher (2016) that most farm crimes which occur in developed countries are property-related and include theft of farm produce (such as fruits and vegetables, maize or wheat, and livestock).

Armed robbery was also identified as the effect of unemployment on rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area as stated by 21% (42) respondents. Armed robbery has been identified by the residents of Ekiti West as violent crime which most often has been resulting to death or permanent disability of the victims. The findings has also coincided with the views of the Trent (2014) where an incident involves robbery, victims usually lose their valuables after the attack. Similarly, assassination leads to the elimination of individuals who are usually of immense contribution to their family and indeed society in general.

Another effect of youth unemployment on rural crime in Ekiti West Local Government Area as posited by 37% (74) respondents is drug abuse. Crime has consequences for individuals, groups, corporate bodies and the society. This result is in line with O'Higgins (2007) and Fougère, Kramarz, Pouget (2009) that youth unemployment has been found to be associated with drug use and crime.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Discussion

The relationship between youth unemployment and rural crime has shown that there is significant, positive and high correlation between the two variables. This means that the degree of the technological displacement, lack of proper

skills in the composition of demand, residency in depressed areas, and competition of imports with domestic goods among others are contributory factors to youth unemployment and rural crime. This implies that availability of jobs depend to a great extent on the degree of skills acquired by youths in rural areas which most often are not available. This is in agreement with Danjos and Ali (2014) who noted that the introduction of technology such as computers has displaced many people in many organizations, especially banks and this has resulted in structural unemployment.

This finding is also in accordance to the findings of Gange (2016), who maintained that unemployment has led many youths in the rural areas to take to robbery, kidnapping and hired assassins. The analysis on the relationship between seasonal unemployment and drug abuse showed that there is positive significant relationship between the two variables. This implies that the unemployment is based on the dictate of the season. In essence, it comes and goes with the seasons of the year that dictates the demand of certain jobs. This view is corroborated by Ajaegbu (2012) who reported that disenchantment and frustration of young people due to mass unemployment has increased the number of aggrieved youths and resulted in the emergence of jobless youths who target the very society that alienated them.

The relationship between frictional unemployment and armed robbery showed that there is positive significant relationship between the two variables. Frictional unemployment is a situation where a person is out of one job and in search of another job. This implies that the changing employment is not particularly easy especially where the level of unemployment is high such as Nigeria where the labour market is saturated. This is in line with the finding of Bennel (2000) which disclosed that rural society is becoming increasingly criminalized, especially with the proliferation of youth gangs. Neither homes, nor markets are safe in Nigeria because of frequent occurrence of armed robbery incidents. Ideyi (2005) similarly revealed that the unemployment problem, which now seems beyond remedy, has produced army of idle hands

and some of them have decided to punish the society that fails to provide them with means of livelihood and dignity by robbing its members of their property at gunpoint.

5.2 Conclusion

The issue of unemployment in Nigeria has remained a recurring decimal. Despite the fact that the country is endowed with diverse human and material resources, long years of negligence and adverse policies have led to the under-utilization of these resources. Factors that contribute to unemployment and rural crime include deficient school curriculum, failure of the government to provide jobs, lack of technical and vocational skills, and lack of interest in agriculture, bad governance, drug abuse, hunger, poverty and lack of interest in agriculture. Thus, lack of financial assistance to start-up small scale business, and quest for survival can make unemployed youths to engage in criminal activities such as rural crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, burglary, motor theft, among others.

5.3 Recommendation

It is recommended based on the findings that government should intensify efforts to create more vocational skills acquisition centres across the country especially in rural areas to enable our young men and women to acquire skills in areas like tailoring, carpentry, automobile mechanic, ICT, metal work for them to be self-employed and also employ others. This will strongly help in drastically reducing the level of crimes in Nigerian rural areas. Skills acquisition is a strong instrument for empowerment of youth as to avert youth unemployment.

Thus, there is urgent need for good and effective policy options to solve the problem of graduate unemployment and crime in Nigeria.

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