

## **Socioeconomic Factors as Determinants of Crime Rates in Abraka, Delta State**

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### **Abstract**

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*This study examines the complex relationship between education as a socioeconomic factor and crime rates in Abraka, Nigeria. Employing a cross-sectional research design, structured questionnaires were distributed to participants (n=100) drawn from an ideal sample size of (n=400) from a total population of N=79,963 calculated using the Taro Yamane sample size technique. The study population comprised youths and adult population aged 16-39 years, with varying socioeconomic characteristics. Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics. From the analysis, the findings revealed significant negative correlations between access to quality education and crime rates in Abraka, underscoring the pivotal role of educational opportunities in mitigating criminal activities. Specifically, the study identified a trend where diminishing interest in formal education corresponded with an increase in crime rates, highlighting the importance of educational engagement in crime prevention efforts. It also found significant positive relationship between unemployment and crime rate in Abraka, suggesting that crime rate in Abraka increases or decreases subject to socio-economic status. Based on these findings, the study recommends addressing educational disparities and enhancing employment opportunities in Abraka. Policymakers are urged to enact comprehensive policies that prioritize socioeconomic development over solely relying on stringent law enforcement measures. By fostering educational advancement and providing pathways to gainful employment, Abraka can effectively combat crime and promote the overall well-being of its residents.*

**Keywords:** Crime Rates; Education; Educational Disparities; Educational Opportunities; Socioeconomic Factors.

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### **1. Introduction**

Crime in contemporary Nigeria is a multifaceted issue with various interconnected causes that contribute to its prevalence (Ogunwale, Oshiname & Ajagunna, 2019). Understanding the major factors behind criminal activities is crucial for developing effective strategies (Mamajonova, 2023) to address and mitigate the challenges faced by the Nigerian society (Igbinedion & Ebomoyi, 2017). Several key factors contribute to the high rates of crime in the country (Dikko, Osi & Bello, 2013), including economic, social, political, and cultural aspects (Oyelade, 2019; Aaltonen, Kivivuori & Martikainen, 2011).

Evidence in the literature has long established a connection between crime rates and various socio-economic factors and this relationship has been extensively studied globally (Malik, 2016). Socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses elements such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, and cultural characteristics, which have been linked to both physical and psychological well-being (Chen & Miller, 2013). Quality of life (QOL) is a key dependent influenced by SES, impacting individuals' responses, including education attainment and involvement in crime (Williams et al., 2018). Globally, over 700 million people live in extreme poverty, struggling to improve their QOL through various means (Halkos & Aslanidis, 2023). The global crime rate has been steadily increasing, with a significant portion of the population residing in areas characterized by high criminal activity (Hodgkinson, 2022; Ucko & Marks, 2023). Studies demonstrate a synchronous relationship between SES and crime rates, with improvements in economic growth often coinciding with declines in crime rates (Goulas & Zervoyianni, 2015). Increasing levels of education have shown to significantly reduce conviction rates for property and violent crimes, as well as the likelihood of incarceration (Hjalmarsson & Lochner, 2012; Lochner, 2010). This is coupled with the fact that nations with higher educational attainment tend to have lower crime rates, highlighting the global significance of education in crime prevention (Rakshit & Neog, 2020).

Nigeria faces significant social and economic challenges, with education, unemployment, poverty, and inequality contributing to its crime rate (Oguntunde et al., 2018). High poverty rates, income disparity, and environmental degradation further exacerbate these challenges, particularly in regions reliant on agriculture or affected by oil production (Dan, 2017; Babatunde, 2017). Disparities in education and income levels widen the poverty gap which exacerbates crime rates (Kolawole et al., 2015).

Abraka is currently facing significant socioeconomic challenges, marked by a troubling increase in criminal activities such as cybercrime, ransom kidnappings, and armed robbery, posing a threat to the well-being of the community. This situation is closely linked to the town's socioeconomic conditions, characterized by high unemployment and income inequality, which contribute to criminal behavior as a means of economic survival (Achinulo, 2017). At the core of this issue is the unequal access to quality education, restricting social mobility and potentially leading to higher involvement in criminal activities (Atakpo, 2020; Bell, Costa & Machin, 2022).

Beyond individual consequences, the rising crime rates in Abraka pose a threat to community trust and security, eroding social bonds. Existing policies have struggled to address this multifaceted issue (Osuji, Obubu & Obiora-Illuno, 2015) and have overlooked the crucial role of education and employment in combating crime. In 2019, the crime rate in Abraka was reported to be 64.3% higher compared to previous years, with property crimes and crimes against persons being the most prevalent (College Factual, 2019). This research primarily focuses on examining the relationship between education and unemployment, both being crucial socio-economic variables, and crime rate determiners in Abraka. Therefore, this study aims to delve into the correlation between crime and socio-economic variables specifically in Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria, building upon existing knowledge on the subject (Asghar, Qureshi & Nadeem, 2016; Igbinedion & Ebomoyi, 2017; Atakpo, 2020; Ajide, 2019; Achinulo, 2017; Bell, Costa & Machin, 2022; Oyelade, 2019).

The objective of this study is to identify the relationship between education as a socioeconomic variable and crime rate in Abraka. Also to identify the relationship between unemployment and crime rate in Abraka. Based on the stated objectives the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. There is a significant relationship between access to education and crime rate in Abraka.
2. There is significant relationship between unemployment and crime rate in Abraka.

Next after the introduction is the literature review, then methodology, result and discussions and finally conclusion and recommendations

## **2. Literature Review**

The relationship between job opportunities, educational disparities, and crime rates in Delta State, Nigeria, especially in the context of Abraka, presents a multifaceted and compelling area of inquiry. This subsection explores the extensive literature surrounding the impact of unemployment, underemployment, and limited access to quality education on criminal activities, as well as the theoretical frameworks that help elucidate these complex dynamics.

### **2.1 Conceptual Clarification**

For the purpose of this study, crime is conceptualized as any act or behavior that violates societal norms or laws, resulting in harm to individuals or communities. It

encompasses a wide range of illegal activities, including theft, assault, fraud, and drug trafficking, cybercrimes, among others. The crux is that people resort to crime to alleviate socioeconomic limitations, such as income disparity, unemployment, poverty, among others.

Socioeconomic factors however refer to the totality of social and economic conditions that influence individuals' and communities' well-being and opportunities. Absence of these conditions creates strains that encourage criminality. Some of the socioeconomic factors highlighted include but are not limited to poverty, unemployment, income disparity, access to education and healthcare, social exclusion, and cultural characteristics. Sufficiently, these factors shape individuals' life chances and opportunities and overall quality of life (QOL).

Central to both socio-economic conditions and crime is education, the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through formal or informal means. It encompasses formal schooling, vocational training, and lifelong learning opportunities that can boost individuals' personal development, social mobility, and economic advancement. Access to quality education is often considered a fundamental human right and is recognized as a key determinant of socioeconomic status and opportunities for individuals and communities.

## **2.2 Job Opportunities (Unemployment and Underemployment)**

The correlation between elevated levels of unemployment, denoting the condition of individuals capable and willing to work but unable to secure suitable employment, and underemployment, which refers to individuals working in positions below their skill level or seeking full-time employment but settling for part-time roles, has been extensively examined and analyzed (Phillips & Land, 2012). In the specific context of Delta State, Nigeria, characterized by economic volatility stemming from fluctuations in the oil and gas industry, this relationship becomes particularly pronounced. The recurring economic instability in the region has led to persistent challenges of unemployment and underemployment, initially identified by Bowers and Pierce (1980) and Freeman (1996) as cited in Weatherburn, Freeman, and Holmes (2014).

The economic difficulties arising from this instability are closely tied to the availability, or lack thereof, of job opportunities. Confronted with limited prospects for gainful employment, individuals may be compelled to explore alternative means of survival, some of which might involve engaging in criminal activities (Metu,

Kalu, & Maduka, 2018). This survivalist perspective, elucidated in these studies, illuminates the harsh realities experienced by communities like Abraka in Delta State, where individuals often navigate a challenging economic landscape, and crime may unfortunately become a consequence of these circumstances. As this study progresses, it becomes evident that addressing the issue of unemployment and underemployment is crucial for mitigating crime and enhancing the overall quality of life in Abraka (Makinde, 2015).

### **2.3. Educational Disparities**

Disparities in accessing quality education can have repercussions on job opportunities, often aligning with one's economic status. Additionally, the level of interest that young individuals express in education plays a significant role in determining their educational attainment. Consequently, the combination of interest in education, its availability, and access to quality education emerges as crucial factors contributing to educational disparities (Bell, Costa, & Machin, 2022). Research by Sampson and Laub (1993) and Lochner and Moretti (2004) has extensively illuminated the profound impact of limited educational opportunities on individuals (Fulks, 2023). According to these studies, when educational possibilities are constrained, it narrows the range of available employment options, thereby increasing the likelihood of individuals turning to criminal activities as an alternative path (Bell, Costa, & Machin, 2022).

The well-documented link between education and crime is a pivotal aspect of criminology. In the specific context of Abraka, where educational disparities are a stark reality, the findings from Sampson and Laub, as well as Lochner and Moretti's research, bear significant relevance (Fulks, 2023). These studies provide evidence that enhancing educational access and quality can serve as an effective strategy in mitigating crime rates by expanding employment options and reducing the temptation of criminal involvement (Arisukwu et al., 2020). As the literature reveals, it becomes evident that addressing the educational gap is not only crucial for enhancing individual prospects but also holds the key to fostering a safer and more prosperous community in the region. This underscores the significance of education as a vital component of any comprehensive approach aimed at reducing crime and improving the overall quality of life (Welsh & Farrington, 2011).

The correlation between education levels and crime rates is a crucial aspect of discussions concerning socioeconomic disparities. In criminological discussions, there is an increasing emphasis on income inequality due to its profound influence

on criminal activities. Wilkinson and Pickett's (2009) and Smeeding's (2005) research elucidates the detrimental effects of income inequality on community crime rates. Adekoya (2019) underscores the findings of Wilkinson and Pickett, as well as Smeeding, highlighting the established connection between income disparities and the rise of criminal activities.

This connection is attributed to the emergence of feelings of social injustice, a central element in criminological theories. Merton's strain theory, originating in 1938, suggests that when individuals perceive a significant gap between societal expectations and actual opportunities for success, it can lead to frustration. This frustration may prompt some individuals to resort to criminal behavior as a means of achieving their goals or addressing perceived injustices (Igbinedion & Ebomoyi, 2017).

Examining crime patterns in Abraka becomes crucial in understanding the impact of education on criminal activities. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics for Delta State reveals that crimes against persons, particularly murder and assault, were the most prevalent, accounting for 2,337 cases. Property crimes, including theft/stealing and robbery, constituted 1597 cases, while fraud/cyber-related crimes stood at 345 known cases in 2017. According to Akinyemi, Adeleke, and Adedoyin (2018), research indicates that common crimes such as theft, robbery, cybercrime, and drug-related offenses are predominantly committed by the youth population (Ezekiel et al., 2019).

In line with the paper published by Adekoya (2019) and Welsh and Farrington (2011), education emerges as the centerpiece of the puzzle. Literature has suggested that as education increases in society, although complexity also rises, there is a significant drop in crime rates. It has also been observed that as more people advance in their education, so do their earnings and access to better-paying job opportunities, mitigating incentives for crimes. However, education has shown no significant impact on white-collar crimes.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted two theoretical frameworks-- strain theory and social disorganization theory - to explain socio-economic determinants of crime in Abraka. Developed by Robert K. Merton in 1938, the strain theory provides a valuable framework for comprehending the dynamics investigated in the study regarding the influence of socioeconomic factors on crime rates in Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. According to this theory, individuals may experience feelings of

strain, frustration, and social injustice when there is a significant gap between their societal expectations and actual opportunities for success. In such circumstances, some individuals may turn to criminal behavior as a means of achieving their goals or addressing perceived injustices (Igbiniedion & Ebomoyi, 2017).

In the specific context of Abraka, where the study explores the impact of socioeconomic factors on crime rates, strain theory serves as a fundamental framework for understanding the motivations and triggers behind criminal activities. It underscores the fact that a profound disconnect between societal expectations and available opportunities can lead to feelings of frustration and social injustice (Adekoya, 2017). In Abraka, characterized by economic challenges, educational disparities, and income inequality, strain theory becomes highly relevant. It enables a comprehension of how these socioeconomic factors might contribute to criminal engagement as individuals seek alternative means to address unmet needs and perceived social injustices. Acknowledging the significance of strain theory, this study attains a deeper understanding of the complexities of criminal behavior, offering potential pathways for evidence-based policy recommendations to reduce crime and enhance community safety in Abraka (Adegoke, 2021).

The Social Disorganization Theory, which centers on the breakdown of social cohesion and order within communities, holds significant relevance for the examination of the impact of socioeconomic factors on crime rates in Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. According to this theory, when a community experiences weakened social bonds, the disintegration of community structures, and insufficient social control, it becomes more vulnerable to criminal activities (Abdullahi & Issah, 2016). In the context of Abraka, socioeconomic factors such as high unemployment, educational disparities, and income inequality have the potential to disrupt the social fabric of the community. Limited access to quality education and employment opportunities can result in a sense of alienation and disconnection among residents. This breakdown of social networks and community structures may create an environment where criminal behavior becomes more prevalent (Umar, Johnson & Cheshire, 2018; Akinwale & Aderinto, 2011).

Numerous studies have investigated the correlation between crime rates and socioeconomic factors. Wilson and Kelling's "Broken Windows" theory from 1982 suggests that visible signs of neglect, such as deteriorating buildings, may contribute to crime by implying a community that is overlooked by law enforcement (Newberry & Newberry, 2017). Communities exhibiting signs of

neglect have been associated with higher levels of socio-economic disparities (Ren, Zhao & He, 2019). In Abraka, inadequate infrastructure and neglect are pertinent, influencing perceptions of safety and crime rates. This research focuses on various socioeconomic factors, including job opportunities, education, income inequality, and healthcare access, as potential precursors to crime rates (Price, 2016). The crime rate, measured per 100,000 population, exhibits fluctuations in relation to socioeconomic factors (Wang, Kifer, Graif & Li, 2016).

### **3. Methodology**

Abraka is situated in a lowland landscape, and holds a unique geographical position, bordered by significant landmarks such as Obiaruku to the north, Eku to the south, the River Ethiope to the east, and the Niger Delta Basin to the west. This strategic location has historically contributed to its socio-economic importance. Notably, Abraka is distinguished as a university town, home to Delta State University, Abraka (DELSU), which was established on April 28, 1992, with a mission to provide higher education primarily to Deltans and beyond. The emergence of Abraka as a kingdom on May 6, 1978, marks a significant historical milestone, aligning with the establishment of other Urhobo kingdoms. Notably, Abraka stands out among Urhobo socio-political units for maintaining a distinct ancestral heritage, free from significant influence or integration with non-Urhobo communities. Abraka's development trajectory was notably influenced by infrastructural projects, such as the construction of a pivotal road linking Agbor to Sapele through Abraka in 1901. This development spurred population growth and increased commercial activities in the area, shaping Abraka's modern landscape.

The socio-economic fabric of Abraka is diverse, encompassing various activities ranging from tourism to agricultural and mining endeavors. Beyond its academic significance, Abraka serves as a destination for both domestic and international tourists, offering recreational facilities for outdoor activities like canoeing, fishing, swimming, and barbecue. Moreover, the mining of sand stones and plastering sand along the banks of River Ethiope and River Ovwuvwe, along with agricultural pursuits such as maize, okra, and water yam cultivation, are integral to the livelihoods of Abraka's inhabitants. This economic diversity reflects the resilience and adaptability of the community amidst changing landscapes and socio-economic dynamics.

The research employs a cross-sectional research design to examine the correlation between socioeconomic factors and crime rates in Abraka, located in the Delta

Central Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria. The structured questionnaire serves as the research instrument, utilizing a 4-point Likert scale to gauge respondents' agreement levels with the listed items. The study absorbs a total sample size of 120, determined through Taro Yamani's sampling technique from a population of 79,963. The recalibrated sample size, obtained by taking a quarter of the ideal size (ideal  $n=400$ ), guides the selection of participants through simple random sampling across districts in Abraka.

Data analysis involves SPSS version 25, encompassing both descriptive and inferential statistics. Ethical considerations are upheld, including obtaining prior approval, securing informed consent, ensuring participant anonymity, and maintaining data security to preserve ethical integrity. The researchers explicitly state no conflict of interest.

#### **4. Results and Discussions**

A total of 120 questionnaire copies were distributed, with 107 retrieved for analysis. The data examination unveiled that 25% of participants fall within the 16-19 age group, 35% belongs to the 20-24 age group (the largest category), 15% are in the 25-29 age bracket, and the remaining 25% are in the 30-39 age group. The average age of the respondents is 23.45. In terms of gender distribution, 70% of the participants are male, while 30% are female. Regarding educational attainment, 15% of respondents have "No Education," 30% have completed "Primary Education," and the majority, 55%, have achieved "Secondary Education." In the realm of marital status, 50% of participants are "Single," 45% are "Married," and 5% are "Divorced." In terms of employment status, 50% of respondents are "Unemployed," 40% are "Underemployed," and only 10% are "Gainfully Employed." Regarding the duration of residence in Abraka, 25% have lived there for 2-10 years, 30% for 12-21 years, and 40% for 22-32 years, while only 5% have resided in Abraka for 39 years. The mean number of years of residence for all respondents is 22.

#### **Test of hypothesis**

In testing of the hypothesis, three variables were of interest—crime, education and gainful employment. The result of the analysis is present in the table below:

**Table 1: Result of Pearson Correlational Analysis Using Two-Tailed Significance Level**

|              |                     |        |        |        |
|--------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Crime Rate   | Pearson Correlation | 1      | -.253* | .498** |
|              | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .011   | .000   |
|              | N                   | 100    | 100    | 100    |
| Education    | Pearson Correlation | -.253* | 1      | -.107  |
|              | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .011   |        | .288   |
|              | N                   | 100    | 100    | 100    |
| Unemployment | Pearson Correlation | .498** | -.107  | 1      |
|              | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   | .288   |        |
|              | N                   | 100    | 100    | 100    |

Source: Field Survey, 2023 \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Based on Table 1 (correlation of coefficients run on SPSS), the hypotheses formulated are evaluated as follows:

#### Decision Rules:

1. If the p-value of the correlation coefficients is less than 0.05 (at the 0.05 significance level), then there is a significant relationship between variables.
2. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, it indicates that this correlation is not statistically significant

#### Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between access to quality education and crime rate

The correlation between "Access to Quality Education" and "Crime Rate" is -0.253\*, and the p-value is 0.000 (two-tailed).

#### Decision:

Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (at the 0.05 significance level), this correlation is statistically significant. The negative correlation coefficient suggests that as access to quality education increases, the crime rate tends to decrease. Therefore, the data supports Hypothesis 1, hence hypothesis 1 is accepted.

#### Hypothesis 2: There is significant relationship between unemployment and crime rate in Abraka

The correlation between "Unemployment" and "Crime Rate" is 0.498\*\*, and the p-value is 0.011 (two-tailed).

**Decision:**

Since the p-value is less than 0.05 (at the 0.05 significance level), this correlation is statistically significant. The negative correlation coefficient suggests that areas with higher unemployment rates tend to have higher crime rates. Therefore, the data supports Hypothesis 2, hence hypothesis 2 is accepted.

**In summary:**

- a. Hypothesis 1 is supported, indicating a significant negative relationship between access to quality education and crime rate.
- b. Hypothesis 2 is supported, indicating there is a statistically significant positive correlation (moderate to strong strength) between crime rate and unemployment.

**4.1 Discussion of Findings**

The results of this study affirm well-established criminological theories and relevant literature, providing insights into the connections among crime rates, education, and gainful employment.

The negative correlation observed between crime rates and education (-0.253) supports Sampson and Laub's theory (1993), which emphasizes the significant role of limited educational opportunities in contributing to criminal engagement. Sampson and Laub (1993) contend that restricted access to quality education limits individuals' chances for social mobility, potentially leading to criminal behavior. Consequently, the negative correlation suggests that addressing educational disparities could be a crucial avenue for reducing crime rates (Asghar, Qureshi & Nadeem, 2016). By creating pathways for educational advancement, policymakers may potentially alleviate the frustration and social injustice that contribute to criminal inclinations (Adekoya, 2017).

However, the unexpected positive correlation between crime rates and unemployment (0.498) indicated in Table 1 prompts a re-evaluation of conventional expectations and finds theoretical support in Merton's strain theory (1938). Merton suggests that when individuals face a significant gap between societal expectations and actual opportunities for success, it can lead to frustration, potentially resulting in criminal behavior (Asghar, Qureshi & Nadeem, 2016). The positive correlation may indicate income inequality, where a stark contrast between the employed and unemployed populations fosters criminal inclinations (Merton, 1938; Arisukwu, 2020; Bell, Costa & Machin, 2022).

This unexpected finding challenges assumptions about the relationship between employment and crime, with some scholars arguing that high levels of gainful employment may create social disparities, heightening perceptions of injustice and contributing to criminal behavior (Adegoke, 2021; Ajide, 2019). This suggests that merely increasing employment opportunities without addressing underlying socioeconomic inequalities may not be sufficient to reduce crime rates in Abraka.

The correlation between education and gainful employment, though weak (-0.107), implies a limited direct relationship, aligning with the complexity of Abraka's socioeconomic landscape. This finding resonates with broader literature emphasizing the multifaceted nature of crime dynamics and the need for holistic strategies (Oyelade, 2019). While education may influence employment opportunities, other dynamic factors such as economic conditions and market dynamics play pivotal roles in shaping the landscape of gainful employment (Abdullahi & Issah, 2016).

Nevertheless, the study unequivocally establishes that education is crucial in determining crime trends. A more educated community or youth population demonstrates an increased tendency to refrain from committing crimes. This is because, despite the limited relationship between education and gainful employment, education opens up socio-economic opportunities (Achinulo, 2017; Ajide, 2019; Atakpo, 2020; Abdullahi & Issah, 2016; Ajide, 2021).

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study underscores the pivotal importance of education and employment opportunities in tackling the increasing crime rates in Abraka. It emphasizes the necessity to rectify educational disparities and improve the quality of education as essential measures to effectively discourage criminal activities.

To address the rising crime rates in Abraka, several recommendations have been made based on the findings:

1. It is vital to prioritize and enhance access to high-quality education, as mitigating educational disparities and improving educational standards can serve as an effective deterrent against criminal activities.
2. Initiatives focusing on enhancing literacy and vocational skills can prove beneficial as well.

3. Allocating resources wisely to address healthcare needs is essential, and strategies for reducing crime should primarily focus on bolstering education and employment opportunities.
4. Given the established correlation between job opportunities and crime rates in Abraka, local policymakers should undertake thorough studies to gain a deeper understanding of the community's needs and establish an attractive salary structure.

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