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Economic Hardships and Rising Youth Crime: Perspectives from Igbesa Community, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was conducted to seek the opinions of people on how economic hardships had increased the rate of economic crimes among Nigerian youth. The study was guided by the combination of social disorganization theory and anomie-strain theory. It adopted descriptive research design and quantitative approach was implemented through the administration of questionnaire to the people living in the study area. Sixty copies of questionnaire were administered but only fifty-nine copies were returned. Convenience sampling method under non-probability sampling technique was used to select the study area and respondents who participated in the study. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to analyse the data. A total of 55.9% of respondents were female; 28.8% of them were between 40-44 years; 67.8% of them were Christians; 52.5% of the respondents were middle class people and 55.9% of them had lived in the study area for period of 1-5 years. Findings show that 47.5% of respondents strongly agreed that economic hardship from subsidy removal on oil has increase stealing/theft among youth; 44.1% strongly agreed it has increased computer crime/frauds and 35.6% strongly agreed it has increased house breaking/burglary among youth. Furthermore, 38.9% of

respondents agreed that the economic hardship has increased the crime of kidnapping for ransomed; 37.3% of them agreed it has increased the ritual killing /ritual money among youth; 47.5% of them agreed it has increased the rate of robbery/armed robbery among youth; 49.3% of them agreed it has increased selling and buying of stolen goods; 44.1% of them agreed it has increased the crime of stealing under false pretense among youth; 49.3% of them agreed it has increased forgery among youth and 50.9% of respondent agreed it has increased selling of hard drugs by youth. Economic hardships which emanated from removal of oil subsidy is increasing crime among youth. Implementation of youth-oriented policies, parental care for the youth, community programmes centred on youth, proactiveness of law enforcement agents and further studies on economic hardships and youth crime were recommended.

Keywords: Economic hardship, Subsidy removal, crime, petroleum resources and youth.

Introduction

The recent decision of the Federal Government of Nigeria to remove fuel subsidy has unleashed unprecedented hardship on Nigerians. The removal has caused hyper-inflation within the economic sector. The increase in pump fuel price has drastically increased the cost of transportation which is a major driver in every economy.

It is very difficult now for many Nigerians, to eat food three times a day. The burden of this recent economic hardship is placed on every category of the Nigeria populace, youth included. Before the fuel subsidy removal which ushered in the current economic hardship, youths in Nigeria were already facing economic problem as a result of youth unemployment due to lack of quality education, skills and government insensitivity to help Nigerian youths in providing job opportunities (Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah, 2012) and Odeku (2013) . Hence, many youths have resulted to crimes in order to eke out living. Such criminal acts have drastically increased of recent, because of the current economic hardship being felt by Nigerians.

This study, therefore, was conducted to know the opinions of Igbesa community people on recent economic hardship and

its impact in increasing the crime rates among youths in Nigeria.

The general objective of the study was to investigate the impact of the recent economic hardship in Nigeria on increase of crime among Nigerian youths. However, the followings were the specific objectives:

(1) To investigate whether the recent economic hardship has increased crime among Nigerian youths than the past years.
(2) To find out which crimes have increased among Nigerian youths as a result of the recent economic hardship.

The research questions posed by the study were:

(1) Has the recent economic hardship increased crime among Nigerian youths?
(2) What are crimes that have increased among Nigerian youths as a result of the recent economic hardship?

The opinions of the Igbesa community people were sought on the above research objectives and questions as reflected in the findings of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth form an important demographic sector of every nation's population. The youth represent a dynamic, vibrant, most talented sector of any society (Adegun, 2008). However, one of the biggest challenges facing society today is the problem of juvenile or youth offending (Mbuba, 2005). Hence, youth crime in general and trends in youth crime especially, have become topics of discussion over the years (Svenssoni and Ring, 2007). Adolescent youth want an autonomous and independent life that is free from the watch and control of the adult which make them to engage in various delinquent acts like drug abuse, rape, robbery, cultism and vandalism (Fareo, 2012).

Youth crime may be traced to when governments and administrative authorities put excessive burdens on their citizens and deprive them of their freedom to pursue happiness has noted by Gacsi (2013). Odeku (2013) also argued the similar point. According to Odeku (2013), it is the obligation of the government to provide and deliver services to the citizens. However, in many countries of the world, Nigeria

included, government has failed woefully in making provisions for the basic necessities of living to the citizens.

Failure of the government in their obligations towards making citizens living in a decent way through lack of basic necessities of life has increased crime rate in the country, especially, the youth crimes. Hence, youth crimes have made a significant contribution to every country's overall crime situation (Jones, 2010). Youth, therefore, are considered as vulnerable young people who are 'at risk' of encountering a wide range of problems across different domains of life as submitted by Day (2011). One of those problems is crime. Hence, many youths are being influenced by knowledge of their friends' and peers' delinquent acts and poor parental monitoring or supervision (Omoniyi, 2011). In addition to this is the psychopathy personality features of some youth which put them at risk of antisocial behaviours, as noted by Wareham, Dembo, Poythress, Childs and Schmedler (2009). Omirin (2007) also argued in similar direction that youth confronted social and psychological problem like being shy, lack of self-confidence and identity, lack of love and affection and not being happy at home as sources of youth crime in our society.

However, Greenberger, Beam, Whang and Dong, (2000) identified the behaviours and attitudes of family members, peers and cultural differences as causes of youth crime.

Parenting is another factor to consider. Parents living in structurally disadvantaged communities fail to provide adequate parenting and the accumulation of social capital which is crucial for youths to stay away from antisocial behavior (XU, 2010). Children who are inadequately supervised by parents, whose parents discipline them erratically and harshly and children who experience violence at home are more likely to become delinquent (Sanni, Udoh, Okediji, Modo and Ezeh, 2010). In some cases, youth may rebel by abusing their parents who are not performing their parental obligations. Hence, there is possibility of parents experiencing abuse at the hands of their own children, within their own homes as argued by Holt (2009). Family, therefore, as a public space should provide a sense of security for the individuals. For instance, some criminologists associate single parenthood with delinquency because a single parenthood family is highly vulnerable to poverty which creates a cycle of disadvantaged individuals living in

such a condition of desperation that crime becomes the only way of life (Balogi, 2004). Apart from poverty is violence at home, children (youth included) who live in disrupted homes where violence is a daily occurrence have been found to be prone to anti-social behavior (Balogi, 2004).

Van-Dorn and Williams (2003) gave similar opinion. They argued that home environment has been shown to have deleterious effects on children's development. According to them, youth who escalate in their criminal involvement are more likely to have had experiences with prior criminal victimization and violent home environment. When youth grow up in a family where there are no well-adapted role models, where there are financial burdens, where there is no health insurance and where the family members use violence as a way of solving problem, the risk of involvement in violent behaviours for such youth increases (Temple, 2000). Similar to family violence as a cause of crime among youth is community violence. Studies of psychopathology in youth exposed to community violence have found that signs of disorder are more common in young people with greater exposure to community violence (Temple, 2000).

Lack of access to benefits in the society through school and work, leads some youth to hopelessness and others to crime (Temple, 2000). Youth employment is important in keeping youth away from crime. Youth unemployment in Nigeria is caused by rapidly growing urban labour force from rural-urban migration, rapid population growth, outdated school curricula and lack of employable skills and rapid expansion of the educational system which causes increase in the supply of educational manpower that demand for them (Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah, 2012). The problem of youth unemployment is a herculean task and when youth are unemployed the tendency for deviant behaviours are high (Chukwuemeka, Okoye, Muo and Anazodo, 2012). In Nigeria, crime is generally increasing, especially, property offences (Sa'ad, 2006). Property crime like stealing is common among youth in the streets (Faloore and Asamu, 2010). Other property crimes common among youth are shoplifting, pick pocketing, attempted robbery, or robbery, snatch theft and other personal property crimes (Ikuomola, 2012).

The present economic hardship has also increased suicide among youth; especially as a result of constant reports of suicide among populace. Gould, Jamieson and Romer, 2003) argued that increase in suicide is proportional to the amount,

duration and prominence of media coverage. Suicide is another crime which is committed by some youth.

Youth offender has gone from being a victim of poor upbringing and difficult environment to perpetrator of crime who assaults other people out of choice (Estrada, 2001).

The best solution to youth crime is to fix the problem as early as possible when youth show signs of anti-social behavior. They are much harder to fix once they become criminals than they are when they first show signs of deviant or anti-social behavior (Wallace, 2010). There should be a strong community. A strong community will enforce high levels of social control which prevents crime as well as providing a fallback position when a family fails in socializing children (Balogi, 2004). In addition to these, members of different families have an obligation to provide an environment conducive to the absorption of frustrations and the stabilization of adult personalities so as to prevent them from committing crimes in the society (Balogi, 2004).

The growing concerns over the increasing youth crime rate have sparked extensive research into various factors which lead youth to engage in crime (Omoniyi, 2011). It is not only factors which causes youth crime but also types of crime youth engage in is also very important, especially, because of the recent economic hardship. This was the reason which necessitated this study.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories to explain crime phenomena in society. These are theories of crime. A theory of crime consists of a set of assumptions (e.g. about human nature, social structure, the principles of causation) it also consists of a description of the phenomenon to be explained (i.e. facts which the theory must fit) and an explanation or prediction of the phenomenon (Casey, 2011).

This study was anchored or Social Disorganization theory of crime and Anomie-Strain/Strain theory. The theoretical framework was built up from the combination of these two theories.

Social Disorganization Theory

Social Disorganization Theory of crime focuses on the cultural and socio-economic environment which youth have been opened up to and how these conditions can make them go into crime. The theory argues that crime is not caused by factors within individuals but that the factors of crime are totally outside the youth's control. According to the theory crime is caused by breakdown of traditional values and norms which is common in urban areas with high population and high level of migration which produce breakdown of family relationships and community, competing values and increasing impersonality (Walklate, 2003).

Anomie Strain / Strain Theory

Anomie strain / strain theory is credited to the work of Robert K. Marton. According to this theory, the real problem is in social structure that holds out the same goal to all its members without providing them equal means to achieve them (Furham, 1984). Hence, there is overridden by the pressure to achieve and at the same time confronted with weak normative restraints on legitimate means to achieve. Hence, certain structural conditions generate anomie and a high crime rate (Teh, 2009).

Merton presented five dimensional types of adaptation: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion based on adaptation to society's cultural goals and institutionalized means. Elusive goals and stratified institution produce strains towards and anomie behavior (Severer and Isajiw, 1993).

The five adaptations are:

(1) Innovation: individuals who accept socially approved goals but rejected the socially approved means and find alternatives to them.
(2) Retreatism: those who reject socially approved goals and also the means to acquire them.
(3) Ritualism: those who agree to a system of socially approved means but lose sights of the goals.
(4) Conformity: those who conform to the system's means and goals at the same time.
(5) Rebellion: people who rejected socially approved goals and also the means and created a new system of acceptable goals and means for themselves (Walklate, 2003).

Youth who engage in crime falls under the category of innovation and the category of ritualism.

Below is the synthesized theoretical framework for the study:

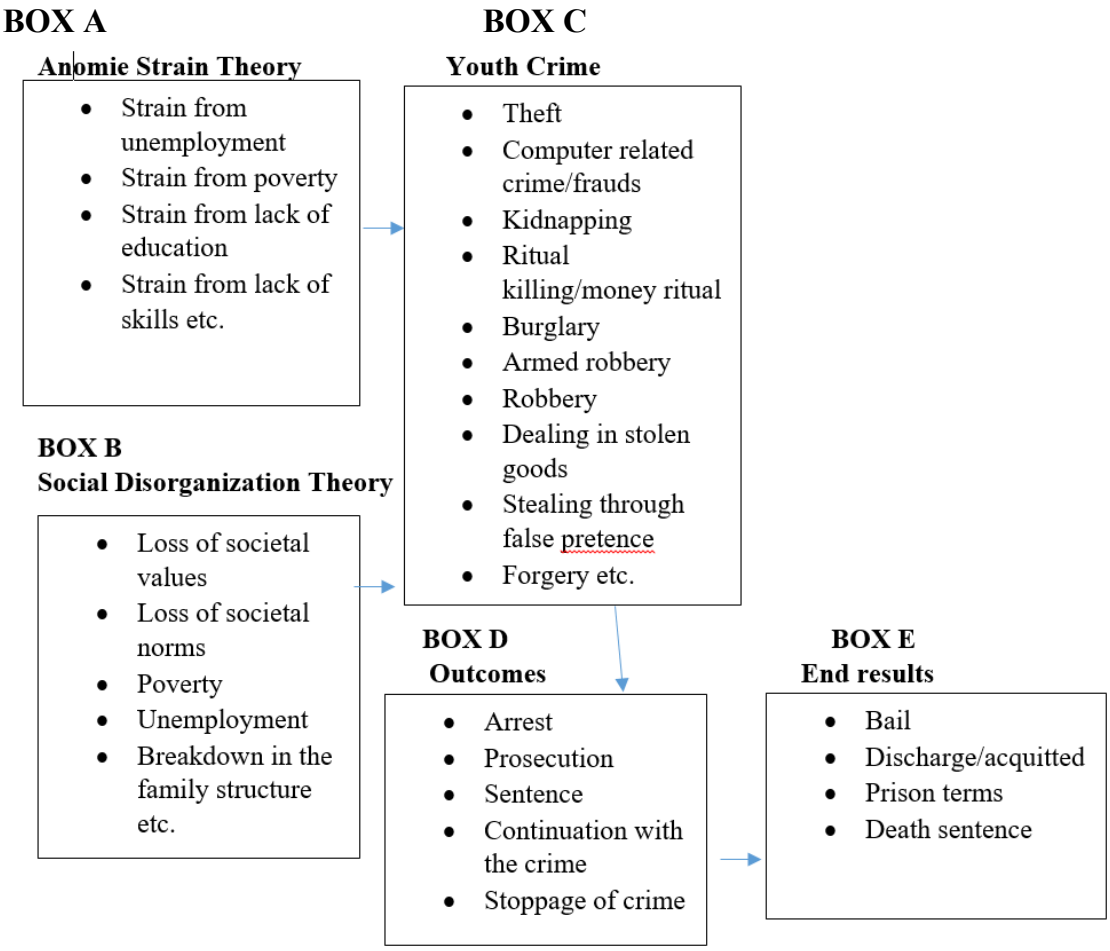


Figure 1: Emerging Theoretical Framework (Source: Authors)

In the above figure, Box A contains strains from different sources which can be used to explain anomie strain theory. The concept of unemployment is a good source of strain for youth. Youth that are not employed can be frustrated and unable to meet up the societal goals. The same is poverty, lack of education, lack of skills etc. All the above-mentioned factors create a disjuncture between societal goals and institutional means to achieve them legitimately, which can lead youth to engage in crime as an innovated means of achieving societal goals.

Box B also contains concepts of social disorganization. For instance, when societal values are lost or discarded by youth, it can cause them to go into crime. The same are the norms cherished in the society. When norms are no longer guiding the conducts of the people in the society, normless set in which can breed crime in the society. In the same way, the breakdown in the family structure through divorce, separation, violence, child abuse, single parenthood, etc. can consequently make the young people in such disorganized families to 'walk' in criminal behaviours.

Disorganization in area of economy like unemployment and poverty are other factors to consider under Social Disorganization Theory of crime. Poverty and unemployment do break the way the society is structure to ensure social unity and social control and consequently cause youth crime.

In box C, various economic crimes which are common among youth are listed. These include, but not limited to theft, computer related crime of frauds, kidnapping to get money, ritual killing which may or not involve money ritual, burglary, robbery or armed robbery, dealing in keeping or selling stolen goods (fencing), stealing through false pretence, forgery etc.

The box D contains what can be the outcome of youth engagement in crime. Youth who engage in crime may be arrested. Some arrested by the law enforcement agencies may be prosecuted at courts of competent jurisdiction. Youth who face prosecution for crime committed may be sentenced in law courts if found guilty, whether to death or terms of imprisonment as deemed fit within the law. However, when youth who engage in crime are not arrested or evaded arrest, there is tendency for them to continue with the crime. But in some occasions due to one reason or the other, some of these youth may stop committing crime.

In box E, we listed the end results of the outcomes of youth crime. Youth who engage in crime may enjoy bail, especially if the gravity of the crime is not serious or the youth involved are first timers in crime. Secondly, some of them may be discharged or acquitted or both (discharged and acquitted) as a result of lack of diligent prosecution by state prosecutors or because of other reasons deemed fit under judiciary system.

However, some youth prosecuted may be eventually found guilty of the offences alleged by the state which may earn them terms of imprisonment as stipulated by the criminal code or penal code in Nigeria.

Youth who found guilty of crime like armed robbery may be sentenced to death according to the penal/criminal code. Armed robbery still attracts death penalty in

Nigeria. Armed robbery is both economic crime and violent crime. Hence, death may be the end results of the outcomes of some crimes committed by youth.

Methodology Applied

Research Design

The study adopted research design which is descriptive one. This involved the collection of information from individuals sampled for the study (Schutt, 2004). Quantitative technique was utilized for the study.

The study area

Igbesa community which was the study area is a semi-urban community in Ado-Odo/Otta Local Government Area of Ogun State. It is located on latitude 6.533602^0 and longitude $3.13416^{0.}$ The GPS coordinates of the area are 6^0 .32' 0.9672' N and 3^0 8'2.97968T. The community elevation above the sea level is 19 metres high or 6 feet high. It is 8 miles in distance to the western part of Lagos State. There are about 7,000 people living in the community. It is an industrialized community with forty different industries located in different part of the community. The largest of them is Ogun-Guangdong Industrial Zone.

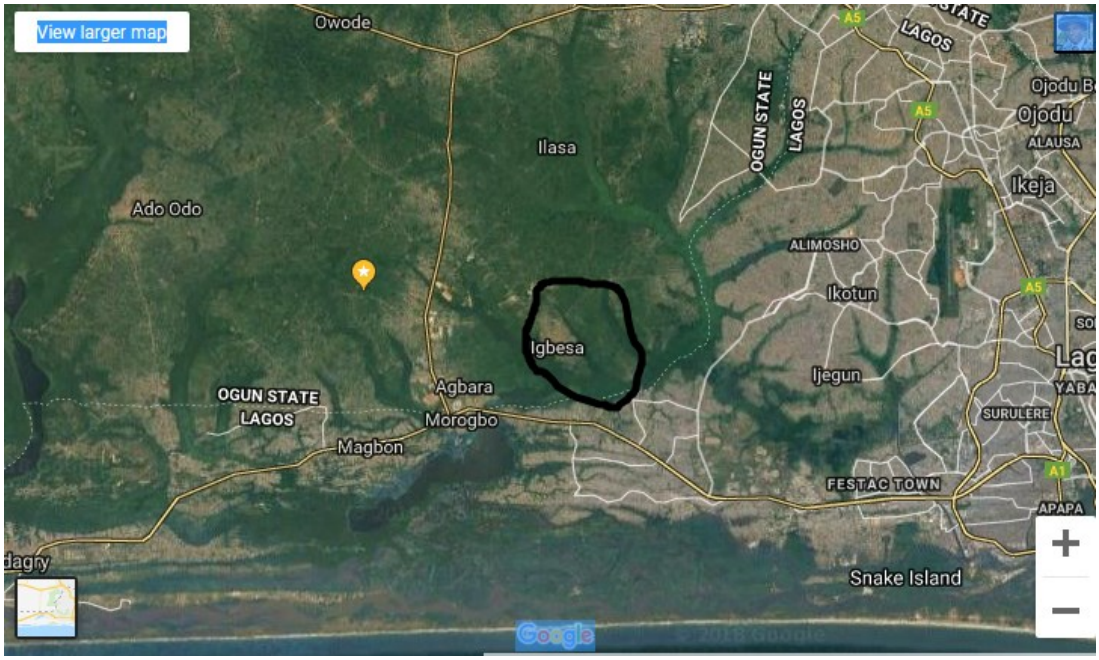


Figure 2: Map of the study area (Source: Department of Geography, University of Ibadan)

The Study Population

The population of study consisted of the indigenes and non-indigenes living in this community. They were male and female from different ethnic groups who had resided in the community at least one year before the research is carried out. They were the people their opinions were sought on recent economic hardship and increase in the economic crime among youth.

Sampling technique and sampling size

Sampling was unavoidably necessary because to study every single instance in population of study was beyond the means of researcher. Sampling was therefore important to improve the quality of our data. Convenience sampling method under non-probability sampling technique was used. Convenience samples are called available subject. They are relatively inexpensive and can yield results that are wonderfully plausible. It reduces the cost of the research in money and time (Adler and Clark, 1999)

Method of Data Collection

Questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. The question was divided into two sections; section A featured the socio-demographic data of respondents while section B featured questions on recent economic hardship and increase in economic crime among youth. Sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire were administered among Igbesa community residents but only fifty-nine (59) copies were returned.

Method of data analysis

The quantitative data from the questionnaire administered were first sorted out and those not properly filled were subjected to cleaning. In order to minimize errors, data from the questionnaire were coded to ensure proper editing of data before the use of SPSS –Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Univariate analyses were employed in interpreting demographic data of the respondents and their responses to the subject matter of the study, using frequency tables. Data analysis and interpretation was done within the Nigeria, socio-criminological and economic environments which shaped the opinions of the respondents who participated in the study.

Ethical Issues

The relevant ethical issues raised in research were resolved in the study. Ethics refer to the abstract set of standards and principles that are used to determine appropriate and acceptable social conduct (Adler and Clark, 1999).

In resolving the ethical issues, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed and strictly followed. The questionnaire did not require names, signatures, addresses, phone numbers or other means of identity. Coding ensure it is

impossible to identify the persons who filled the questionnaire. Furthermore, information and the data supplied were strictly kept confidential and used only for the purpose of the study. Finally, the oral consent of the respondents was obtained before the copies of the questionnaire were administered.

Data presentation, analyses and interpretation

Data presentation, analyses and interpretation were based on fifty-nine (59) copies of questionnaire returned out of sixty (60) copies administered to respondents. The first set of data presentation, analyses and interpretation was the socio-bio data of respondents. Table 1 below shows the information of respondents' socio-bio data.

Table 1: Socio-bio data of respondents

S/N	Socio-bio data	Frequency	Percentage
1	**Sex**		
	Male	26	44.1
	Female	23	55.9
	Total	**59**	**100.0**
2	**Age - range**		
	15 – 19 years	NIL	NIL
	20 – 24 years	3	5.1
	25 – 29 years	5	8.5
	30 – 34 years	12	20.3
	35 – 39 years	9	15.3
	40 – 44 years	17	28.8
	45 – 49 years	10	16.9
	50 years and above	3	5.1
	Total	**59**	**100.0**
3	**Religion**		
	Christianity	40	67.8
	Islam	18	30.5
	Aheist/Agnostic	1	1.7
	Total	**59**	**100.0**
4	**Economic Status**		
	Upper class	7	11.9
	Middle class	31	52.5
	Lower class	13	22.0
	Undetermined	8	13.6
	Total	**59**	**100.0**
5	**Period of residence in Igbesa**		
	1 – 5 years	33	55.9
	6 – 10 years	16	27.1
	11 – 15 years	8	13.6
	16 – 20 years	1	1.7
	20 years above	1	1.7
	Total	**59**	**100.0**

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2025.

A cursory look at table 1 shows that for the sex, 44.1% of respondents were male while 55.9% of them were female. This indicated that more female respondents participated in the study than male respondents. Female are prone to crime than male and hence, are victims of crime than male. Furthermore, females are usually afraid of crime than males. Hence, this possibly showed their eagerness to take part in the study.

The next datum was the age brackets of respondents. Analyses from the table 1 show that 5.1% of respondents were between 20-24 years of age; 8.5% of them were between 25-29 years of age; 20:3% of them were between 30-34 years of age. The respondents that were between 35-39 years of age were 15.3%; those that were between 40-44 years were 28.8%; a total of 16.9% were between 45-49 years and those from 50 years and above were 5.1%. Age is an important factor in criminology. For instance, age determines the vulnerability of individuals to crime. Aged people for example are more vulnerable to crime than younger people. Hence, old people do fear crime than the younger people in the society. This is because, the old people cannot defend themselves from crime like the younger people. However, all the respondents who participated in the study were young people and young adults.

The study also considered the religious affiliations of respondents. Analyses from table 1 show that a total of 67.8% of respondents were Christians; 30.5% of them were Muslims and 1.7% did not believe in any religion/God (atheist/agnostic).

The religious faiths of people are quite important in this study because it shaped their thinking's on the subject matter of the study. Crime, when viewed from religious point of view is considered as sin. Moreover, crime may be as a result of breakdown in our religious institution as it can also be as a result of breakdown in our economic institution as viewed by this study.

The study also investigated the economic statuses of respondents. A glance at table 1 above shows that 11.9% of respondents considered their economic status to be upper class; 52.5% of them considered their economic status to be middle class and 22.0% considered it to be lower class. A total of 13.6% of respondents cannot determine which economic status they belonged to. Economic status is an important factor to considered in study of crime. For instance, crime commission is higher among the lower-class people and middle-class people than the upper-class people. Moreover, the people of upper class are more protected from crime than people from middle class or lower class. Hence, the respondents who were

middle class and lower-class will be more familiar with recent increase in crime rate among youth. They constituted the larger percentages of respondents.

Finally, the study also considered how long respondents had stayed in Igbesa, community. Analyses from the table 1 show that 55.9% of respondents had stayed in Igbesa community for 1-5 years (the highest in the table); 27.1% of respondents had stayed there for 6-10 years; 13.6% of them for 11-15 years; 1.7% of them had stayed in the community for 16-20 years and another 1.7% for 20 years and above.

The familiarity of respondents with essentiality of petroleum resources as economic drives in Nigeria was investigated in the study. Table 2 below shows the analyses of their responses

Table 2: Familiarity of respondents on petroleum resources as Nigerian economic drives

Level of familiarity	Frequency	Percentage
Very familiar	23	39.0
Familiar	19	32.2
Somehow familiar	12	20.3
Not familiar	5	8.5
Very not familiar	NIL	NIL
Total	**59**	**100.0**

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2025.

Table 2 above shows that 39.0% of respondents were very familiar with petroleum resources as economic drives in Nigeria. A total of 32.2% of respondents were also familiar with the same and 20.3% of respondents were somehow familiar that petroleum resources are economic driver. However, 8.5% of respondents were not familiar that petroleum resources drive the economy of Nigeria and none of them said they were very not familiar. It can be deduced that very large numbers of respondents acknowledged that petroleum resources drive the economy of Nigeria. For instance, transportation is an important sector of the economy. Other sectors of economy revolve around transportational system. However, when there is hike in petroleum products' costs, the costs of transportation will be raised and when this occurs it will affect the entire cost of living in the country. Hence, when government of Nigeria announced subsidy removal in 2023, the economy of Nigeria was drastically changed, the cost of living became unbearable for the entire citizens of the country.

Question on subsidy removal was also asked in the study. Respondents were asked to say whether they agree with subsidy removal on petroleum resources by government or not. Table 3 below shows how the respondents agreed with the removal of subsidy on petroleum resources as announced by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Table 3: Respondents' agreements on removal of subsidy on petroleum resources

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	20.3
Agree	13	22.0
Somehow agree	15	25.5
Disagree	6	10.0
Strongly disagree	13	22.0
Total	**59**	**100.0**

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2025.

Analyses from table 3 above shows that 20.3% of respondents strongly agreed with removal of subsidy on petroleum products; 22.0% of respondents agreed with the same while 25.5% of respondents somehow agreed with the removal. However, 22.0% of respondents strongly disagreed with the removal of the subsidy and 10.2% of them also disagreed with the same.

Subsidy removal was considered as a way out to save the economy of Nigeria because of the huge amount of money being spent on subsidy. Money spent on subsidy prevented government from getting enough money to spend on infrastructural development. Hence, many who agreed on subsidy removal believed it is the only way to save the economy of the country from entering into comma.

However, those who disagreed one way or the other with the removal of petroleum subsidy must have taught of the implications of this on cost of living of the people of Nigeria. Hence, they did not agree with the subsidy removal. The subsidy removal has created unprecedented effects on the standard of living of Nigeria. The hyperinflation in the economy of Nigeria is as a result of subsidy removal which has skyrocketed the costs of the living because of the high cost of transportation and other economic sectors which make use of petroleum products. Not that this

has affected the standard of living only, it has also increased the rate of crime in the country, especially among youths who are more vulnerable because of unemployment.

The study therefore, investigated whether or not respondents agreed that economic hardship as a result of subsidy removal on oil has increased the economic crime among youth. This was objective number one. Table 4 below shows how they agreed with the statement.

Table 4: Respondents' agreement on whether economic hardship caused by subsidy removal has increased economic crime among youth.

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	28.8
Agree	22	37.2
Somehow agree	9	15.3
Disagree	6	10.2
Strongly disagree	5	8.5
Total	**59**	**100.0**

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2025.

A glance at the above table shows that 28.8% of respondents strongly agreed that economic hardship brought about by oil subsidy removal has increased economic crime among youth; 37.2% of respondents also agreed with the same statements while 15.3% of them somehow agreed with it. However, 10.2% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 8.5% strongly disagreed with it. It can be inferred from the analyses that majority of respondents acknowledged that economic hardship caused by subsidy removal on oil has increased economic crime among youth in Nigeria.

The removal of subsidy on oil does not only increase crime but brought about unprecedented hardships on all Nigerians, generally. The study therefore, investigated whether removal of subsidy on petroleum products has generally caused and increased hardships on Nigerians. Table 5 below shows the ways respondents agreed on this statement.

Table 5: Respondents' agreement on whether removal of oil subsidy has generally caused and increased hardships on Nigerians.

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	26	44.1
Agree	19	32.2
Somehow agree	9	15.3
Disagree	3	5.0
Strongly disagree	2	3.4
Total	**59**	**100.0**

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2025.

In table 5 shown above, analyses show that 44.1% of respondents strongly agreed that removal of subsidy on oil by government has caused and increased hardships generally in all spheres of life of the people of Nigeria. A total of 32.2% of respondents also agreed with the same statement while 15.3% of respondents somehow agreed with it. However, 5.0% of respondents did not agree with the statement and 3.4% of respondents strongly disagreed with it.

It is a common knowledge in Nigeria of today that the removal of oil subsidy has raised the costs of living in Nigeria. In recent times, Nigeria has witnessed hunger protests from citizens across the length and breadth of the country. The hardships have increased the rate of untimely death among people and caused a lot of health challenges to many innocent citizens in the country. Hence, all the experiences of these have informed the knowledge of majority of respondents to agree with the statement that oil subsidy removal has caused and increased hardships on Nigerians in many ways apart from increase in crime.

The second objective of this study was to investigate various economic crimes that have increased among Nigerian. youth as a result of economic hardships birthed by recent removal of oil subsidy in Nigeria. Table 6 below shows the broad analyses of this on various economic crimes.

Table 6: Respondents' agreement on whether economic hardship caused by oil subsidy removal has caused increase in some economic crimes among youth.

S/N	CRIME	SA	A	SHA	D	SD	TOTAL
1	Stealing/theft	28(47.5%)	15(25.4%)	9(15.3%)	3(5.0%)	4(6.8%)	59(100%)
2	Computer crime/frauds	26(44.1%)	17(28.8%)	8(13.6%)	3(5.0%)	5(8.5%)	59(100%)
3	Kidnapping for ransom	18(30.5%)	23(38.9%)	7(11.9%)	4(6.8%)	7(11.9%)	59(100%)
4	Ritual killing/ritual money	21(35.6%)	22(37.3%)	7(11.9%)	3(5.0%)	6(10.2%)	59(100%)
5	House breaking/burglary	21(35.6%)	19(32.2%)	12(20.4%)	3(5.0%)	4(6.8%)	59(100%)
6	Robbery (included armed robbery)	17(28.8%)	28(47.6%)	7(11.9%)	4(6.8%)	3(5.0%)	59(100%)
7	Selling/buying stolen goods	15(25.4%)	29(49.3%)	9(15.3%)	3(5.0%)	3(5.0%)	59(100%)
8	Stealing through false pretence (419)	20(33.8%)	26(44.1%)	9(15.3%)	2(3.4%)	2(3.4%)	59(100%)
9	Forgery to get money	18(30.5%)	29(49.3%)	10(16.8%)	1(1.7%)	1(1.7%)	59(100%)
10	Selling of hard drugs	16(27.1%)	30(50.9%)	9(15.3%)	1(1.7%)	3(5.0%)	59(100%)

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2025.

Note: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), SHA (Somehow agree), D (Disagree) SD (Strongly Disagree)

All the listed crimes in table 6 above were economic crimes. However, some may involve violence in the process e.g. kidnapping, ritual killing/ritual money and armed robbery. But all the crimes have economical undertone.

The first crime in the table was stealing or theft. Stealing/theft has become rampant among youth in the recent time. A total of 47.5% of respondents strongly agree that stealing/theft has increased among youth in Nigeria because of economic hardships brought about by subsidy removal on oil. A total of 25.4% of respondents agreed with the same; 15.3% of them somehow agreed with the same statement. However, 5.0% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 6.8% of them strongly disagreed.

A cursory look at the analyses shows that large numbers of respondents acknowledged that the rate of stealing/theft has increased among youth because of

the recent economic hardships caused by subsidy removal on oil. Removal of oil subsidy has put excessive burdens on citizens. When government and administrative authorities put excessive burdens on their citizens, happiness is denied and crime may be the end result (Gacsi, 2013).

The second crime on the table was computer crime/fraud. It is a common crime among youth in Nigeria. Youth who are involved in computer frauds are usually called Yahoo boys by Nigerians. Computer fraudsters steal credit cards information from people, especially foreigners, through online. They use the same to defraud them of their money. They may also impersonate identities of other people to defraud unsuspecting victims (identity theft). Computer fraud may also involve phishing, malware, ransom ware, hacking, cyber espionage, data breaches, software piracy, intellectual property, banking fraud, social media fraud etc. many of the above-mentioned computer crimes/frauds are usually perpetrated by Nigerian youth and the rates have been confirmed by respondents to have increased.

Youth employment is grossly lacking in Nigeria. This was been caused by rapidly growing rural-urban migration, rapid population growth, lack of employable skills etc. (Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah, 2012). Hence, many brilliant, talented, gifted and genius Nigerian youth do use all the qualities mentioned above to engage in computer crime/frauds instead of using them for meaningful development of the country. Hence, 44.1% of our respondents strongly agreed that computer crime/frauds have increased among youth because of the recent economic hardships triggered by removal of oil subsidy. A total of 28.8% also agreed with the same submission while 13.6% somehow agreed with it. However, 5.0% of respondents disagreed with the submission while 8.5% of them strongly disagreed. The over whelming respondents who acknowledged that economic hardships have increased the rate of computer crime/frauds among youth shows that it was so.

Kidnapping for ransom was the next in the table. It was a recent crime propelled by Nigerian economic crises and it has become worsened of recent because of the economic hardships unleashed by removal of subsidy on oil/petroleum products. The analyses show that 30.5% of respondents strongly agreed that kidnapping has increased as crime among youth because of the recent economic hardships birthed by subsidy removal on oil. A total of 38.9% of them also agreed with the statement and 11.9% of respondents somehow agreed with the statement. However, 6.8% of respondents disagreed and 11.9% of them strongly disagreed with the statement. Running a look on the analyses shows that large numbers of respondents

acknowledge that kidnapping for ransom as crime among youth as increased because of economic hardships. The arrests of kidnappers effected by law enforcement agents in the past showed that almost all the suspects were youth. These youth kidnapped people, get in touch with the families of the victims to ask for ransom before the victims can be released. Billions of naira have been paid as ransoms in the past for the release of kidnapped victims. In some instances, the victims die in the dens of the kidnappers.

Experiences show that some youth can also fake their kidnapping in order to defraud their family members. In addition, some may even kidnap their family members in order to get ransoms from other family members.

Ritual killing/money ritual is currently trending very high among youth in Nigeria. It has been given a name by Nigerian people as yahoo plus. Ritual killing/money ritual go together because ritual killing in most cases is done for money ritual. Analyses show that 35.6% of respondents strongly agreed that ritual killing/money ritual as a crime, has increased among youth because of recent economic hardships brought about by removal on oil subsidy. A total of 37.3% of respondents also agreed with the same statement, while 11.9% of them somehow agreed with the statement. However, 5.0% of respondents disagreed with it and 10.2% of them strongly disagreed with the statement.

There were cases of missing people in the past and the incidents had been traced to ritual killing/ritual money. Many of the cases were not uncovered by the police. However, many dens of ritual killers have been discovered in the past. In some cases, some youths do kill their family members for ritual money. They may kidnap and kill their fathers, mothers and siblings or other members of their extended families for ritual money.

Kidnapping usually precedes ritual killing/ritual money. Hence, some kidnappings are usually done for ritual killing/ritual money. Lack of access to benefits in the society through school and employment can lead youth to hopelessness and crime (Temple, 2000) as it may be with the crimes of kidnapping and ritual killing. Moreover, it may be as a result of home environment which has devastating effects on youth as noticed by Can-Dorn and Williams (2003).

House breaking/burglary is another crime very common among youth in a recent time. The crime has increased among youth within neighborhood and outside it. Recent economic hardships have increased the rate of house breaking/burglary among community youth as necessitated by removal of oil subsidy. A total of 35.6% of respondents strongly agreed that recent economic hardships birthed by

removal from oil subsidy have increased the crime of house breaking/burglary among Nigerian youth. A total of 32.2% of respondents also agreed with the same statement and 20.4% of them somehow agreed with the same. However, 5.0% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 6.8% strongly disagreed with it. Many of the respondents were of the opinion that house breaking/burglary has increased among community youth because of the recent economic hardships, as it appears in the analyses.

Neighbourhoods in Nigeria, are in the recent time, frequently experiencing house breaking/burglary. This nefarious crime is usually carried out when people have gone to their different places of work or worship centres. Doors, windows and ceilings are usually break down to gain access to the properties of victims inside their houses.

The next crime on the list is robbery/armed robbery. Robbery is the act of attacking people with the intention of stealing from them. When arms are used in the attack, it is no longer ordinary robbery but armed robbery. Both carry different punishment under criminal code and penal code in Nigeria. When armed robbery attracts death penalty, robbery is punished by some years in correctional centres. In the analyses shown on table 6, 28.8% of respondents strongly agreed that recent economic hardships have increased the crime of robbery/armed robbery among youth. A total of 47.5% of respondents also agreed with the same statement and 11.9% of them somehow agreed with it. However, 6.8% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 5.0% of them strongly disagreed with it.

The overall understanding of the analyses shows that majority of respondents were of the opinion that economic hardships sparked by removal of oil subsidy have increased the rate of robbery/armed robbery among youth. There were various incidents of robbery in traffic hold ups in cities in Nigeria e.g. Lagos. It also occurs in major walk ways and other public places in cities. Armed robbery cases also involved youth. Some banks and other financial institutions had experienced armed robbery cases in the past. The same way are businesses which deal with cast. For instance, petroleum filling stations in the cities.

Fencing or selling of stolen goods is another crime. Fencing is act of buying and selling stolen goods for profit. A total of 25.4% of respondents strongly agreed or opined that selling and buying of stolen goods among youth have increased as a result of recent economic hardships instigated by removal of subsidy on oil. Furthermore, 49.3% of respondents also agreed with the same statement and 15.3%

of them somehow agreed with the same. However, 5.0% of respondents disagreed with the statement and another 5.0% strongly disagreed with it.

Simple calculations on this show that large numbers of respondents acknowledged that buying and selling of stolen goods have increased among youth due to economic hardships surged up by removal of subsidy on oil. Buying and selling of stolen goods are very common occurrences in every community now. This is common among some youth who are pretending to be scavengers/buyers of unused goods.

The crimes like house breaking, robbery/armed robbery and buying and selling of stolen goods as explained earlier on may be as a result of unemployment among youth. When youth are not employed, there is tendency that they will deviate from the norms of the society (Chukwuemeka, Okoye, Muo and Anazodo, 2012). Unemployment increases crime against property among youth as noted by Sa'ad (2006) and Falore and Asamu (2010). Socio-economic environment may breakdown traditional value system and increase impersonality which can cause crime among youth (Walklate, 2008).

Stealing through false pretence (419) has also increased among youth in the recent time because of economic hardships created by removal from oil subsidy. A total of 33.8% strongly agreed or opined that economic hardships from removal of subsidy have pushed more youth into stealing through false pretence which is popularly known as '419'. A total of 44.1% of respondents also agreed with the same statement while 15.3% of respondents somehow agreed with it. However, 3.4% of respondents disagreed with the statement and another 3.4% of them strongly disagreed with it. Stealing through false pretence (419) is a popular crime in Nigeria, especially among youth. However, its proportion has increased of recent among youth because of economic hardships being experienced because of removal of oil subsidy. This is clearly shown in the study, for majority of respondents attested to this in their opinions. Many of youth who engaged in stealing through false pretence (419) usually employed lies to deceive unsuspected victims. Lying is a psychopathy personality. Psychopathy personality features may put them at risk of anti-social behaviour as submitted by Wareham, Dembo, Poythress, Childs and Schmeldler (2009). The same are lack of self-confidence and identity (Omirin, 2007).

Forgery is another crime on the list. Forgery is usually perpetrated for monetary reason or other economic criminal gains. A total of 30.5% of respondents strongly agreed that forgery as a crime, has increased among youth because of the economic

hardships which emanated from removal of oil subsidy. A total of 49.3% of respondents also agreed with the same statement and 16.8% of them somehow agreed with it. However, 1.7% of respondents disagreed with the statement and another 1.7% of them strongly disagreed with it.

Forgery usually involved documents. For instance, bank cheques and other official documents. A successful forgery will give opportunity to the persons involved to have access to some economic gains or advantages at the detriments of the victims. Forgery may be as a result of pressure on youth to achieve and at the same time, confronted with weak normative restraints on a legitimate means to achieve as noted by Teh (2009). Elusive goals and stratified institution produce strains towards an anomie behaviour (Severer and Isajiw, 1993).

Finally, selling of hard drugs was also investigated in the study. A glance at table 6 shows that 27.1% of respondents strongly agreed or opined that selling of hard drugs by youth has increased as a result of economic hardships which were birthed by removal of subsidy on oil. A total of 50.9% of respondents also agreed with the same statement and 15.3% of them somehow agreed with the same. However, 1.7% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 5.0% of them strongly disagreed with it.

A conclusion can be drawn from the above analyses that selling of hard drugs has increased among youth as opined by larger percentages of respondents who acknowledged this. The youth who engaged in it, are a set of innovators. Innovators are individuals who accepted socially approved goals but rejected the socially approved means and find alternatives to them (Walklate, 2003). They do not have equal means to achieve social goals like others in the society (Furham, 1984). Many streets and corners in cities especially in slums are usually market centres where youth traded in hard drugs like marijuana and other hard drugs. Youth also engaged in planting of hard drug like marijuana in rural areas. They harvested this drug and brought them to cities where there are large numbers of its consumers.

The overall conclusion that can be drawn from all the analyses in table 6 is that all the ten categories of crime investigated in the study have increased among youth as acknowledged by fast majority of respondents. This was as a result of economic hardships being suffered by Nigerian youth and others in the society as a result of removal of oil subsidy.

The study requested that respondents give brief comments on recent economic hardships and increase in youth economic crime in Nigeria. The responses were

collated and grouped into units based on their comments. The following were the highlighted responses from respondents:

1. Youth are into unlawful acts because government is making life hard for the people.
2. Removal of oil subsidy has aggravated the prices of goods and services beyond the reach of Nigerian youth. This has led many youths into crime.
3. Recent economic hardships have made youth to engage in crime as a mean for survival of the fittest
4. Multiple challenges like poverty, unemployment and underemployment drove youth into crime
5. As a result of economic hardships, some parents are even encouraging their children to engage in crime.
6. Recent economic hardships in the country have a great impact in increasing youth involvement in crime.
7. There had been increase in the rate of crime among youth more than the time which preceded the subsidy removal.
8. Joblessness has really caused increase in crime among youth.
9. Economic hardships are truly in the country but some youths are lazy and unwilling to lift fingers.
10. Recent increase in crime among youth is becoming unbearable and causing havoc in the country.
11. Many people are dying because of hunger caused by removal of oil subsidy which has led to surge in youth involvement in economic crime.
12. Government should help to provide more employment opportunities for the youth, initiate the youth driven policies and encourage digital skills for the youth
13. Leaders and public office holders should lead by examples to solve Nigerian economic problems.

All of the above highlighted comments are the realities of recent economic hardships and increase of crime among youth. They also pinpointed steps that can be taken to solve the problem and other economic problems in the country at large.

Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendation

The summary of findings shows that majority of respondents acknowledged the increase in crime among youth due to economic hardships being experienced in the

country as a result of removal of oil subsidy. For instance, 47.5% of respondents strongly acknowledged that the economic hardships had increased the rate of stealing/theft among youth; 44.1% of respondents strongly said the hardships had increased the rate of computer crime/frauds among youth; 38.9% of respondents agreed that the hardships had increased crime of kidnapping for ransom among youth; 37.3% of respondents agreed the hardships had increased ritual killing/ritual money among youth; 35.6% strongly opined that crime of house breaking/burglary had increased among youth due to economic hardships. Robbery/armed robbery was agreed to have increased by 47.5% of respondents as a result of economic hardships; selling of stolen goods by 49.3% of respondents; stealing from people through false pretence (419) by 44.1% of respondents and forgery to get money was agreed to have increased among youth by 49.3% of respondents.

Finally, 50.9% of respondents agreed the economic hardships have increased rate of selling hard drugs among youth.

Conclusion

This study concluded that economic hardships caused by removal of oil subsidy have really increased the rate of economic crimes among youth as shown in this study. The economic hardships caused more hunger, unemployment and more poverty, especially among youth who are more vulnerable. Although, this study was an opinion survey, it was not supported by official statistics. However, the opinions of respondents were the reflections of what they experienced or witnessed in the society. Hence, government needs to reconsider what can be done to ameliorate the effects of subsidy removal on oil on people, in order to raise their standard of living. There is a necessity for government to take actions that will help youth in Nigeria, so that they can live decent life that they are entitled to as citizens of Nigeria.

Recommendation

This study recommended further studies on economic hardships and increase in economic crime among youth with the support of available official statistics that we determine the rate and proportion of increase.

It is also recommended that youth-oriented policies be implemented by federal government of Nigeria to assist in youth development. Policies that will create employment, acquisition of skills, financial support, good business environment,

talent development and others should be implemented by Federal Government of Nigeria.

Parents are also advised to assist their youth children by encouraging them to be law abiding, provide for their needs, instill the societal values and religious values in them and give them hope for the future.

Community people should also collaborate with government to sponsor programmes that will target helping youth out of recent predicaments. Youth programmes should be designed and implemented to assist in overall development of the youth in our society. Moreover, individuals in the society, at their own capacities, can help and engage youth in meaningful programmes at the community level, to discourage them in committing crime because of the recent economic hardships.

Finally, law enforcement agents are to be more vigilant and keep more surveillance in our society, in order to be proactive in combating and curbing crime among youth and other categories of people in the society.

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