

Urban Slums and Youth Criminality in Bayelsa State Nigeria: A Study of Selected Slums Settlements in Yenagoa Metropolis

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The study focused on Urban Slums and the spate of Youth Criminality in some selected slum communities in Bayelsa state. Slums are widely believed to be breeding grounds of crime and havens for criminals. The study addressed the nexus between urban slums and the rising wave of youth criminality. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted on the study. Data for the study depends on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were garnered with the aid of a self-design structured questionnaire while secondary sources of data depend on the reviews of empirical literature of scholars. The Durkheimian “Anomie Theory” was implored as a sketch for theoretical framework of the study. Furthermore, a sample of 150 respondents were drawn using both purposive and simple random techniques. Three (3) slum communities were purposely selected in Yenagoa metropolis and randomization method of balloting was employed to select the respondents. Data garnered were analyzed with frequency distribution table coupled with simple percentages. Chi-square statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis. By and large, the study established that crime rate among youths in Bayelsa state slums is alarming (63%). Certain factors such as poverty (60%), unemployment (54%) and government continued neglect of slums (52%) were considered by respondents to be some of the reasons influencing youth involvement in crime. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the clamour for structuring of Nigeria should be imbued to reorient society towards economic efficiency, equity and development. This is collaboration with other factors will ameliorate the dire denigrating socio economic conditions inducing youth criminality.

Background to the Study

Slum is a universal phenomenon spreading its tentacles in virtually every urban settlement. Slum is an informal, criminalized illegal space both in the occupation of land and the formation of substandard structures and is often marginalized by the local and national governments. Consequently, slum dwellers have limited access to formal health, education and other social services, and live in environments characterized by poor housing, sanitation and infrastructure, high unemployment rates, and high rates of violence. Nestled between slums is the rising spate of crime particularly among youths. Youth criminality seems to be ubiquitous in urban slum.

According to Un-Habitat (2007: np), a slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing and squalor (Poverty). Slums punctuate almost every city in the world, a trend that has become a universal phenomenon accompanying urban growth. Late in 2003, the United Nations reported that one billion people, approximately one third of the world's urban dwellers and a sixth of all humanity live in slums. Similarly Un-Habitat stated that, around 33% of the urban population of the developing world in 2012, or about 863 million people lived in slums. The proportion of urban population living in slums was highest in Asia and Africa especially sub-Saharan Africa with a staggering 61.7%.

Slum is a major phenomenon accompanying Nigerian cities, characterized by overcrowded dwellings, unemployment, poor environment conditions, limited water supply, poor sanitation, inadequate electricity supply and access to health facilities. Slums are generally marked with a distinctiveness of poverty, lack and frustration. Available literatures have shown that slums are breeding grounds for criminal activities, accompanied by increased rates of crime, violence and lawlessness. Hence, reducing the population of urban slum by 100 million was a critical point of the millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Crime is an inevitable reality in human society. It is inherent in human nature; hence, no society or human settlement is completely free from the shackles of crime. The phenomenon (Crime) knows no boundary and does not distinguish between the developed or developing world. Crime is a social contact, relative to time and place (Olusegun, 2015:65). However, the nature and intensity of crime vary across societies, within societies, and forms of human settlement (urban or rural). This solidly underscores the fact that criminal behaviour tend to be compatible with the pattern of social organization and level of economic development of a given society.

Crime is a menace bedeviling developed and developing countries alike. It deleterious, debilitating and distasteful consequences on man and society cannot be overemphasized. However, the dramatic upsurge of crime particularly among youths today is a cause for serious concern. Nigeria is not an exception. As rightly pointed out by Olujinmi (2005:1), Nigeria being a developing society tends to experience an upsurge in youth crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, political motivated killings, ethnic and religious clashes

etc Hence, Nigeria continue to grapple with the prevalence of youth criminality damaging the social fabric, especially in her urban areas and attendant slums.

Credence is lent to Nubi (2015: np) who decried slums as centres of violence and crime and that these informal communities are veritable breeding grounds for criminals. Nubi contends that, Slums are known for high crime rates, unemployment, Low self esteem, alcohol abuse, stigma, discrimination and low quality of life. According to Nubi, people will have terrible mindset about how society functions if they crawled under the bridge or from a hole every morning. He argued further that these people would have a better view to life if they were given basic homes with function amenities.

Extrapolating from the above, slums perpetuate criminality especially among youths. Slums create conditions that expose and stimulate youth criminal tendencies. Living in deprived slum neighbourhoods had a leveling effect on young people's occupational and educational aspirations. Limited opportunities in the slums lead many to make early transitions out of school and into crime. When faced with significant real or perceived barriers, many youths may adjust their aspirations to the reality of constraints within their environment. Hence, living in slums invariably result to youth's susceptibility to crime as well as being victims.

Furthermore, the transition to adulthood is marked by refinement of self-concepts and life aspirations. This period of 'active exploration' where youth imagine different "possible selves" as they contemplate and aspire toward their future is influenced significantly by available opportunities (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997:47). For example, exposure to high rates of violence and crime, which is typical in many resource-poor urban slums, can have negative impacts on youth development. These include depression, poor academic performance, post-traumatic stress symptoms, delinquency, and aggression (Kabiru et al, 2013: 83).

Nevertheless, many youths may maintain high aspirations and strive towards achieving them despite harsh realities in urban slums. Unfortunately, some young people may maintain high aspirations but turn to crime to fulfill them or to deal with the strain of disjunction. As poignantly observed by ', high levels of crime and antisocial behaviours are prevalent in slum environments characterized by limited means to achieve aspirations. He suggests that where the achievement of life aspirations is severely curtailed by the lack of opportunities to actualize these goals, undesirable ramifications, such as increased spate of crime, are likely to occur. Hence, where success is defined by financial prosperity and where slums are situated in close proximity to well-to-do neighbourhoods (UN-HABITAT, 2008b), attendant exposure to middle or upper class lifestyles may force some young people to resort to crime in order to achieve pecuniary success and fulfil their life aspirations.

Youths are the most sensitive, energetic, active and the most productive citizens of a country. Through their creative ingenuity and labour power, a nation makes giant

strides. Albeit their creativity and ingenuity youths are the most volatile when their creative energies are misdirected or channelled into wrong disruptive endeavours. Hence, the prevalence of youth crime is a sheer disaster and catastrophe for any society. Therefore, the onus probandi' of this study attempts to explore the nexus between Urban Slums and the spate of Youth Criminality in the oil rich Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problems

Globally, Slum is characteristically emerging trend in urban centre of human settlement, particularly in the developing world. As rightly captured by Sammy Kyamana (2010:1) urbanization, especially in the developing world has been accompanied by slum. Nigeria has witness persistent rise in slums. The situation is more cumbersome in Bayelsa State which is ridden with slums.

In Bayelsa state particularly the state capital Yenagoa, over 60 – 70% of the population lives in slums or slum-like conditions, and about half of the residents are youths. As squatter settlements, slums are often marginalized by the local and national governments. Consequently, slum dwellers have limited access to formal health, education and other social services, and live in environments characterized by poor housing, sanitation and infrastructure, high unemployment rates, and high rates of violence. Despite these challenging conditions, cheap housing and close proximity to urban amenities continue to attract large number of in-migrants leading to the rapid growth of slum settlements.

This emerging trend (Slum) has been a cause of serious concern for government, NGOs and other critical minds. However, what is more alarming is the dramatic upsurge of criminal activities among slum dwellers, particularly the youths that is skyrocketing on daily basis. Slum is a poverty stricken environment and hence, a breeding ground for crime. Many slum dwellers are unemployed and rural urban migrants in search for greener pastures in order to fend for their families. Sommers (2010:318) notes that, while most urban youth in Africa are certainly poor and many are struggling, cities provide youth with opportunities, attractions, and possible trajectories that are simply not available in rural areas. Thus, they encapsulate in slums, finding solace in uncompleted buildings and wooden houses (Bacha) which are not healthy for living. Government usually neglects slum dwellers, and the basic social amenities are distanced from them.

Therefore, Youth crimes such as gambling, robbery, arson, drug abuse, rape, kidnapping, cultism, thuggery etc is inevitable in slums. This solidly underscores the fact that slums are socially degraded communities bereft of moral sanctity and social cohesion in organized societies. Hence, children cultivate deviant behaviours from their peers. Drugs are abused by young people because there is no proper social control. Young girls are raped while others are driven into prostitution. Many a youth turn to crime because their visions and aspirations appear beyond their reach, thus causing frustration and anger, while others engage in criminal acts for survival.

In line with this, the study therefore investigates the effect of urban slum on the spate of youth criminality in some selected squatter communities in Bayelsa State.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study is designed to examine the effect of slum on youth criminality in Bayelsa State.

However, the study is specifically set to achieve the following:

1. To determine the criminal patterns of youth in slums areas of Bayelsa State.
2. To investigate the factors influencing youth participation in crime among Slum dwellers in Bayelsa.

Research Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between poverty and criminal patterns among youths I slum areas of Bayelsa State.

Unemployment is inversely related to youth criminality in slums.

Literature Review

As earlier noted, slums are breeding ground for crime. Slums are believed to perpetuate crime especially among youths. Hence, the study intends to review relevant empirical works which bother society with regards to slum and concomitant criminal activities, particularly among young people. However, the relevant works are organized into the following subheadings.

Conceptual framework

The quest for unravelling the nexus between urban poverty and the rising spate of crime is an unending journey travelled by many scholars particularly criminologists. Over the year's criminologists had been concerned with the widespread variation of crime levels across urban spaces. Most research of this crop focuses on city or neighbourhood characteristics associated with high crime levels in an area. Numerous aggregate studies had been shifted to the simmering urban poverty in informal or squatter settlements (Slums) on one hand, and the dramatic upsurge of crime particularly among youths on the hand.

The significance of slums socioeconomic conditions for the incidence of crime were early recognized in the 'ecological studies' led by a crop scholar at the University of Chicago, popularly acclaimed as the Chicago school of thought. There is mountain of scientific evidence pointing accusing fingers to poorest urban slums as housing the highest crime rates (Curtis, 1974). According to Un-Habitat (2007), a slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing and squalor (Poverty). The origin of the term in 19th century England distinctively portrayed slums as centers of crime and infectious disease. Paula Meth (2016:402) notes that crime is shaped by deep socioeconomic inequalities, however the spatial design of urban slums offers a breeding ground for crime and havens for criminals.

Urban slums are often criminalized spaces and their residents often criminalized by association. By definition, most were illegal in both occupation of land and the formation of non-standard structures. Slums are often marginalized by the local and national governments. Consequently, slum dwellers have limited access to formal health, education and other social services, and live in environments characterized by poor housing, sanitation and infrastructure, high unemployment rates, and high rates of violence. Hence, Caldeira (2000:79) explains, “excluded from the universe of the proper, slums are symbolically constituted as spaces of crime, spaces of anomalous, polluting and dangerous qualities. It is commonly alleged that an anti-establishment or oppositional culture prevails in slums which is broadly supportive of all kinds of illegal activities especially among youths.

Slums perpetuate youth criminality. Living in slums had a levelling effect on young people's occupational and educational aspirations that invariably influence criminal tendencies among youths. Slums are ridden with poverty and lack visible law and order, hence roaming youth gangs, muggers, drug dealers, prostitutes and the indigent become the order of the day; and marginal activities take place with impunity (UN, 2003:76).

The Concept of Slum

Generally, there is no exact definition of the term slum as writers often differ on the fundamentals. Hence, the term slum is used in a loose sense to designate areas which are overcrowded, dilapidated, faulty laid out and generally lacking in essential civic areas. In the words of Kabiru et al (2013:81) slums have been defined as poverty areas, run-down overcrowded, inhabited by persons who are not acceptable in other areas; characterized by unsanitary surrounding, high death rate, and high delinquency and crime rate. Similarly, the Webster international Dictionary narrates slum as a thickly populated street or alley, especially one marked by squalor, wretched living conditions or degradation of its inhabitants.

Credence is lent to the Un-Habitat (2007) that that a slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing and squalor. Slums differ in size and other characteristics, however most lack reliable sanitation service, supply of clean water, reliable electricity, law enforcement and other basic services. Slums vary from shanty houses to professionally built dwellings that because of poor quality construction or provision of services have deteriorated into slums.

Slums are universal in character and no country is able to get rid of them. Slums were common in the 18th to early 20th centuries in the US and Europe (Lawrence Vale, 2017, Ashaton S.R, 2006). More recently, slums have been predominantly found in urban regions of the developing world, but are also found in developed economies. About 1 billion people live in slums and around 35% of the urban population of the developing world. Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest concentration of slums (Sammy Kyamana, 2010: 3).

Furthermore, slums pose significant deficiency to society. Nubi (2015:np) described slums as “breeding ground of crime as stagnant water is to mosquitoes. Owelenze (upd) contends that slums degrade its inhabitants and demystify their status as functioning human population. Patton (1988) narrates that slums form and grows in many different parts of the world for many different reasons. Some causes include rapid rural –urban migration, economic stagnation and depression, high unemployment, poverty, informal economy, poor planning, politics, natural disasters and social conflicts.

As a result of its menacing effect, several strategies have been tried to reduce and transform slums in different countries with varying degrees of success. Monas et al (2006) and UN-Habitat (2007) identified such strategies to include a combination of slum removal, slum relocation, slum up-grading, urban planning and public housing. Moreover, despite the various strategies, slums have remained intractable, wrecking its havoc on society at will.

The Concept of Crime

Crime like other concepts in the social sciences has no generally accepted definitions. Glory and Serkaddis (2012: np) notes that there are no easy explanations for the phenomena collectively called crime. Crime is a deceiving concept because it covers an enormous range of human behaviour. Crime as a concept as always had been dependent on public opinion. Obviously, every society formulates certain rules to regulate the behaviour of its members, the violation of which is forbidden. However, the problem arises as to what acts should be forbidden, or what acts should be selected for punishment by the society or the state; in other words, what acts should be declared as crime.

The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009) defined crime as an offence which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws to which requires the intervention of a public authority. Henslin (2008) defines crime as the violation of rules that have been written into law. However, according to Terence Morris “crime is what society says is crime by establishing that an act is a violation of the criminal law.

Crime is a social construct, relative to place and time, in other words what is considered a crime in one society may be normal in another society (Attoh, 2012:214). Dambazau (1994:157), note that for crime to be known as such, it must come to the notice of and be processed through, an administrative system of enforcement agency. Crime is a threat to the economic, political and social security of a nation, it threatens the very fabric holding society together. Crime reduces the quality of life, discourages both local and foreign investment, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, thus undermining democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development (Adebayo, 2013:351).

Crime and Urbanization

Sociological literature establishes a clear link between modernization and increasing levels of criminality (Galbraith, 1958: np). Specific forms of criminal behaviour such as

property theft, armed robbery and burglary are associated with increasing affluence and improved technology, which are by-products of structural changes associated with industrial productivity and concomitant value transformation (Odetola, 1980/81: 214). Such changes have important impact on urban locations, which are invariably the usual locus of such developments.

Cities represent an enormous concentration of capital assets invested by a multiplicity of builders. It is hardly surprising that crime has generally been rampant in most cities of the world. 'From Los Angeles to New Delhi', observes (Hasan, 1993: np) 'urban crime statistics reveal that not only is the incidence of violence becoming more frequent, but the nature of those crimes more heinous'. The situation is very depressing in developing countries where the rapid growth of unplanned cities and population pressure force impoverished inhabitants to live in cramped spaces, undermining social relations and increasing the propensity for conflict and violence. This disorderly growth of urban areas is aggravated by poverty, the breakdown of traditional value structures and social norms, psychological disorientation, child abuse, street trading, unemployment and violence for example, in television programmes.

Crime is one of the major problems affecting cities of the world (UN-Habitat, 2003:8). Globally, the incidence of crime is high in the urban areas compared to their rural counterparts. In Africa, crime takes different patterns and trends. Sammy kyamana (2010:1) posit that, urbanization, especially in the developing world, has been accompanied by increased levels of crime, violence and lawlessness. Hence, the growing violence and feeling of insecurity that city dwellers are facing daily is one of the major challenges around the world.

The Chicago school led by Robert E Park and Ernest Burgess (1925) urged that cities are infested with the social problems of unemployment and crime. They argued, "neighbourhood condition particularly in Chicago districts (Wealth or poverty), had a much greater determinant effect on criminal behaviour than ethnicity, race or religion.

Furthermore, the common denominator is that crime is increasing in urban environments, especially in developing societies. Ekpenyong NS (2012:130) narrates that urban poverty is a driving force behind crime and juvenile delinquency particularly in Port Harcourt. He contends that economically poor areas are often plagued by high level of criminal activities. Extrapolating from the above, it is observed that incidences of crime are experienced in both developing and developed countries. This notion has been supported by Clinard (1973:1010). However, crime differentials are experienced more in urban canters compeered to the rural areas.

Slums and Crime

Slums are areas of deprivation of basic needs such as adequate shelter, food, clothes, sanitation and security (and this is consistent across different slums). Based on these similarities, it is expected that the level of crime would be similar across the different slums as well. However, available literatures and research indicates divergent views.

Nubi (2015: np), perhaps unsympathetic with slum dwellers in Lagos classified slums as crime breeding grounds. Hence, slum life from this persuasion has been associated with relatively high incidence of crime particularly among youths.

On the contrary, the United Nations-Habitat report on the "Challenges of slums, Global report on human settlement" (2003 P.18) refutes the notion of high crime in slum area as not always universal. There are urban environments that have low crime incidents even though these environments are typically slums areas.

Adam Parsons (2010) notes that "slum can be places of cruelty and violence, but equally of solidarity, tenderness and hope, we do not always distinguish between the conditions of people's lives and response to these conditions". Jeremy Seabrook (1996:174) claimed that the reality is that poor people living in informal settlements (Slums) are the foremost victims of crime and violence, as opposed to the middle-classes living in wealthier neighbourhoods with higher levels of protection. He bemoaned that a corollary of the myth that the poor are to blame for their poverty is the widespread prejudice against slums as places of social degradation, despair, and crime. Hence, contrary to popular perceptions, many poor areas in cities of the south may even be considered relatively safe when compared to the daily robberies, burglaries and attacks experienced in many western cities.

This lends credence to Robert Neuwirth (2006: 252), who reports after spending two years in four different squatter communities around the world (Rio de Janeiro, Nairobi, Mumbai and Istanbul), that slums were not an experience of non-stop crime and violence as usually portrayed. Rather, slums are of relative safety and community protection.

Although, there are some literatures on this, there is lack of proper explanation and justification of these crime differentials between slums with homogenous characteristics, such as uncontrolled settlements, lack of sanitation, and lack of adequate clean portable water, poorer living standards and widespread poverty (Owelenze, upd).

Consequences of Youth Crime on Bayelsa State

The profile of urban crime in Bayelsa State demonstrates that it covers the entire gamut of criminal activities. Offences range from murder, robbery, petty theft, burglary, shoplifting, domestic violence, gambling, narcotics, rape, indecent assault, arson etc. Crime has spread through all neighbourhoods in the city, though there are variations according to income categories and attendant slums. These include armed robbery, fraud, assassination or hired killing, organized street violence associated with the drug abuse, 419 scams and political violence.

Youths crime are replete in Bayelsa state particularly the state capital, Yenagoa. Not a day will pass without the usual discussion of the incidence of youth crimes in state news media. Stealing and armed robbery has become intractable by the day, occurring at will even in broad daylight. Cultism has become the order of the day. Drugs are abused with impunity

especially narcotics and the recent 'tramadol' outbreak. Politically motivated killings and assassinations have become common occurrences in the state. The killing of former commissioner, Ayakeme Massa and Southern Ijaw NULGE chairman represent high profile assassinations in the state.

Youths are the greatest assets a nation could possibly possess. The National Youth Development Policy (2001) asserts that the youths are the foundation of society; their creative energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of national development and security in a country. Through their creative ingenuity and labour power, a nation makes giant strides. They are the most sensitive, energetic, active and the most productive phase of life of citizens of a country. Albeit their creativity and ingenuity youths are the most volatile when their creative energies are misdirected or channeled into wrong disruptive endeavours. Hence, the prevalence of youth crime is sheer disaster and catastrophic for any society.

Furthermore, the implications of youth crime on Bayelsa society cannot be overemphasized. The precise computation of the economic costs of youth crime is impossible because of statistical discrepancies in police records and the gap between cases reported to the police and the five indices of crime rate. Moreover, the devastating effect on the value of human lives lost and the harrowing ordeals or the emotional and psychological trauma attached to them has left many wallowing in excruciating pains and misery. Again, because the issue touches on the social security and stability of every citizen of the state, the cost becomes incalculable.

Investors shy away from the Bayelsa state, crippling economic activities and rendering the state dangling in a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. Thus it is imperative that measures be sought to alleviate the prevalence of youth crimes. Such measures must take into account the wide ranging causes of youth crime, which extend to poverty, migration, lopsided affluence, unjust social and economic policies, urban pathology, food scarcity, unemployment, media effects and the failure of the educational policy.

Theoretical Framework (Anomie Theory)

In attempt to provide a theoretical framework for the study, 'Slums and Youth Criminality in Bayelsa State' the relevant theory used is the anomie theory. The theory Anomie is a sociological approach which has been dominant in the investigation on the trends of crime in a given society. Anomie theory was propounded by Emile Durkheim on his classical work "The division of Labour in society (1893). The theory was further popularized by Robert K. Merton. It is also central to Steven Menssner and Richard Rosenfelds Contemporary explanation for the substantial variation observed in rates of serious crime across nations.

Durkheim defined anomie as a state of normlessness or lack of regulation (Ruth and Wolf, 2006:55). That is the breakdown of social norms and it is a condition where norms no

longer control the activities of members in society. He believed that the specialized division of labour and the rapid expansion of industrialized society contain threats to social solidarity. He posits that the general procedural rules of society, the rules of how people ought to behave, have broken down. Hence, for Durkheim, anomie arises more generally from a mismatch between personal or group standards and wider social standards, or from the lack of social ethic, which produces moral deregulation and an absence of legitimate aspirations (Adabayo, 2013:351).

Furthermore, Durkheim believed that the state of normlessness (anomie) easily leads to crime and deviant behavior (Halarambos and Horlborn, 2008:323). Robert Merton reiterating the opinion of his predecessor, linked anomie with deviance and argued that discontinuity between culture and structure have the dysfunctional consequences of leading to deviance within society. Merton defined anomie as the “discontinuity between cultural goals and the legitimate means available for reaching them. He described five (5) types of deviance (conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion) in terms of the acceptance or rejection of social goals and the institutionalized means or achieving them (Ruth and Wolf, 2006:55).

Extrapolating from the above, anomie thus, refers to the breakdown of social norms and a condition where those norms no longer control the activities of the members of society. Hence, without clear rules to guide them, individuals cannot find their place in society and have difficulty adjusting to the changing conditions of life. This invariably leads to dissatisfaction, frustration, conflict and deviant behaviour (Crime) since humans are nasty, brutish, wicked and vile in nature as Thomas Hobbes claimed.

Juxtaposing the anomie theory and the study at hand “slums and youth criminality in Bayelsa State”, make bold to say that slums are socially deranged and disorganized environments involving lack of coordination and other variation of social chaos that set the stage for violence and crime. Slums are poverty stricken and as such places of social degradation despair and lack of basic necessities of life. Hence, slum communities are usually anarchic in nature lacking proper rules, regulations norms and social control. This engenders slums as “breeding ground of crime” as stagnant water is to mosquitoes (Nubi, 2015: np)

Durkheim notes that, lack of rules and clarity result in psychological status of worthlessness, frustration lack of purpose and despair. In addition, since there is no idea of what is considered desirable, to strive for anything would be futile. Hence, youths in slums choose criminal activity because the individual believes that there is no reason not to. In other words, the person is alienated, feels worthless and that their efforts to try and achieve anything else are fruitless. Therefore, with lack of any foreseeable alternative, youths falls into criminal activities such as kidnapping political thuggery, robbery, prostitution, drug abuse etc.

Therefore, youth crime is inevitable in slums because crime pervades the world of youths from birth in slums. Poor youths with no access to college, chronically unemployed will feel worthless, with no direction or sense of purpose. Many a youth thus turn to crime as an outlet, because he or she felt that there were no other options; to try to achieve a higher purpose would be a waste.

Methodology

The study adopts a cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional survey provides us with a snapshot of the population to collect data in order to make inferences about the population of interest (universe) at a specific point in time. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were implored to select the sample. A purposive sampling technique was implored to select three (3) slum communities (Swali, BDGS -Ovom, and Cameroun Camp - Azikoro). A simple random technique was then adopted to select 150 respondents from the selected slum communities. To ensure randomization, balloting method was used to select 50 respondents each from the slum communities.

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data were garnered with a structured questionnaire. However, secondary data were derived from books, journals, newspaper, magazines as well as other research works.

Data Presentation and Analysis

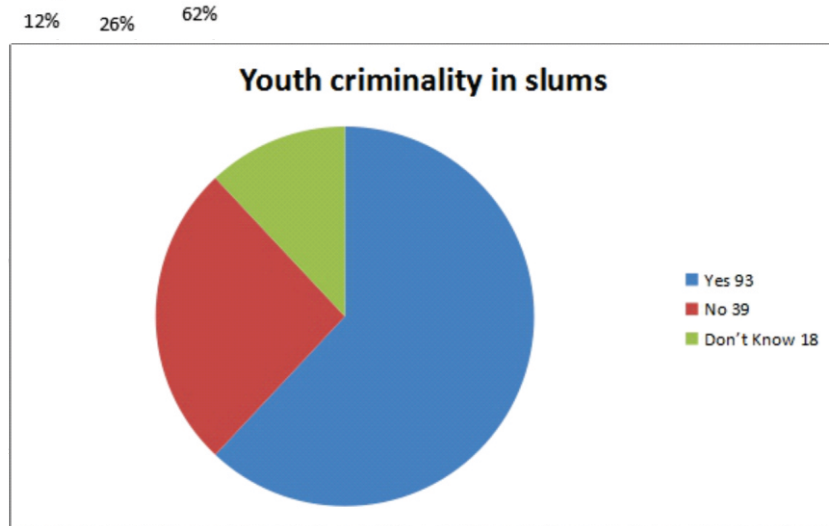
Data presentation is based on the relevant objectives and hypothesis outlined above. The objectives are presented with a frequency distribution table and measured with simple percentage analysis.

However, the formulated hypotheses are tested using the chi-square statistical measure.

Table 1: Extent of youth crime in Bayelsa state slums

Youth crime rate in slums	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	93	62%
No	39	26%
Don't know	18	12%
Total	150	100%

Figure 1: Extent of Youth crime in Bayelsa State Slums

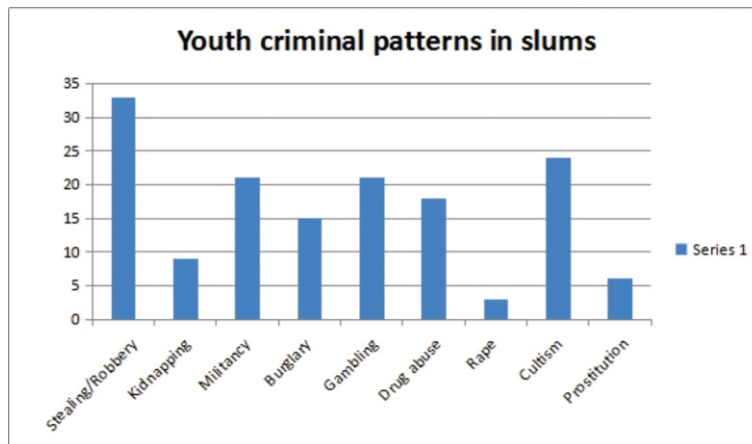


Extrapolating from the study, 93 respondents (62%) constituting the majority affirmed that youth crime rate is alarming in Bayelsa state slums.

Table 2: Criminal patterns of youth in Bayelsa state slums

Types of Crime	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Stealing/Robbery	33	22%
Kidnapping	9	6%
Militancy	21	14%
Burglary	15	10%
Gambling	21	14
Drug abuse	18	12%
Rape	3	2%
Cultism	24	16%
Prostitution	6	4%
Total	150	100%

Figure 2: Youth criminal pattern in Bayelsa state slums

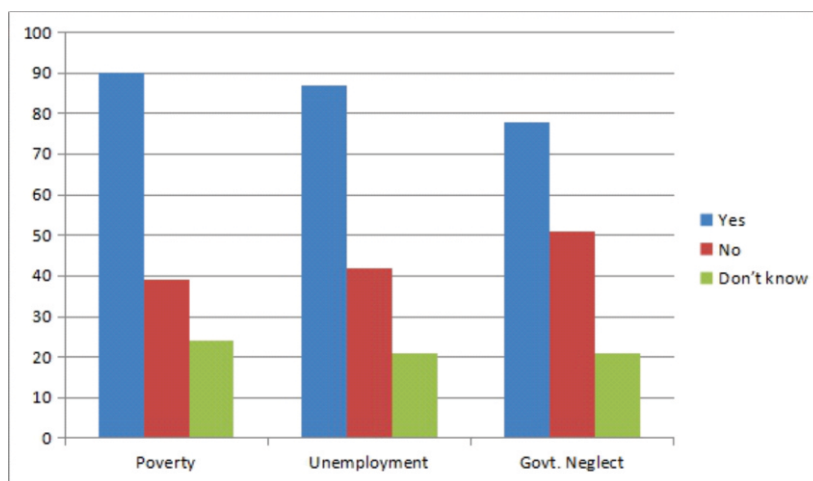


Gleaning from the table, the common criminal patterns of youth in Bayelsa State slums adjudged by the respondents were stealing/robbery (22%), cultism (16%). militancy (14%) gambling (14%) drug abuse (12%) burglary (10%) On the country, respondents overlooked other crimes such Kidnapping (6%), prostitution (4%), rape (2%). These crimes were adjudged to be seldom committed by youths in Bayelsa state slums.

Table 3: Factors influencing youth criminality in Bayelsa state slums

Factors influencing youth crime.	Frequency/percentage %			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Poverty	90(60%)	39 (26%)	24 (16%)	150 (100%)
Unemployment	87 (58%)	42 (28%)	21(14%)	150 (100%)
Government neglect	78 (52%)	51 (34%)	21 (14%)	150 (100%)

Figure 3: Factors influencing youth crime in slums



Extrapolating from the table, the majority of the respondents decried poverty (60%), unemployment (58%), and Government neglect of slums (52%) as the germane factors influencing youth participation in crime in bayelsa state slums. These factors inflict frustration, depression and hopelessness among youths Which invariably engender criminal tendencies among youths in Bayelsa state slums.

Discussion

The study explored the nexus between urban slums and youth criminality in some selected slum communities in Bayelsa state. Findings of the study adjudged that crime rate among youths living in slums of Bayelsa state are high. The criminal patterns of youths were believed to be a function of the interplay of social forces in slums. The most common types of crime adjudged by the respondents were stealing/robbery (22%), cultism (16%). militancy (14%) gambling (14%) drug abuse (12%) burglary (10%). The findings resonate with Ekpenyong N S (2012), who observed that violent, property and drug related crimes were prevalent in poor urban areas especially port Harcourt remand homes.

By and large, the analyses of study present empirical verification that slum perpetuate youth criminality in Bayelsa state. Findings of the study revealed that the widespread poverty (60%), unemployment (58%), in Bayelsa state slums as well as government continued neglect of slum communities (52%) were deciphered as the germane factors influencing youth involvement in crimes. Hence, these findings are in consonant with the study of Chiganta (2012) and Uyangetal (2016), that poverty and unemployment are significant causes of youth involvement in crimes. Collaborating Chiganta and Uyang et al observation, Benson (2004 and James (2001) laments that many youths earn their living through obnoxious criminal means deem necessary to sustain their living.

Annexures (Test of Hypotheses)

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between poverty in slums and youth criminal patterns.

Chi-square calculation for Ho 1

Respondents	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Male	59(49.8)	14(23.24)	10(9.96)	83
Female	31(40.2)	28(18.76)	8(8.04)	67
Total	90	42	18	150

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{O-E^2}{E}$$

$$\frac{(59-49.8)^2}{49.8} + \frac{(14-23.24)^2}{23.24} + \frac{(10-9.96)^2}{9.96} + \frac{(31-40.2)^2}{40.2} + \frac{(28-18.76)^2}{18.76} + \frac{(8-8.04)^2}{8.04}$$

$$= 1.700 + 3.674 + 0.001 + 2.105 + 4.551 + 0.001$$

$$X^2 = 12.032$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom} = (R-1) (C-1) = (2-1) (3-1)$$

$$DF = 2$$

Decision: The calculated value X^2 12.032 is greater than the critical table value 5.99 at 2 and 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there exists a significant relationship between poverty and youth criminal patterns in Bayelsa state slums.

Hypothesis two

Unemployment rate in slums is inversely related to youth criminality

Chi-square calculation for Ho 2

Respondents	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Male	57(48.14)	16(23.24)	10(11.62)	83
Female	30(38.86)	26(18.76)	11(9.38)	67
Total	87	42	21	150

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{O-E^2}{E}$$

$$\frac{(57-48.14)^2}{48.14} + \frac{(16-23.24)^2}{23.24} + \frac{(10-11.62)^2}{11.62} + \frac{(30-38.86)^2}{38.86} + \frac{(26-18.76)^2}{18.76} + \frac{(11-9.38)^2}{9.38}$$

$$= 1.631 + 2.255 + 0.225 + 2.020 + 2.794 + 0.280$$

$$X^2 = 9.205$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom} = (R-1)(C-1) = (2-1)(3-1)$$

$$DF = 2$$

Decision: since the calculated X^2 value 9.205 exceeds the table value, the researchers reject the null hypothesis and declare that there is a direct relationship between unemployment and youth criminality in slums.

Conclusion

It is widely believed that slum is a breeding ground of crime and havens of criminals. Youths occupy the highest rung in the crime ladder in urban slums as well being victims. This study brings to the fore that the increasing spate of youth criminality in slums is the function of a confluence of socioeconomic conditions, negatively skewed against youths within the confines of Bayelsa state slums. As amplified by the findings, this study crystallized that the spate of youth criminality in slums is alarming in Bayelsa state. A striking majority of the respondents constituting 62% of the sample adjudged that the prevalence of youth crime in slums has skyrocketed in Bayelsa state, eating up the very fabric gluing our society together. This largely stems from the relative dire socioeconomic conditions in slums coupled with moral breakdown and the lack of visible law. Hence, excluded from the universe of the proper, youth crimes become ubiquitous in slums.

Furthermore, the study confirmed that the common criminal pattern of youths in slums tends to be compatible with the social milieu of Bayelsa state slums. The most common types of youth crimes in slums adjudged by the respondents were stealing/robbery (22%), cultism (16%), militancy (14%), gambling (14%), drug abuse (12%), burglary (10%).

However, crimes such as kidnapping, prostitution and rape were considered seldom among youths in Bayelsa state slums.

By and large, in tandem with the findings, the study crystallized and established a relationship between urban slums and youth criminality in Bayelsa state. The study confirmed that youths involved in crime are social derelicts induced by the interplay of dire socioeconomic conditions of slums in Bayelsa state. Such factors include poverty (60%), unemployment (58%), and government continued neglect (52%) as well as a host of concomitant factors. Hence, the factors responsible for youth crimes were not unique. Contrary to many studies done earlier, the unique setting of slum locality had a levelling effect on young people aspirations and expectations that invariably culminates to the spate of youth crime in Bayelsa state slums. Many youths turn into crime as a business franchise to earn a living.

Therefore, the study concludes that practical and pragmatic efforts must be devised by Government, critical stakeholders, and NGOs to checkmate the simmering urban slums and concomitant spate of youth crime in Bayelsa state, because the implications are not farfetched. Not only will the precariousness of youth criminality have mediated by urban slums in Bayelsa state left our society in a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. It will shy away foreign investors, crippling and disrupting business and economic activities. However, if not properly checkmated, the concomitant effects of youth crime in urban slums will spread its tentacles to every facet of national security and development on our society. The potent damage to the fabrics of our society will be a sheer disaster. Concerted efforts should be embarked to checkmate the spiralling of slums and concomitant sprawl of youth criminality in Bayelsa state and Nigeria as a whole.

Recommendations

After summarizing, collating and analysis of data, the followings are recommended based on the specific findings of the study. They are:

Housing Policy to Reduce Slum Prevalence

Government and concern bodies should develop proper housing policies to curtail the menacing prevalence of slums in our urban areas. This study unravelled that many informal dwellers in Bayelsa state are attracted to slums because of the relative cheap housing compared to their costly counterparts in the formal city settlements. Housing policies such as the proposed 1000 housing will be able to accommodate many immigrants from rural areas in search of greener pastures in cities, thereby reducing the prevalence and density of urban slums.

Appeasing the Dire Socioeconomic Conditions

The clamour for restructuring of Nigeria should be imbibed to reorient our society towards economic efficiency, equity and development. The widespread poverty and spiralling rate of unemployment are cyclical factors responsible for the outbreak of urban

slums as well as engendering crime particularly among youths living in urban slums in Bayelsa state. Hence, government and critical stakeholders should reposition programmes aimed at addressing the high rate of poverty in the land as well as creating employment opportunities especially among the youths. These will ameliorate the dire denigrating socioeconomic conditions that engender youth criminality.

Neighbourhood Crime Prevention Approach

The study unravelled that informal settlements are unique and the criminal pattern tend to be compatible with the slum setting or locality. There should be conscious effort to encourage informal settlement cohesion as well as the provision of basic amenities distanced from slum dwellers. This should be handled by government in terms of organizing how informal settlement environment will look like and to facilitate formal recognition of these slums as key components of wider crime prevention strategy. Effective policing including neighbourhood watch, vigilante groups and community policing should be implemented based on the specific slum locality. Within this context, three types of palliatives may be offered. The first seeks to protect the individual, the second focuses on the community while the third directs attention to the overall structure of public policy and the model of governance.

Youth Engagement with Economic Activities and Skills Acquisition

Finally, youth empowerment and sensitization programmes coupled with proper educational and skill acquisition programmes should be adequate implemented in slum communities. This will ensure meaningful engagement of youths and vocational development as a “stitch in time saves nine”. This is predicated on the fact that, as the hungry youth cannot sleep, so will the middle class and working class may not be able to sleep peacefully in their luxury.

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