

Unequal Job-Opportunities in the Nigerian Civil Service and Youth Criminality: An Empirical Analysis

Habeeb Abdulrauf Salihu

Department of Criminology and Security Studies,
University of Ilorin, Nigeria
salihu.ha@yahoo.com

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Abstract - *The research investigates the increase in criminal activities among educated Nigerian youths in Lagos state as a response to the unequal employment opportunities in the public sectors. Questionnaire was the instrument used in data collection. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a total of 1900 respondents and 4 communities respectively. The information gathered was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The research found that unequal employment opportunities have a significant influence on the increase in youth criminality in Lagos. The study concludes that the increase in crime among educated Nigerians in Lagos is a response to the lack of level playing ground in the recruitment process for the available jobs in the civil service. Thus, the paper suggests that the recruitment process in the various government institutions should follow the process of the law and an enabling business environment that will support small and medium entrepreneurs should be created.*

Keywords: Nigerian civil service; public sector; job opportunity; unemployment in Nigeria; youth criminality in Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Social scientists, policymakers and stakeholders have at different fora grieved over the increasing level of unemployment, undesirable living conditions of the people, and the increase in violent and deviant behaviours in the Nigerian states [1]. Reports revealed that over 65% of the working population is either unemployed or underemployed and larger percentage of the populace lives desolately due to difficulty in getting the basic needs necessary for human survival [2], [3]. In addition, barely a week will pass without a report of lawlessness and crime against people and properties (such as fraud, armed robbery and bank invasion, kidnapping, killing for ritual and other kinds of antisocial behaviours) in the Nigerian communities [4], [5]. Analysts have attributed the increase in most of these transgressions to the level of unemployment among the teeming youth in the country [1], [6].

Besides, several studies have established a correlation between unemployment, crime and other deviance in Nigeria and other countries. For instance, Hassan [7], Nordin and Almén [8] found a relationship

between accumulated rate of unemployment and the level of criminal motivation and opportunities. Also, Lee [9] established that unemployment has a positive influence on property crimes. In the same vein, Ghani [10] and Ajaegbu [1] observed a nexus between youth unemployment and crime, that the level of youth unemployment reflects the restlessness in the Nigerian states. Hence, this present study is not a replication of the previous studies. However, it tries to examine unemployment (and underemployment) among Nigerians and increase in crime (or deviance) rate from the perspective that uneven access to job opportunities or available jobs in the Nigerian civil service have, to some extent, inspired some level of grievances amid young educated Nigerians which, in turn, drive them to engage in antisocial behaviours to better their living conditions. This understanding is based on the common apprehension that unemployment in the country is caused majorly by the unequal opportunity or lack of level playing ground to compete for the available jobs [11].

Employment opportunities in the various subdivisions of the Nigerian public (and private) sector abound teaching, engineering and technical works, law enforcement and security, financial management and supervision (such as accounting, auditing, planning and budgeting), marketing, medical and health care (nursing, primary health care workers, and medical practitioners), clerk among others [7]. The requirements for these opportunities include high-school certificate, diploma degree, bachelor and master degree and PhD degree for some key positions. Accordingly, thousands of Nigerians are being trained in different line of work in higher institutions of learning to fill the available positions [11]. However, many of these people could not get a job upon completion of their studies [12]. Ojo [12] observed that many educated Nigerians could not get a job not because there are no job opportunities (in the civil service) rather it is as a result of inequity in the recruitment process for the available jobs. This perception appears to be driven by the various pronouncement made by the government (at all levels) regarding the number of jobs being created every year (in the civil service and through youth empowerments); the purported allocation of job appointments and empowerments slots given to or shared among members of the political class and parties (ruling party) and; the trending issue of jobs being sold around the country [13].

Moreover, the feeling of job deprivation or denial, coupled with the challenges people encounter in meeting their basic daily needs and difficulties in fulfilling what Salihu [14] termed 'Nigerians urge for success' seem to have aggravated the tension or frustration and triggered certain negative responses from the people. Also, the common notion among Nigerians that 'man must survive' appears to have given some people the impression that if the legitimate means is blocked or inaccessible, other possible means (including illegitimate) can be explored. It is on this account that this study seeks to investigate the increase in criminal or deviance behaviours among educated Nigerians (especially the working population) as a response to the unequal job opportunities in the civil service.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study, therefore, are to investigate whether the increasing rate of criminality among unemployed and underemployed educated Nigerians in Lagos State is a reaction to the unequal job

or recruitment opportunities in the civil service; and suggest measures that may be employed to address issues in the recruitment process and criminality among unemployed and underemployed Nigerians in Lagos state and Nigeria as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Creation, Equal Employment Opportunity and Challenges

Equal employment opportunity is an employment practice that seeks to provide an unbiased or equal job chance to all qualified applicants (or citizenry) without discrimination against anyone [15]. The philosophy of equal employment opportunity seeks to ensure that all the applicants regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity or colour; have a fair opportunity in the hiring process, fair remuneration and rewards, competing for promotion and equal access to training and other benefits. This is to guarantee a level playing ground for all qualified applicants, recognition of skills and abilities, and ensure that certain classes of people are not subjected to any unfair treatment or characteristics that have nothing to do with the qualification or experience required for the job [16]. Equal employment opportunity according to Orife and Chaubey [15] goes beyond giving people an equal opportunity in the recruitment process, it also encompasses accommodation of applicants' differences.

However, employment equality can be guaranteed only when there are available jobs. Provision or creation of jobs is one of the major challenges facing many countries around the world. Job creation depends significantly on a number of factors- particularly the economic strength (trade, investment, and industry etc.) of a country [17]. A nation with a vibrant economy has the potential to have both anticipated and unanticipated job creation through her investments and the various industries. On the other hand, a nation with a weak or smaller economy (trade, investment and industry) may possibly experience unemployment, underemployment and other challenges [18]. In addition, the global economic situation also plays a significant role in the employment generation across the globe [19].

Therefore, in an economy like Nigeria's, where trade and investment are practically invisible; and the production of goods and services (industries) are virtually crippled; it will be very difficult to create adequate employment opportunities [19]. Undeniably, Nigeria was affected by the global economic trend; however, the various sectors or industries that should serve as multiple sources of revenue for the

government and provide employment opportunities for Nigerians have been neglected for decades [20]. Since the oil boom in the 1970s, Nigerian government has abandoned the agricultural and manufacturing industry that used to be the mainstream of the economy in favour of crude oil. Today, Nigeria's economy depends solely on oil; as a result, the unstable global price of crude oil dictates the state of the economy [21]. In addition, the politics of corruption and ethnicity, and the implementation of faulty economic policies also contributed to the present economic challenges the country is facing [22].

Accordingly, the economic condition has made it difficult for private business enterprises (that would have created jobs for the teeming youths) to thrive. Today, there are very few private enterprises in the country and they have little capacity to employ a large number of labours [23]. In fact, the private industries in Nigeria, as Okoye and Chijioke [24] have observed, fire more employees than they hire. This is because most of them are struggling to cope with what Salihu [14] called the 'unfavourable or harsh' operating system (such as unsteady government policies and tax system, access to and interest on credit or loan, lack of stable electricity etc.) that has crippled many of them. The Nigeria Bureau of Statistics reported that a total of 7.956 million jobs were lost in the private sector between January 2016 and September 2017 [2].

Additionally, the Nigeria Association of Manufacturers reported that between 2006 and 2011, 834 private enterprises have either folded up or relocated to other countries due to the unfavourable condition [25]. In addition, Eniola et al. [26] and Alemayehu [27] observed that the economic situation in Nigeria makes it difficult for small and medium business enterprises (entrepreneurs) to survive. Also, the unsteady electricity supply, unstable fuel price, unscrupulous tax system and access to credit facilities also contributed immensely to these challenges.

Consequently, the government (federal, state and local) became the major employer of labour in the country. The civil service is the only institution every Nigerians (both educated and uneducated) are looking up to for job opportunity [24]. However, job distribution in the civil service according to some analysts is based on favouritism. That is qualified people are not giving equal opportunities to compete for the available jobs. Adebayo [28] noted that how all the eminent government establishments recruit is not clear to the public. Recruitment takes place in these organisations without any announcement or public

advertisements. Ajaegbu [1] also observed that government institutions that advertised job openings to the public often conduct the recruitment exercise in a manner inconsistent with the provisions of the law and Federal Character principles.

By virtue of the provision of the law and the Federal Character principles, all recruitments into the Nigerian civil service should be conducted in a manner that gives equal opportunity to all Nigerians regardless of status, gender, religion and ethnicity. Section 4(1) of the Federal Character Act of 1996 provides that each state (including the Federal Capital Territory) of the Federation of Nigeria shall be equitably represented in all government institutions and public enterprises. In addition, qualified and competent Nigerian from all states in the Federation shall be given equal opportunity in the recruitment process to fill the available positions [29]. Furthermore, Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria also provides that the composition of or recruitment into the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner that will reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity. Hence, recruitment into the civil service is expected to be carried out on the basis of qualification and merit, through a competitive and open consideration [30].

However, Ndagi [11] observed that employment opportunities in government establishments in Nigeria are not based on merit. Ndagi added that even the government empowerments are distributed inequitably. They are often distributed to cronies of individuals in power, active members of the ruling political party and supporters of the government of the day. Bakare [31] stressed that the major cause of unemployment among Nigerian youths is not the lack of job, it is as a result of corruption among individuals in the position of authority who use their powers and influences to employ close allies, sell employment positions and inflate the workforce or payroll for their personal gains, thereby leading to vacuum and/or ghost workers in government institutions. Moreover, Aluko and Adesopo [32] argued that the politics of cronyism in the recruitment process in the Nigerian civil service is largely responsible for the increase in joblessness in the country.

In a study on leadership and corruption in the Nigerian public sector, Imhonopi and Ugochukwu [33] observed that it would be erroneous to claim that there are scarce job opportunities in the Nigerian states, this is because there are vacant positions that needed to be

filled and individuals are employed, practically, on a daily basis. However, the recruitment process into many of the prominent government institutions are in secret; the positions are filled on the basis of power and influences. Consequently, educated, brilliant and potential future frontrunners of Nigeria have turned to be motorcyclists (Okada riders), bus drivers and petty item sellers on the street (including other demeaning jobs). They work or struggle day and night to survive-feed themselves, pay rents and fulfil other basic needs [34].

However, success or being a successful Nigerian as Salihu [14] described depends greatly on the kind of job one has. Individual's employment position or status is one of the basic measures of success in Nigerian society. Wealth, prestige and material possessions are other measures that are significantly influenced by employment status. That is an individual's employment status, to some extent, determines his living condition and material possession. In this way, an unemployed (and underemployed) Nigerians may find it very difficult to be prosperous. Ironically, an unemployed individual may not be able to own a home, car, feed his family, and afford a better living condition. Therefore, they are invariably considered poor.

Youth Unemployment (and Underemployment) and Crimes in Nigeria

Research on how individuals or groups respond to structural inequality revealed that people tend to demonstrate their grievance through different approaches including violent or deviant behaviours mainly borne out of the feeling of deprivation [35]; [36]. Thus, observers have claimed that the increase in the crime rate and deviant behaviours among youths in many parts of Nigeria can be attributed to or seen as reactions to the undesirable and unequal opportunities they experience following their graduation from school [37]; [1]. Ibaba and Ikelegbe [38] argued that the feeling of disappointment and apprehension of how to attain success after acquiring the necessary educational qualifications are the major factors that breed resentment and aggression on the part of some people who respond in various ways using different strategies. Many unemployed graduates are frustrated because they have become a burden to their parents and other employed family members who bear the responsibility of providing for their basic needs. The strain of those that have no parents or family members to depend on is even doubled [39]. The accumulation of frustration and strain according to Salaam [34] and Ajaegbu [1] is

evident in the accelerating level of fraud or scam (419 and yahoo-yahoo), prostitution, kidnapping and demanding for ransom, armed robbery, killing for rituals, political thuggery and gangs, cultism, militancy and insurgency and other forms of crimes and deviant behaviours. The various urban centres and public space are increasingly terrified by the activities of criminals and bandits. Every corner has been turned into a drug joint where marijuana and other drugs are sold [40].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many intellectuals in the previous time have explained people's violent and deviant behaviour in relation to the feeling of discontentment or deprivation. That is the various ways people employed to react to the dissatisfaction or grievances of their perceived unfavourable condition. This perspective is evident, particularly, in the work of Aristotle. Aristotle cited in Gurr noted that the 'relative sense of inequality among people rather than absolute is the driving force of revolution [35:46]. In addition, social scientists, particularly sociologists, are also recognised with such a perspective. Sam Stouffer, Walter Runciman, Bernstein and Crosby, and Gurr, identified relative deprivation as a potential cause of social movements that often lead to intense situations of violence such as rioting, terrorism, militancy, civil wars and other forms of social deviance such as crime [41].

Additionally, Merton [42] adopts the idea of relative deprivation or the feeling of discontentment to explain social deviance among Americans. In his work on strain theory, Merton focused on society (especially American) where worldly success or goals are largely measured in terms of wealth and material possession. The legitimate means to achieve such goals include personal talent, good education or skills, ambition and efforts, getting a good job and so on. According to Merton, the society attached greater value on success or achieving the goals but placed less importance on using the legitimate means. Individual or groups are thereby pressured to conform and struggle within the structure society has produced. This form of structural arrangement, according to Merton, may limit the possibility of some individuals to achieve the goals through the socially accepted means.

The result is the institutionalisation of an unbalanced society where the rules of the game are not important but winning. The lower class according to Merton is the most vulnerable group in such a society. They are subjected to pressure or strain to survive and maintain their unfulfilled aspirations with frustration.

This is because the social goals and the legitimate means to achieve them does not correspond. Such situation compels individuals to develop or adopt the various possible means to achieve the goals. Merton noted that people respond to this situation in different ways. Some adopted a non-deviant approach by accepting defined goals and determined to achieve them through the legitimate means (conformist), some accepted the goals but try to achieve them via the illegitimate means (Innovationists), some rejected the goals and still hold on to the legitimate means (ritualists), while some overruled both the goals and the means (retreatists), others rejected the goals and substitute it with an entirely different goals, and employ whatsoever available means (legitimate or illegitimate) to achieve the goals (rebels).

Following Merton, Cloward and Ohlin [43] argued that the pressure is more likely to be felt by the children of lower-class- 'lower-class boys' who seek to reach middle-class status by competing with their middle-class counterparts. These lower-class boys, according to Cloward and Ohlin, often tend to be more brilliant, intelligent and have better grades than their counterparts from other social class. However, in the pursuit of success, they realize the fact that achieving success is not only based on mere qualification, ability or talent; other influences such as belonging to the right or winning group, having the right connections, and/or social background which they may not have access to, often play a significant role. Consequently, they are placed in a disadvantaged position which creates a strong sense of disappointment, injustice and anger that drive them into engaging in antisocial behaviours.

In addition, some scholars have claimed that individual or group reaction to this kind of unbalance system or the structural arrangement Merton described depends on the openness of the social system or opportunity for change (mobility) within the system. Smith and Huo [44] and Taylor and Moghaddam [45] argued that if people perceived that there is opportunity or chances to move upward (open system) within the social structure, they are more likely to view the system as fair and respond to their perceived underserved condition with an increased normative approach. That is conventional actions that conform to the standards of society such as acquiring more skills or education or personal development. In the same vein, an individual or groups are more likely to tolerate an undesirable situation if they believe there are chances of improvement. However, if the system is perceived to be closed and there is no opportunity to move up the

ladder using the legitimate means, people are more likely to feel unfairly treated and respond with unconventional behaviours such as illegal, violent and aggressive behaviours.

METHODS

Study Area

Lagos State is located in the south-western part of Nigeria. It bounded Ogun state in the east and north and shares boundaries with the Republic of Benin in the west. Lagos occupies an area of 3,577sq km, of which 787sq is covered by lagoon and creeks. Administratively, it is divided into 20 Local Government Areas assembled into 5 divisions. Lagos state is often referred to as the commercial city of Nigeria. This study purposively covered four areas in Lagos where there is a large population of unemployed youth and the occurrence of criminal activities. The selected areas include Agege, Ikorodu, Ajegunle, and Mainland of Lagos. The population of this study, therefore, include all unemployed (and underemployed) educated youths between the ages of 25 and above residing in the selected areas.

Sampling Technique

Purposive and simple random sampling technique was employed. The purposive sampling method was used to select 4 areas in Lagos where there are wide reports of criminality among youths. While the simple sampling method was used to select a total of one-thousand and nine-hundred ($n = 1900$) respondents from the selected areas. The criteria used include age, education and employment status.

Data Collection

The study employed both primary and secondary source of data. The primary source was a cross-sectional survey research design. A structured questionnaire was the research instruments used to collect information from the respondents. The questionnaire was administered with the assistance of three trained research assistants. The secondary sources include previous academic research, legal documents and statute, newspaper reports and online sources. These sources were evaluated to provide a clear understanding of the challenges of unemployment, unequal job opportunities and the widespread of criminality in Nigerian communities.

Data Analysis

The method of data analysis used for this work centred on both descriptive and inferential methods.

Simple percentage and frequency counts were used to analyse the demographic information of the respondents and response relating to the research objective, while chi-square was used to test the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable with the use of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Ethical Consideration

It has become necessary for social researchers to honour ethical considerations in doing research. This research is, therefore, bounded by research ethics. Accordingly, participation in this research was voluntary. Respondents’ consents were sought; also, they were all informed of the purpose(s) of the study and provided with adequate information about taking part. These allowed them to understand the implications of their participation and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time they desire to do so. In addition, confidentiality of the information and assurance of anonymity were guaranteed. In order to ensure these, the questionnaire used did not, in any way, contains items that may reveal the identity of respondents or be traceable to any of them. Also, the researcher did not, in any way, have access to personal details of the respondents. Therefore, all information collected was anonymous. Moreover, respondents were guaranteed that the information provided is confidential and will be used purposely for this research work and possibly its publication.

RESULTS

This section focuses on the presentation and analysis of the results of primary data gathered through the administered questionnaires. A total of 1900 questionnaires were administered, 1792 was returned completed. Therefore, the analysis and discussion were centred on the 1792 returned questionnaires.

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of respondents. It can be observed that 62% of the respondents were male and 38% were female. Also, 17% of the respondents fell between the ages of 20-25 years old, 24% were between 26-30 years old, 38% were between 31-35 years old and 21% were between 36 and 40 years old. The implication of this is that the majority of the respondents were between 31 and 35 years old. Additionally, 49% were single, 36% married, 9.5% divorced and 5.5% were widow/widower. Besides, 8% had Postgraduate Degree, 34% had University Bachelor Degree, 24% had Polytechnic Higher National Diploma (HND), 15% had Polytechnic

National Diploma (ND) and 22% had National Certificate in Education (NCE). In addition, 64% were unemployed and 36% were underemployed. These results indicate that the majority of the respondents were single, educated and unemployed.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants (n = 1792)

Category	Frequency	Percentage%
Gender		
Male	1111	62
Female	681	38
Age		
20-25	305	17
26-30	430	24
31-35	681	38
36-40	376	21
Marital status		
Single	878	49
Married	645	36
Divorced	170	9.5
Widow/widower	99	5.5
Level of Education		
Postgraduate Edu.	143	8
Bachelor Degree	609	34
Higher National Diploma (HND)	430	24
National Diploma (ND)	269	15
National Certificate in Edu. (NCE)	394	22
Employment Status		
Employed	0	0
Unemployed	1147	64
Underemployed	645	36

Source: Field Survey 2018

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents’ Perception of Job Creation in the Country

Item	Frequency	Percentage %
Very High	287	16
High	376	21
Moderate	681	38
Low	340	19
Very Low	108	6
Total	1792	100

Source: Field Survey 2018

Respondents’ perception of the level of job creation in the civil service (at federal, state and local government level) is presented in table 2. The results show that 16% and 21% of the respondents were of the perception that job creation in the civil service was very high and high respectively, 38% said it was moderate; while 19% and 6% held that it was low and very low

respectively. The implication of these results is that the majority of the respondents believed that the degree of job creation in the civil service was somewhat reasonable. That is it is not high and not low.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents' Perception of Equal Opportunities in the Recruitment Process in the Civil Service.

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Disagree	753	42
Somewhat Disagree	645	36
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	394	22
Somewhat Agree	0	0
Strongly Agree	0	0
Total	1792	100

Source: Field Survey 2018

From the respondents' perception of equal opportunity in the recruitment process in the Nigerian civil service presented in table 3; it can be observed that 42% and 36% strongly disagree and somewhat disagree respectively that there is no equal opportunity in the recruitment process, 22% neither agree nor disagree; while none of the respondents somewhat agree and strongly agree. The implication of these results is that the majority of the respondents believed that there is no level playing ground for all qualified Nigerians in Lagos state to compete for the available jobs in the government institutions (civil service) at all levels.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents' Perception of the Major Factor Responsible for their Joblessness and Underemployment

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Lack of adequate jobs	412	23
Unequal recruitment opportunity	681	38
Poor economic condition and conducive business environment	179	10
Poor policy and implementation	72	4
Inadequate government empowerment program	143	8
Inadequate private establishments	305	17
Total	1792	100

Source: Field Survey 2018

Respondents' responses to the question on the major factor they perceived to be responsible for their state of joblessness and underemployment is presented in table 4. The results revealed that 23% of the respondents

were of the opinion that lack of adequate jobs in the country was a major factor, 38% chose unequal recruitment opportunity in the civil service, 10% said it was as a result of the poor economic condition and unfavourable business environment, 4% perceived poor policy and implementation as the factor, while 8% and 17% were of the perception that inadequate government empowerment and private establishments in the country respectively were the factors responsible for their unemployment and underemployment. The implication of this is that the majority of the respondents believed that unequal employment opportunity in the civil service was a major factor.

Table 5. Respondents' Perception of the Level of Youth Criminality in Lagos City

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Very High	627	35
High	735	41
Moderate	430	24
Low	0	0
Very Low	0	0
Total	1792	100

Source: Field Survey 2018

Table 5 presents the respondents' perception of the level of criminality among youths in Lagos City. The results showed that 35% and 41% perceived the level of criminality to be very and high respectively, 24% believed it was moderate, while none of the respondents held that youth criminality in Lagos was low and very low. The implication of this is that a larger percentage of the respondents believed that youth criminality was high in Lagos city.

Table 6. Respondents' Perception of the Increase in Youth Criminality as a Response to the Unequal Job Opportunities in Civil Service

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Disagree	108	6
Somewhat Disagree	233	13
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	376	21
Somewhat Agree	573	32
Strongly Agree	502	28
Total	1792	100

Source: Field Survey 2018

The respondents' responses to the question of whether the increase in youth criminality in Lagos is a reaction to the unequal employment opportunities in the recruitment process is presented in table 6. It can be observed that 6% and 13% of the respondents strongly disagree and somewhat disagree that the increase in youth criminality in Lagos state was a reaction or

response to the unequal job opportunities in the civil service; 21% neither agree nor disagree, while 32% and 28% somewhat agree and strongly agree respectively. These results indicate that the majority of the respondents agree that youth criminality in Lagos was a reaction to the unequal level playing ground for all qualified Nigerians to compete in the recruitment process for the available jobs in the civil service.

Table 7: Spearman Correlation Analysis of Unequal Employment Opportunity and Youth Criminality in Lagos State

Items	Mean	SD	Sig. Level	r-value	p-value
Unequal employment opportunity	2.86	1.097	0.01	0.681	.001
Increase in youth criminality	2.08	0.820			

Source: Field Survey 2018. $p < 0.01$

The results presented in table 7 revealed that the calculated r-value $0.681 > 0.5$, and the p-value $0.001 < 0.01$. Therefore, there is a significant positive relationship between unequal unemployment opportunity and increase in criminality among educated youths in Lagos state, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

This present study investigated whether the rise in youth criminality in Lagos State, Nigeria is a response to the unequal employment opportunities in the recruitment process in the civil service at all levels (federal, state and local) in the country. Results presented in Table 2 indicated that the larger percentage (38%) of the respondents were of the perception that the level of job creation in the civil service (at all levels) is moderate. This suggests that some people in Lagos held the opinion that the government (at all levels) have, to some extent, created jobs in the public sector. However, the common belief (as illustrated in table 3) is that the recruitment process for these jobs is biased (42% and 36% differ). That is qualified Nigerians are not given equal opportunity to compete for these jobs. Although, there are varied opinions among the respondents as regards the major factor responsible for their state of joblessness (and underemployment). Nonetheless, the majority (38%) of the respondents as demonstrated in table 4 held that unequal employment opportunity in the public sector was a major factor.

In addition, respondents perceived youth criminality in the city of Lagos to be high (table 5). This perception could have been shaped by the level of unemployment recorded in recent years. Besides, the various factors Salaam [34], Ajaegbu [1] and Olukayode and Urhie [40] described, that the increasing level of fraud, kidnapping, armed robbery and other violent acts experienced across cities in Nigeria and the growing number of police arrests, parade (on the media) and prosecution of young Nigerians who are guilty of committing criminal offences could have also given respondents the impression that criminality among Nigerian youths in the city of Lagos is on the increase. Moreover, many of the respondents attributed these to the unequal job opportunities in civil service (table 6). The correlation analysis presented in table 7 (where r-value 0.681 is greater than 0.5 and the p-value 0.001 is less than the level of significance), therefore, shows a relationship between respondents’ perception of unequal job opportunities in the civil service and an increase in youth criminality in Lagos state, Nigeria. Basically, the findings indicated that there is a wide perception among some young educated Nigerians in the city of Lagos that there is no equal level playing ground for them to compete for the available jobs in the civil service which is considered as the common opportunity for an average Nigerian to get a job. This unequal opportunity is understood to have hindered their chances of getting a job or made it difficult for them to get a job. As a result, many of them remained unemployed (and underemployed). The situation appears to have forced many to engage in petty and demeaning jobs (the underemployed) to fulfil their daily basic needs, while others (the unemployed) depend on their family members. Accordingly, there is continued anxiety that their condition is a major barrier that limits their opportunity to attain success or achieve their dreams as Nigerians. Consequently, a strong feeling of disappointment, deprivation and anger set in and some people began to resort to illegitimate means (crime) to satisfy their (basic and material) needs. Therefore, crime becomes a major way of meeting these needs. Ironically, since their chances of getting a job in the civil service are limited, and their condition may not allow them to own a home or afford rent, car, feed their family, and afford a better living condition, they are likely to remain poor. Hence, the only way to break out of the bond is to find an alternative means. Thus, criminality appears to be an available option. The result that indicates a significant influence of unequal employment opportunity on the

increase in criminality among educated youths in Lagos state, therefore, supports the principles of strain-anomie theory. Thus, the increase in youth criminality in Lagos state, Nigeria is a response to the lack of equal opportunities in the recruitment process for the available jobs in the civil service.

Furthermore, the results of this investigation validate the findings of previous studies that found a significant relationship between socio-economic deprivation (unemployment) and criminality. For instance, Edmark [48], Berman et al, [47], Smith and Huo [44] found that employment (and other socioeconomic) deprivation or inability of some group of people to find work usually creates a sense of vulnerability and idleness which in turn incites some level of grievances and later reinforces attraction to illegal and violent activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Unemployment and poverty are among the major socio-economic challenges the Nigerian government has been battling for decades. Several attempts in the form of job creation and empowerment programs were made to contain these problems. Nonetheless, figures in recent years revealed that a larger percentage of Nigerians live below the poverty threshold and the majority of young educated Nigerians are unemployed and/or underemployed. Admittedly, the available jobs in the public sector cannot go round all the qualified Nigerians; however, analysts have claimed that the major factor responsible for the increase in the level of unemployment (and poverty) in the Nigerian states is corruption among those in the position of power (government) who use their position to favour their allies by sharing or distributing jobs and empowerment benefits meant for all qualified Nigerians to their cronies, political partners and supporters of government of the day. Accordingly, educated Nigerians who do not have a connection or belong to any political party, and as a result cannot find a meaningful job, find it very difficult to survive in a society where success is measured by employment status.

This category of individuals lives in the neighbourhoods with another class of individuals (usually having the same qualification with them or their former classmates) who have, either through their connections or other means, gotten a job with reasonable incomes that allow them feed their family, send children to school, buy cars and afford other materials. All these make them perceive their situation as undesirable. Hence, the feeling of discontent and

denial make them resort to illegitimate means so as to be able to feed the family, send children to school, pay rents, afford medical care and other comforts.

However, it is impossible to create a perfect or equal society where everyone will have what they deserve. Class or difference in status will continue to exist for as long as there is variation in the level of education, skills, personal efforts and achievements, family background and connections. Yet, a level playing ground for (the available jobs) every qualified Nigerians as stipulated in the law will create a healthy competition for achievements. Therefore, creating productive employment opportunities for all will ensure an open system that will allow mobility.

Nonetheless, the state cannot provide employment for every single Nigerian; an enabling business environment is needed for local and foreign investors to invest. This will increase job opportunities and as well give small and medium scale entrepreneurs the opportunities to start their businesses. In addition, access to entrepreneurial training, credit facilities and tax subsidy or holiday will go a long way in making young (educated and uneducated) Nigerians job creators rather than job seekers. Additionally, it will keep them away from engaging in criminal activities.

Limitations

This present study investigated whether the rise in youth criminality in Lagos State, Nigeria is a response to the unequal employment opportunities in the recruitment process in the Nigerian civil service. Research of this nature is not without certain limitations particularly with regard to the methodology, interpretation of results and generalization of the findings. Basically, this study only considered four areas or communities in the city of Lagos, Nigeria with a sample of 1792. The sample size may not be a representative of the entire population of these areas and there may be some variation in perceptions of other people not captured in the study. Also, the generalizability of the findings with regards to the proportion of the communities covered in relation to the size of Lagos city may incite certain criticism. However, the originality of the study and findings are credible; nonetheless, in the light of the issues raised, further research in this line of study is expected to be widened in scope so as to address these issues.

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