

Youth Unemployment and Crime Rates in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya

Veronica Mpoyio Sasine., Prof. John Ndikaru wa Teresia

The Technical University of Kenya Department of Liberal Development and International Studies
Nairobi, Kenya

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400003>

Received: 08 March 2026; Accepted: 13 March 2026; Published: 23 April 2026

ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment remains a major global challenge and is strongly linked to rising levels of criminality, particularly in informal urban settlements. This study examined the relationship between youth unemployment and criminality in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. The research was guided by Strain Theory and Social Learning Theory to explain how socioeconomic pressures influence youth involvement in crime.

The study employed a survey research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from youths aged 18–35 years through questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic content analysis.

The findings indicated a strong association between youth unemployment and increased crime rates in the Mathare informal settlement. Many respondents lacked stable income and employment opportunities, exposing them to extreme poverty and making criminal activities such as robbery, drug trafficking, and prostitution alternative survival strategies. High unemployment also increased frustration, idle time, and exposure to delinquent peer groups.

The study concludes that youth unemployment is a key driver of criminal activity in informal settlements. It recommends youth-focused education and skills training, fair recruitment practices, economic empowerment programs, and job creation policies as essential strategies for reducing unemployment and crime among youths.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a complex problem that has become a global trend, though it mainly affects the youth. For instance, according to the UN (2013), the unemployment rate was 11.8 percent in 2008 and went up to 12.7 percent in 2009. By 2010, about 75.8 million youth were unemployed globally. Buonanno and Montolio (2008) associate crime with unemployment arguing that unemployment creates adverse provocations from social interactions since an individual is free from social places like workplaces and do not get moral judgment from colleague's thereby promoting idleness. In recognition of this fact, governments have taken the initiative to reduce the effects of unemployment. These initiatives are aimed at encouraging the unemployed youths not to engage in criminal activities. The main measures are welfare benefits.

This study, therefore, sought to determine the connection between youth unemployment and high crime rates in Mathare Sub- County. More specifically, the study sought to establish the relationship between youth unemployment and urban crime and the strategies that can be used to mitigate youth criminality in the informal settlements.

Problem Statement

The alarming rise in youth unemployment in developing countries has brought about a significant threat to the eradication of poverty, which is a key UN goal for sustainable development. Unemployment has prevented most of these countries from optimizing their human resources fully, despite the relatively strong growth in the region over the last decade. While unemployment is a global challenge, it presents a particularly difficult labor market experience for young people in developing countries like Kenya. The Kenyan government has tried to address

the issue of unemployment in the hope that it would reduce the problem of high crime rates in urban slums. For instance, the government has introduced low-interest funds such as the Uwezo Fund and Youth Fund to support small and medium enterprises. The government has also pushed for fair recruitment practices in the public service that ensure youths get employment on merit. Additionally, the government has made it mandatory that 30% of all tenders in Government ministries be reserved of the youth. Despite all these efforts, unemployment is still high, particularly in the slum areas such as Mathare, where crime levels are also high. For this reason, this study seeks to assess the correlation between unemployment among the youth and the high crime rates in Mathare.

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the prevalence of youth unemployment in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.
- ii. To investigate the factors that cause youth unemployment in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.
- iii. To find out the common criminal activities in Mathare Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the strain theory and social learning theory to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between youth unemployment and crime rates in the informal settlement of Mathare.

Strain Theory

The strain theory was first developed and proposed by Merton (1938), who argued that a discord between goals and means results in criminality. In most cases, people experience strain after they have failed to achieve what society has set as a success. The theory presupposes that social factors such as lack of quality education and lack of income may put pressure on individual persons and force them to commit crime (Burton Jr & Cullen, 1992). Consequently, the disadvantaged social groups are driven to crime due to their inability to meet the common aspirations that they have with other social groups. For instance, individuals with income that falls below the poverty line are likely to fail to achieve the common socially accepted ambitions by using legal means. Consequently, they have to take a path of criminality to meet these goals.

According to Agnew (1992) individuals are often considered to be successful if they make a lot of money and enjoys fame. Therefore, whenever they fail to achieve this feat, they will experience so much strain which will later result in frustration and stress. To release strain, they engage in deviant behaviors in order to achieve their own goals. These deviant behaviors may include theft, robbery, drug trafficking, and carjacking.

Notably, whereas Merton's theory focused more on those who are poor as the only ones predisposed to criminality. However, this might not be the case in the contemporary world because those with money and power and are already considered being successful continue to experience strain. Robinson (2005), argues that criminality is widespread among the elites like CEOs and CFOs, who have not had enough but continue striving for more through the use of both legitimate and illegitimate means. Robinson (2005), concludes that this could be the reason why corporate crimes are on the increase in the United States.

The strain theory was thus instructive in understanding crime as a response to social pressure whenever there is an inadequacy or limitation of legitimate means for achieving valued goals. For instance, high youth unemployment in Mathare bring about creates economic and aspirational strain in the form of limited jobs, poverty, and social exclusion. These factors heighten frustration and motivate a section of youths to resort to crime as a means of earning a living. The theory effectively framed unemployment as a structural driver rather than individual moral failure; thereby, guiding the focus on the study on the community-level causes. The concepts and constructs of the strain theory are also instructive in linking unemployment and crime and considering the policy-relevant recommendations geared towards job creation, education, and social support.

Furthermore, the theory provided justification for interventions necessary for addressing structural inequalities to reduce youth offending in Mathare and beyond.

Social Learning Theory

The individual propensity to commit a crime can also be explained through Albert Bandura's social learning theory. This implies that people learn to commit crime from one another through modeling behavior, imitation, or making observations (Akers & Jensen, 2017). In particular, people look at the rewards and punishments brought by crime, and make a decision to either accept crime and pursue it for the rewards, or shun it to avoid the punishments. Akers and Jensen (2017) point out that people will observe the behaviors and attitudes of others in their society, and seek to analyze the outcome of their behaviors to determine such behaviors as acceptable or unacceptable.

The Social Learning Theory bridges the cognitive learning theories with the behaviorist learning theories by focusing on the aspects of motivation, memory and attention (Pratt et al., 2010). Behavioral influences, cognitive influences, and environmental influences interact in continuous reciprocity to shape human behavior (Akers, 2002). Therefore, people get new ideas on how to perform new behaviors by observing others. Thereafter, they use the learnt ideas to guide their future actions. Bandura advanced the notion of "reciprocal determinism", where individual behavior and the world experiences reinforce each other (Winfrey Jr, Bäckström & Mays, 1994). In the Social Learning Theory, Bandura indicates that three components interact to shape an individual's personality: behavior, individual psychological processes, and the environment.

Since the social learning theory attributes criminality to learned interactions, youth may imitate and adopt criminal tendencies, techniques and norms they have observed from peers, family members or community role models. Unemployment provide youth in Mathare with disposable time that they may spend with delinquent peers and therefore, be exposed or receive reinforcement for offending. Over time, these youth may eventually normalize theft or drug-related activities. The local gangs, informal network and the media may also avail the unemployed youth with skills and justification for crimes as a viable response to their socio-economic depravity. Notably, the social learning theory recommends prevention through changing or adjusting the social environments. Therefore, approaches such as mentorships, establishing positive peer groups, role modelling, and provision of constructive recreational or economic opportunities are all necessary for interrupting the learning cycles of criminality. The theory, was thus quite instructive in complementing structural explanations by exhibiting the predictors in the social contexts of youth, which translate into strains that eventually yield criminality.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW1500

Youth Unemployment and Crime Rates

Extant literature has explored the link between youth unemployment and crime rates. For instance, Wu and Wu (2012) found that unemployed youth in Sweden face income loss, which reduces the perceived cost of engaging in crime. The lack of means to afford life translated into frustration and anger, which in turn increased the propensity for engaging in violent crime. Studies by Calvo, Antoni, and Zenou (2007), and Bausman and Goe (2004), found that economic marginalization and shifts in employment are closely tied to criminal activity, particularly in inner-city areas.

According to Lin (2007), unemployment and crime go hand in hand. The study noted that that poverty prompted by unemployment forced unemployed people to commit crime as an alternative way of acquiring an income. Therefore, the study concluded that unemployment is a motivating factor for engaging in criminal activities. Besides, according to Ajaegbu (2012), youth unemployment has forced people to use illegal means to achieve societal expectations. Unemployed youth are the main target for terrorist groups and political violence. The study found that there are great expectations after students graduate from universities and colleges. But after some years of joblessness and frustration due to lack of opportunity in the society, the young graduate resorts to criminal activity for survival or actualizes their expectations.

Adebayo (2013) stressed that this relationship is essential for understanding age-related crime trends and developing effective policies. A robust labor market typically correlates with lower crime rates. However, due to data limitations, many studies rely on aggregate data, which can mask local variations. In areas of high unemployment, there may be fewer valuable targets and fewer people in public, affecting crime rates. According to Okechukwu (2014), most of the crimes committed by youth in Nigeria were as a result of unemployment. The study also noted that robbery, rape, and prostitution in Nigeria were as a result of unemployment. He further noted that arrested criminals were unemployed. Some of them could secure good and great employment opportunities. However, they had been denied the opportunity. The study concluded that lack of employment was among the main factors that led to the increasing level of crime in Nigeria.

Unemployment steadily increases criminal activities, for example, property crimes (Raphael & Winter, 2001). Numerous other studies have noted the negative effects of unemployment. For example, Raphael and Winter (2001), further examined 68 different studies and found that more than half of them had identified unemployment as a significantly influential factor for criminality. On the other hand, Lin (2008), states that when we have a lot of unemployed people, it means they are at home serving as guards. These studies concluded that unemployment does reduce crime in society

Conceptual Framework

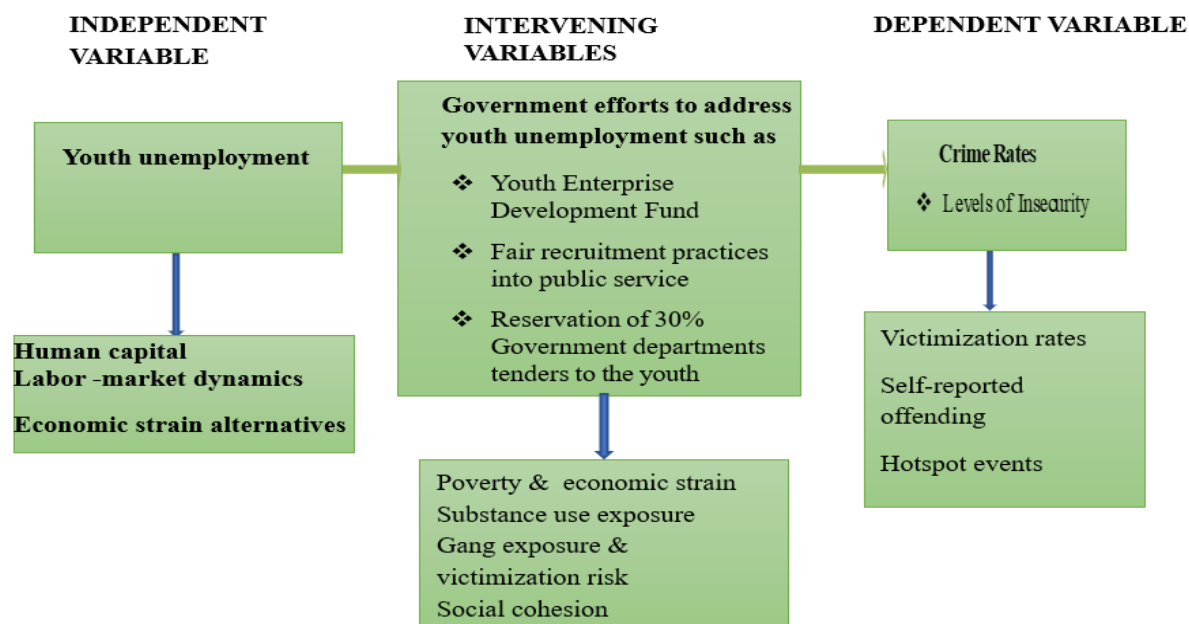


Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework Source: Researcher

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was used in this study. The research design was based on both qualitative and quantitative procedures. The design was appropriate since it captures the attitudes and opinions of the respondents in a study (Creswell & Clark, 2017). It also provides flexibility obtaining information from various data sources while employing multiple methods of data collection. The survey research will focus on people's attitudes and behaviors (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

The study was conducted in Mathare Sub County, which is located within Nairobi County. Mathare Sub County consists of informal settlements in Nairobi and comprises six wards (Hospital, Mabatini, Ngei, Huruma, Kiamaiko, and Mlango Kubwa) with an approximate population of 123,345 people (KNBS, 2009). The residents in Mathare Sub County include casual laborers, while others engage in small-scale businesses. Nairobi county has been ranked among the most insecure cities in the world by the United Nations International Civil Service Commission, which classified it under Class C status in 2001. In 2010, there was a 28% increase in reported crimes. Mathare, Kayole, and Kibera remain among the informal settlements with the highest crime rates in Nairobi County (NPS, 2016).

This study targeted young people residing in Mathare Sub County (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). The most accessible target population for this study was young individuals aged between 18 and 35 years who live in Mathare Sub County, Nairobi, Kenya. The study population will be drawn from the six wards within Mathare Sub County.

This study used Fisher's formula of 1991 to determine the sample size:

$$n = Z^2pq / d^2$$

Where:

n = the desired sample size

Z = the standard normal deviate, which corresponds to a 95% confidence level (1.96)

p = the estimated proportion of the population exhibiting the behavior under investigation (0.4)

$$q = 1 - p$$

d = margin of error (0.05). Applying the formula:

$$n = (1.96)^2(0.4)(0.6) / (0.05)^2 = 126$$

Purposive sampling with a non-probability design was employed in this study. This sampling method was used to select youths aged 18-35 years in Mathare Sub-County. The preference for purposive sampling over other sampling techniques was due to the sensitivity of the issues being investigated, particularly on crime, where some individuals or groups were reluctant to cooperate. Additionally, a stratified random sampling design, which is a probability sampling method, was used to stratify the sample by gender. This approach ensured an equal number of participants from each gender.

The primary data in the study were collected using questionnaires (for the quantitative data) and interview guides (for the qualitative data). The questionnaires were distributed and collected within two days, providing respondents ample time to respond appropriately and accurately. A total 12 interviews were conducted amongst the residents of Mathare slum. The analysis of quantitative data was aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), yielding descriptive statistics that explained features and patterns in the data. The quantitative data were presented in the form of bar graphs, tables, and charts. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis, which involved establishing patterns and trends in the textual data. The data from content analysis was presented in the form of discussions on the dominant topical themes that were manifesting in the data.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Influence of Youth Unemployment of Crime Rates

The study sought to determine how levels of youth unemployment influence the crime rates in Mathare Sub-County. The results in Table 1.0 showed that 68 respondents (64%) agreed that lack of legal sources of income forces youth to use illegal income activities. However, while 6 respondents (6%) were neutral, while 22 respondents (20%) disagreed. The interviewed youth also agreed that they lack resources for starting up small businesses and that this had pushed some of them to engage in criminal activities, which seemed to be the easy way out.

The results showed that 92 respondents (86%) agreed that high unemployment levels led to high crime rates. Whereas 11 respondents were neutral (10%) while 4 respondents (4%) disagreed about that claim. The interviewed youth noted that the job opportunities were not available for everyone and even those that they could access did not pay that well to enable them to upgrade their lives or accumulate enough to start viable business ventures. They, therefore, are underemployed in case they do not find anything at all to do for a living. This suggested that reduction of unemployment through in the area will reduce their likelihood of committing crime.

Creation of jobs for young people can be used as a viable way of providing work opportunities for them to reduce their susceptibility to crime.

A total of 64 respondents (60%) agreed that poverty forced unemployed people to engage in criminal activities for income. However, 28 respondents (37%) were neutral while 15 (14%) disagreed. The interviewed youth agreed that poverty was a key factor that pushed some of them into criminality. According to one participant, they too want to live a good life like anyone else and since this is not possible due to unemployment some resort to criminal activity to fund that lifestyle. Another respondent said that resorting to criminality is a survival tactic for those who do not have an alternative means for income. This suggested that crime had become a viable route for earning a living for youth who were steeped in poverty and lacked opportunities for gainful employment.

The results also showed that 62 respondents (58%) agreed that robbery, rape and prostitution in Mathare were due to unemployment. Besides, whereas 30 respondents (28%) were neutral, 15 respondents (14%). According to one of the interviewees:

“There are so many illegal activities in this slum as we talk. Smuggling of goods, drug trafficking, and sale of illegal liquor. We also have muggings and robberies; prostitution is also a thing. You cannot list everything illegal that goes on here.”

The findings suggested that providing the youth with employment opportunities would reduce the rates of robbery, rape and prostitution in the area. The results also showed that 75 respondents (70%) agreed that youths lacked the skills required for formal employment, forcing them to pursue crime. According to an interviewee, most of the illegal things going on in the slum would disappear if the youth were given something meaningful to do with their time. The interviewee added that:

“A job will distract many from engaging in criminal activities such as gangs. The politicians take advantage of the unemployed youth to hire them for criminal activities during demonstrations. Those youths would not take the small wages politicians give them if they have jobs or businesses that are paying them better.”

This indicated that the creation of increased opportunities for technical education and professional training would give young people the skills required for formal employment and cushion them from crime.

The results also showed that 71 respondents (66%) agreed that people living in less privileged areas spend more time in the streets associating themselves with gangs. However, while 30 respondents (28%) were undecided, 7 respondents (6%) disagreed with the claim. The interviewed participants also agreed that without viable businesses or employment, most youth idle around during the day in groups. They either engage in mobile phone gambling hoping to strike it big someday and since that does not always pay off, they augment it with criminal activity. According to one interviewee most of these youth engage in robberies and muggings elsewhere and then come to sell the stolen products in the slum where there is a ready market because they sell them very cheaply. These findings suggested that providing youth living in less privileged areas with a meaningful work engagement could cushion them from associating with criminal gangs.

Table 1.0: Influence of Youth Unemployment on Crime Rates

(Where 5 – Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 - Neutral, 2 - Disagree, and 1 - Strongly Disagree).

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
Lack of legal sources of income forces youth to use illegal income activities	20%	44%	16%	20%	0%
High unemployment levels lead to high crime rates	60%	26%	10%	0%	4%
Poverty forces unemployed people to engage in criminal activities for income	19%	41%	26%	8%	6%
Robbery, rape and prostitution in Mathare are due to unemployment.	24%	36%	28%	8%	4%
Youths lack the skills required for formal employment, forcing them to pursue crime	16%	54%	18%	8%	4%

People living in less privileged areas spend more time in the streets thereby associating themselves with gangs	20%	46%	28%	6%	0%
---	-----	-----	-----	----	----

Strategies for Mitigating Urban Youth Criminality

The study sought to establish the strategies that could be used to mitigate urban youth criminality in Mathare Sub-County. The results in Table 2.0 show that 88 respondents (82%) agreed that government policy on crime reduction would be a crucial strategy for mitigating urban youth criminality. However, 5 respondents (5%) were undecided and 14 respondents (13%) disagreed that they would not help. According to one of the respondents, the government has legally ignored them or forgotten about them because it doesn't seem to be coming up with any programs or policies that directly target youth unemployment in the slum. The participant noted that the politicians often use youth unemployment as a campaigning agenda but seem to forget about it once they get into office. They never get down to creating policies that would cater to the needs of the unemployed youth in the informal settlement.

The results also showed 86 respondents (80%) agreed that fair recruitment regimes by public and private employers would also help mitigate criminality in the slum. A total of 16 respondents (15%) were undecided while 5 respondents (5%) disagreed that such regimes could not mitigate crime. They also interviewed participants, who highlighted the fact that it is increasingly difficult to access gainful employment because of unfair recruitment. This is especially the case when it comes to recruitment of the youth in government jobs such as civil service and law enforcement and the military. According to one of the participants:

“ You need to know someone for you to get some of these jobs. For example, if you want to get recruited into the police service you have to park with a significant amount of money. Where do you get such a large amount of money when you don't even know what you will eat today. This makes a lot of us who could qualify for their job end up not being recruited.”

Besides, the findings showed 86 respondents (80%) agreed that that job- oriented youth education programs were good mitigation strategies against youth unemployment. Whereas 12 respondents (11%) were undecided while 9 respondents (9%) disagreed that the programs could not help. The interview participants agreed that job-oriented youth programs can be very helpful in addressing youth employment. According to one of the participants Such programs are needed to provide the youth with the skills that employers are looking for and this will make them marketable in the job market. The participant indicated that:

“ We should be provided with the skills in many areas including technology digital marketing hospitality tailoring plumbing construction so that we can easily find employment in these industries which are very competitive. This is because most of us have dropped out of school for one reason or another which is mostly associated to finances. Therefore, if the government or private sectors can come up with these programs, they can really help us to become marketable to employers.”

Participants also noted that because many young people in the informal settlements do not have qualifications for formal jobs, providing them with job-oriented programs will ensure that they have the certification they need to look for employment. The programs will also provide them with a practical experience that will increase their potential to access entry level employment and eventually secure stable jobs. Furthermore, one of the participants noted that the program should include business skills, considering that there are few job opportunities in the formal economy. Therefore, if the youth have financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills, they can start up their small ventures, which can eventually grow into big businesses and potentially escape poverty.

The results indicated that 81 respondents (76%) agreed that government initiatives for youth economic empowerment could help mitigate crime rates. However, 12 respondents (11%) were undecided while 14 respondents (13%) disagreed the initiative could help. They interviewed participants agreed that the government has a major role to play by providing the youth with economic empowerment programs. One of the participants:

“ The programs in this case should not be based on handouts that do not really help the youth but rather make them dependent on the ones who are providing them who happens to be politicians. The empowerment problems

should rather look at businesses the youth can start or those that they are already running and support them through funding.”

The participants also noted that the empowerment program could target youth groups such as bodaboda riders and support any business ventures that they have invested in. Such an approach will ensure that the youth come together to address the economic challenges that they confront in their communities. This will ensure that they first put together their resources towards advancing their economic prospects, which then gives them leverage to access government support and improve on their revenue generation.

The results showed that 93 respondents (87%) agreed job creation could help mitigate crime rates, though 5 respondents (5%) were undecided and 9 respondents (8%) disagreed. The results suggested that job creation was the most viable strategy for reducing criminal activities among urban youth. This result was supported by the views of the interview participants who agreed that their creation was important in mitigating the rates of criminal involvement by the youth in the informal settlement. According to one of the participants:

“ Give the youth something to do and you will see most of these criminal activity vanishing all of a sudden. Most of these young people involved in criminal activities are bring it for survival. They did not wake up one day and say let me be a criminal but they rather found it attractive because it seemed to be the only way they could make a living. It’s unfortunate that they die because of it in most of the cases but if they are given better alternatives before they start engaging in criminality they become better builders of their society.”

Another participant noted that since most youth do not have meaningful engagement during the day they engage in negative activities considering the excessive idle time at their disposal. They find themselves in company of other idol youth who are doing drugs as a way of coping with the harsh economic realities they found themselves in and to earn a living or basically buy more drugs they end up engaging in crime. Therefore, employment will keep the youth productively engaged and limit the chances of engaging in criminal behavior.

Besides, the results indicated that 80 respondents (75%) agreed that welfare benefits could help mitigate crime rates. However, 12 respondents (11%) were undecided while 15 respondents (14%) disagreed that welfare could not help mitigate criminality. Additionally, 81 respondents (76%) agreed that creating initiatives like youth funds would solve the problem of urban youth criminality, though 11 respondents (10%) were undecided, 15 respondents (14%) disagreed. The interviewed participants agreed that establishment of youth funds would go a long way in providing seed money for small scale enterprises. One participant, however noted that the disbursement of such funds should be without favoritism or corruptions because has been the case with previous funds. The application should be considered based on merit of the business ideas that the youth have presented. This will ensure that all those with variable ideas are considered for funding and therefore provided with the resources they need to uplift themselves economically. According to another interviewee, such funds would not be of much help because they have been existing all along and they have not helped to curb unemployment as expected. Their participant noted that the problem has not been their establishment of such policies but rather their implementation has been poor. Therefore, if the implementation of the fund is not changed its establishment is only going to help a few rather than most of the youth who need it to improve their economic outcomes.

Table 2.0: Strategies for Mitigating Urban Youth Criminality

(Where 5 – Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 - Neutral, 2 - Disagree, and 1 - Strongly Disagree).

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
Government policy on crime reduction	36%	46%	5%	10%	3%
Fair recruitment regimes by public and private employers	31%	49%	15%	5%	0%
Job-oriented youth education	32%	48%	11%	4%	5%
Government initiatives for youth economic empowerment	31%	45%	11%	8%	5%
Job creation	52%	35%	5%	2%	6%
Welfare benefits	40%	35%	11%	10%	4%
Creating initiatives like youth funds	30%	46%	10%	9%	5%

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth unemployment is a key contributor to the increase in crime rates in urban centres in Kenya and particularly, Mathare Sub-County. This surge in unemployment has shaped the social and economic landscape in the country, thereby pushing many youths into criminality. The study established that the youth lack stable income opportunities, which pushes them into illegalities as a way of survival. They, therefore, do not necessarily have inherent criminal tendencies, they rather lack viable alternatives for having gainful employment. A direct offshoot of unemployment is abject poverty, which reproduces environments in which criminality becomes alternative coping mechanism for daily hardships. In such contexts, criminal offenses including robbery, prostitution etc become symptomatic of some deeper systemic challenges that affect the wellbeing of the youth.

The study established that limited access to skills and training significantly deny the youth opportunities for engaging in gainful employment. In particular, a majority of Mathare youth have limited access to education and professional development, which leaves them increasingly unqualified for the available job opportunities. Consequently, they become increasingly vulnerable to engaging in criminality and especially considering their contexts where they have ample idle time and lack guidance on how to solve their socioeconomic problems. They are thus disadvantaged by their environment since they spend most of their time in the streets and are therefore, exposed to gang activities and peer influence.

The study established that these challenges could be mitigated by adopting comprehensive, and multifaceted strategies that are targeted to address the causes and effects of youth unemployment. The formulation and implementation of sound government policies is also a step in the right direction, particularly when those policies prioritize the welfare of the youth in terms of economic empowerment and creating equitable access to opportunities. Besides, the policies should ensure fair and transparent recruitment practices by employers in public and private sectors. This will go a long way in redressing systemic biases or informal barriers that restrict youth from marginalized communities from having equal access to employment opportunities.

Additionally, there is a need for conducting educational reforms that are aimed at establishing practical and job-oriented training. These reforms will be instructive in equipping the youth with professional and technical skills that are required in the job market, and thus reduce their vulnerability to criminal tendencies. Initiatives that promote economic empowerment should also be adopted to provide the youth with the requisite resources for building stable livelihoods. Such initiatives could include grants, youth funds, and entrepreneurial support.

Furthermore, job creation is arguably the emergent solution for the youth, providing them with financial stability and a sense of purpose and belonging. Engaging the youth in meaningful work distracts them from taking part in criminality and encourages them to contribute positively to their communities. The youth should also be offered supplementary support systems such as welfare benefits and social assistance, which can cushion them from the economic pressures that can drive them to criminality. Therefore, addressing youth unemployment is integral to reducing criminality in Mathare. In the same vein, sustainable solutions towards unemployment and criminality call for coordinated efforts that include a combined solution that takes into account employment, education, empowerment, and a social support system. This will eventually create a safer and more inclusive environment for the youth in Mathare and their society at large.

REFERENCES

1. Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30(1), 47–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1992.tb01093>
2. Adebayo, A. (2013). Youth unemployment and crime in Nigeria: Anexus implications for national development. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 59–350.
3. Ajaegbu, O. (2012). Rising youth unemployment and violent crimes in Nigeria. *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities*, 87–99.
4. Akers, R. L. (2002). A social learning theory of crime. In F. T. Cullen & R. Agnew (Eds.), *Criminological theories: Bridging the past to the future* (pp. 135–143).
5. Akers, R. L., & Jensen, G. F. (2017). The empirical status of social learning theory of crime and deviance: The past, present, and future. In *Taking stock* (pp. 37–76). Routledge.

6. Bausman, K., & Goe, W. (2004). An examination of the link between employment volatility and the spatial distribution of property crime rates. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 665–696.
7. Burton, V. S., Jr., & Cullen, F. T. (1992). The empirical status of strain theory. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 15(2), 1–30.
8. Buonanno, P., & Montolio, D. (2008). Identifying socio-economic and demographic determinants of crime across Spanish provinces. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 89–97.
9. Calvo, A., Antoni, V., & Zenou, Y. (2007). Strong and weak ties in employment and crime. *Journal of Public Economics*, 203–233.
10. Creswell, J., & Clark, P. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
11. Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2010). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches (4th ed.)*. Sage Publications.
12. Kerlinger, F. N., & Lee, H. B. (2000). *Foundations of behavioral research (4th ed.)*. Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
13. KNBS (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics). (2009). 2009 Kenya population and housing census: Population distribution by administrative units. Government.
14. Merton, R. K. (1938). Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3(5), 672–682. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2084686>
15. NPS (National Police Service, Kenya). (2016). *Crime statistics report 2016*. National Police Service.
16. Pratt, T. C., Cullen, F. T., Sellers, C. S., Winfree, L. T., Madensen, T. D., Daigle, L. E., & Gau, J. M. (2010). The empirical status of social learning theory: A meta-analysis. *Justice Quarterly*, 27(6), 765–802.
17. Robinson, P. H. (2005). Corporate crime, elites, and white-collar offenders: Strain and opportunity in the contemporary United States. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 21(3), 190–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986205277418>
18. Winfree, L. T., Jr., Backström, T., & Mays, G. L. (1994). Social learning theory and delinquency: Integrating theory and research. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 31(3), 299–322.
19. Wu, D., & Wu, Z. (2012). Crime, inequality and unemployment in England and Wales. *Applied Economics*, 44(29), 3765–3775. <https://hdl.handle.net/10.1080/00036846.2011.581217>