

Youth Capacity Building Programmes and Crime Management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: October 2026 Keywords: Youth Criminality Criminal Behavior Access To Microcredit Skill Acquisition Programme Entrepreneurship Literacy Social Welfare Services Organised Crime Politics Of Terror Crime Reporting White-Collar Crimes And Crime Reduction	Youth capacity building programmes have increasingly become a strategic tool for addressing crime and insecurity in many developing societies, particularly in contexts where unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion among young people remain pervasive. This study examined youth capacity building programmes and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. Three objectives were formulated thus: examine the relationship between access to microcredit, skill acquisition programme, entrepreneurship literacy and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. Literature were reviewed in line with the objectives of the study with emphasis on empirical and theoretical review. Cross-sectional survey research design was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was used in collecting data from a sample of 385 respondents for the study. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis. The findings established that there is a significant relationship between access to microcredit, skill acquisition programme, entrepreneurship literacy and crime control in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study concluded that youth capacity building programmes significantly relates to crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The study recommended among other things that government should make youth empowerment in the country seamless so that majority of her unemployed youth can key into the scheme to uplift self and enhance national development. Also, the government should make national security a priority at all times. This is because without adequate security in the country, the zeal to be creative will be discouraged, investment will be limited, thus making development of the country to be stagnated as interested persons and organizations will be scared to invest.

1. Introduction

Youth capacity building programmes have emerged as a strategy for addressing crime and insecurity in many societies, particularly in regions grappling with high rates of unemployment, poverty, and social dislocation (Odinka, et al, 2026). These programmes, which include vocational training, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship support, and empowerment initiatives, aim to equip young people with the knowledge, competencies, and opportunities needed to participate productively in socioeconomic life. Adegboni and Egugbo, (2025); Abang et al, (2026); Iwelumor et al., (2025) noted that youth capacity building programmes and capacity building can act as a preventive tool against crime by diverting young people from criminal pathways into lawful and productive endeavours, thereby promoting social stability and development. The logic is that capacity building strengthens youths' economic resilience and social integration, reducing the lure of illegal or criminal conduct in the face of economic hardship (Chinedu, et al, 2026).

Efforts to reduce crime through youth capacity building programmes have been implemented in both developed societies and African contexts, reflecting a global recognition that empowering young people with skills, opportunities, and positive engagement can mitigate the underlying causes of criminal behaviour (Shaw & McKay, 1942; UNODC, 2019 Abang et al, 2026). In the United States, the Chicago Area Project (CAP), established in 1934, stands as a notable early example of a community-based delinquency prevention initiative that mobilised local youth and residents to address gang violence, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency through community self-development and social cohesion (Shaw, 1934; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Okpa, et al, 2026;). More recent global initiatives, such as the UNODC Line Up Live Up programme, utilise sport as a platform for youth capacity building programmes and life-skills training aimed at preventing crime, violence, and drug use. Implemented across multiple countries, the programme enhances resilience, teamwork, self-control, and decision-making skills, thereby reducing young people's susceptibility to anti-social and criminal behaviour, particularly among at-risk populations (UNODC, 2019; Okpa et al, 2025). These initiatives demonstrate that structured capacity-building interventions combining vocational skills, life-skills education, and community engagement can positively influence attitudes and behaviours associated with youth crime (Okpa et al, 2025).

In Africa, similar youth-focused capacity-building efforts directed at crime management are evident. In East Africa, UN-Habitat's One Stop Youth Centre Model engages young people in vocational skills training, entrepreneurship development, economic empowerment, and peacebuilding activities, with the explicit goal of strengthening resilience against criminal involvement in urban

informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2019; Okpa et al, 2026). This integrated support framework illustrates how coordinated youth services can reduce vulnerability to crime by addressing unemployment, social exclusion, and marginalisation.

Likewise, the Creative Skills for Peace programme in Cameroon, implemented by Local Youth Corner Cameroon, targets young violent offenders and at-risk youth through entrepreneurship training, vocational education, peace education, and civic participation, supporting reintegration and reducing recidivism and social exclusion (Local Youth Corner Cameroon, 2018). At the continental level, the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa Programme under the African Union seeks to build young people's capacities for meaningful engagement in peace and security processes, thereby discouraging violent and criminal behaviour through dialogue, leadership training, and non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms (African Union, 2020; Eshiotse et al, 2023).

In an attempt to check the problem of crime in Nigeria, the government in recent times has introduced empowerment programmes such as the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) meant to empower youths (Abdulai, 2012); other empowerment programmes are: N-Power, Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (Youwin), Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Program, Youth Empowering People (YEP), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), African Youth capacity building programmes Nigeria (AYEN), Trader Moni, Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria (YISA), Presidential Youth Entrepreneurship Support (P-YES), Youth capacity building programmes and Development Initiative (YEDI). The Federal Government of Nigeria, again in 2021, made available an opportunity for the youths through the Youth capacity building programmes Programmes 2021 to scale up skills acquisition and training in agriculture-related businesses, tailoring, and fashion design.

Youth capacity building programmes in Nigeria are widely acknowledged as critical tools for addressing youth unemployment, social exclusion, and crime. However, the effectiveness of these programmes has been constrained by several interrelated challenges such as funding shortfalls, policy instability, corruption, skills mismatch, weak evaluation systems, and structural inequalities that undermine their design, implementation, and sustainability (Adebayo & Ogunrinola, 2006; UNDP, 2021; Attah et al, 2023; Omang et al, 2024). This study therefore examines youth capacity building programmes and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria.

1.1 Research questions

- To what extent does access to micro-credit significantly relate with crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria?
- How does skill acquisition programme significantly relate to crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria?
- How does entrepreneurship literacy significantly relate to crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria?

1.2 Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to establish the relationship between youth capacity building programmes and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria, Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

- Examine how access to microcredit significantly relates to crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria
- Evaluate the extent to which skill acquisition programme significantly relates to crime management in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State
- Determine the extent to which entrepreneurship literacy significantly relate to crime management in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State.

1.3 Research hypotheses

- There is no significant relationship between access to microcredit and crime management in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State
- There is no significant relationship between skill acquisition programme and crime management Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State
- There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship literacy and crime management in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State

2. Theoretical framework

Empowerment theory links individual well-being to the wider social and political environment in which people live (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). The concept originated with Solomon (1976) and was later developed by scholars such as Mallucio and Libassi, Guiterres, Dubois, and Maye, and Miley, O'Melia, and Dubois. It refers to the capacity of individuals to gain social, political, economic, and psychological control over their lives, through access to information, knowledge, skills, decision-making, community engagement, and a sense of personal control (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1998; Adeniyi, Eneji, & Okpa, 2019). In essence, empowerment is the process by which people and groups gain authority, access resources, and take charge of their own circumstances in pursuit of their personal and collective goals (Robins, Chatterjee & Canda, 1988). Solomon (1976) argued that people need personal, interpersonal, and environmental resources to build the skills and motivation required to fulfil meaningful social roles, and that powerlessness arises when people cannot access or use such resources and support.

Building on this, empowerment practice aims to help individuals and groups overcome the social and personal barriers that limit their ability to exercise power, and to support communities that have been blocked from reaching collective goals (Payne, 2005). A key tension within the theory concerns self-reliance: one view holds that people should pursue empowerment largely on their own, with minimal outside help, while the other sees a role for professionals acting on people's behalf, provided they consult with them (Tsiboe, 2001; Ebingha, Eni, & Okpa, 2019). This connects to Gergis's (1999) four steps toward achieving personal goals, namely identifying options, choosing a course of action, mobilising resources, and acting. The disagreement between these two views raises a genuine question about how far people can independently improve their own well-being and power without external support, and how much reliance on professionals undermines the goal of self-reliance itself.

Empowerment theory is relevant to this study because youth capacity-building programmes, which improve access to economic support, entrepreneurial skills, and vocational training, have a notable effect on the socio-economic well-being of young beneficiaries and can discourage involvement in prohibited behaviour. Such programmes aim to help young people earn more, secure

better employment, and achieve financial independence, thereby reducing their exposure to anti-social behaviour. The theory is not without criticism, however. Some argue it promotes radical change that can create conflict between groups or with oppressive systems, and that true empowerment must come from the grassroots rather than being imposed by NGOs or international organisations, since it cannot simply be transferred to individuals from outside (Kabeer, 2000; Ukwai, Okpa & Dike, 2018). Others point to the problem of local power dynamics, where community elites can manipulate participatory processes to serve their own interests rather than those of the wider group, a flaw often overlooked in approaches that rely heavily on participation (Goebel, 1998, as cited in Buckley, 2000; Ukwai & Okpa, 2017).

3. Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. According to Gay (1981), this design involves collecting data from members of a population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. The study was conducted in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The district lies within the tropics and shares borders with the Republic of Cameroon to the east, Yakurr Local Government Area to the north, the Calabar Sea to the south, Akwa Ibom State to the south-west, and Ebonyi State to the north-west. It is one of the largest senatorial districts in both Cross River State and the Niger Delta region, covering an area of 9,972 square kilometres with a population of 1,190,354, according to the 2006 National Population Census. The study population comprised all inhabitants in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. According to the National Population Census Projection and National Bureau of statistics (2016) the population of southern senatorial district is 1, 589,700 (one million, five hundred and eighty-nine thousand seven hundred) people. The sample size comprised unemployed youths and youths who have benefitted from the empowerment programme who are currently residing in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The sample size for this study is three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents. Survey monkey sample determinant was used to determine the sample size from the total population of the study. The study adopted multi-stage sampling technique. This technique consists of simple random, purposive, and systematic stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using a questionnaire and an in-depth interview. The questionnaire, titled "Questionnaire on Youth Capacity Building Programmes and Crime Management (QYCBP)," consisted of 26 items divided into three sections. Section A captured respondents' personal data, including sex, age, marital status, educational level, and years of experience. Section B contained 20 items measuring the activities of youth capacity building programmes, with respondents indicating the frequency of their responses. Section C consisted of 5 items measuring the study's dependent variable, crime management. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis procedure was employed in the data analysis.

4. Results

Out of a total of 384 copies of questionnaires distributed, only 375 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned giving a response rate of 97.7%.

4.1 Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between access to microcredit and crime management in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State. The independent variable in this study is access to microcredit while dependent variable is crime management. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented in Table 1. The result of the statistical analysis as presented in table 1 indicates that the calculated r -value of 0.621 is greater than the critical p -value at 0.05 level of significance with 373 degree of freedom. This, therefore, indicates that there is a significant relationship between access to microcredit and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is upheld. The result also shows R^2 of 0.386 which indicates that access to microcredit accounted for 38.6 % of the determinants of crime management in the study area.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of the relationship between access to microcredit and crime management

Variable	N	X	SD	r	p-value
Access to microcredit	375	17.76	3.92	0.621	.000
Crime management	375	14.01	3.31		
*Significant at 0.05, $df = 373$, r -critical=0.139, $R^2 = 0.386$ Source; Field survey, 2025					

4.2 Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between skill acquisition programme and crime management Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The independent variable in this study is skill acquisition programme while the dependent variable is crime management. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented in Table 2. The result as presented in Table 2 ($r=0.534$, $p=.000$) indicated that there is a significant relationship between skill acquisition programme and crime management Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance and the alternative hypothesis was retained. The result also shows R^2 of 0.285 which indicates that the skill acquisition programme accounted for 28.5 % of the determinants of crime management in the study area.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of the relationship between skill acquisition programme and crime management

Variable	N	X	SD	r-cal	p-level
Skill acquisition programme	375	16.13	4.13	0.534	.000
Crime management	375	14.01	3.31		
*Significant at 0.05, r -critical= 0.139, $R^2 =0.285$, df 373. Source; Field survey, 2025					

4.3 Hypothesis three

There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship literacy and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The independent variable in this study is entrepreneurship literacy while the dependent variable is crime management. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented in Table 3. The result as presented in Table 3 ($r=0.576, p=.000$) indicated that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship literacy and crime management in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance and the alternative hypothesis was retained. The result also shows R^2 of 0.332 which indicates that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship literacy and crime management in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of the relationship between entrepreneurship literacy and crime management

Variable	N	X	SD	$\bar{r}_{cal}$	p-level
Entrepreneurship literacy	375	15.66	4.35	0.576	.000
Crime management	375	14.01	3.31		

*Significant at 0.05, $r_{critical}=0.139$, $R^2=0.332$. Source: Field survey, 2025

5. Discussion of findings

The statistical analysis for hypothesis one showed a significant relationship between access to microcredit and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The finding suggests that access to microcredit may contribute to economic empowerment, self-employment and improved livelihood opportunities, which can have implications for crime management. Access to institutional credit can ease financial constraints and enable economically vulnerable individuals to engage in productive activities. Nkpoyen and Bassey (2012), in their study of micro-lending among women in Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State, found that micro-lending was associated with self-employment opportunities, improved household income and poverty reduction. Their findings suggest that access to small-scale credit can support economic empowerment and livelihood improvement.

The result of the second hypothesis indicated a significant relationship between skill acquisition programmes and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. Ajufo (2013); Okpa, Ilupeju and Eshiotse, (2020) argued that youth unemployment is associated with serious social problems, including militancy, violent crime, kidnapping and other forms of youth restiveness, and recommended technical, vocational and entrepreneurship education as interventions for improving young people's employability. Similarly, Aremu and Ahmed (2011), in their examination of security and crime management in Nigeria, identified the socioeconomic conditions surrounding crime as important considerations in efforts to control criminal activities. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010); Okpa, and Ukwaiyi, (2017) further argued that entrepreneurship development and vocational training can promote self-employment, job creation and economic independence among young people. These arguments support the view that skill acquisition programmes can contribute indirectly to crime management by improving employability, self-reliance and access to legitimate economic opportunities.

There is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship literacy and crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education can provide individuals with knowledge and competencies that support self-employment, business creation and participation in productive economic activities. Nwaoke (2017), in a study of entrepreneurship education and crime reduction in Ethiopia West, Delta State, Nigeria, reported a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and crime reduction. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010); Ukwaiyi, and Okpa, (2017) similarly emphasised the role of entrepreneurship development in promoting self-employment, job creation, improved livelihoods and economic independence among young people. From this perspective, entrepreneurship literacy may contribute to crime management by equipping individuals with the knowledge and confidence required to establish legitimate economic activities and reduce dependence on limited formal employment opportunities.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has established that youth capacity building programmes can significantly contribute to crime management in Cross River South Senatorial District, Nigeria. In examining the effect of the variables to crime management, the survey made use of secondary data to arrive at the conclusion that, youth capacity building programmes, and crime management enhance the safety of citizens and attracts development. Thus, for a nation to attain great height, she cannot afford to malign youth capacity building programmes, wealth creation amongst youth and security in the country. The findings of the study have implications for community development planners, policy makers, non-governmental agencies, and other stakeholders participating in development planning and design, and service delivery security management. Furthermore, it enables youth association to develop the ability to link up with other communities or agencies for assistance in their empowerment programmes.

Based on the findings of this research work the following recommendations were made for improvement of youth capacity building programmes in Nigeria:

Government's empowerment programmes should be restructured, or re-designed, and should be centred on the "participatory approach". This approach emphasizes the importance of involving the beneficiaries in all stages of the programme.

There should be greater investment on the human capital investment of youths. This implies that improvement in education, health and nutrition, employment opportunities, shelter and social services, directly address the most important problem of poverty and reduces crime among the youth.

Government should make youth capacity building programmes and wealth creation process in the country seamless so that majority of her unemployed youth can key into the scheme to uplift self and enhance national development.

Government should make national security a priority at all times. This is because without adequate security in the country, the zeal to be creative will be discouraged, investment will be limited thus making development of the country to be stagnated as interested persons and organizations will be scared to invest.

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