RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AS A PANACEAFOR CRIME RATE ASSESSMENT IN TOURISM DESTINATION: CALABAR SOUTH SCENARIO, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, Calabar South Local Government Area has remained one of the area with increasing crime rate in Calabar, Cross River State. This paper seeks to evaluate the major socio-demographic indices that are responsible to the prevailing crime rate in Calabar South. Three major streets were used for this study which includes Palm Street, Etinyin-Abasi and Afokang. Four hundred and fifty questionnaires were used of which one hundred and fifty were distributed in major entertainment scentres. However, the data collected shows that unemployment and illiteracy were the major socio-demographic indicators that have influenced crime rate in the area. To this end, adequate measures must be put in place to avert the menace of prevailing crime in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, crime rate has become one of the major factors that has led to the collapse of most economy of great nation in the world. Many authors and researchers have at least indirectly linked crime and poverty. It is widely believed that the poor commit more of the crime, at least street crime. However, it is more a link to property crime, not violent crime (Chester, 1976). Even in rural areas where crime is less frequent, acts of violence are of similar proportions, and those are often linked to socio-economic conditions (Arthur, 1991). The poor have a greater motivation to steal to satisfy their means. They only resort to violence when needed to accomplish the theft, such as in an armed robbery. Smith and Jarjoura (1988) wrote of Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory, where poverty was one of three elements linked to higher crime rates. This is especially true of theft and related offenses. In their follow-on research, they found that where a neighborhood had a high turnover rate and high poverty, violent crime was higher. Greene (1993) proposes that exposure to poverty and violence creates a predisposition to violence, and he states that half of risk residents who are predisposed to criminal behaviour. If a person's success is measured by wealth, status, and material

possessions, the poor may see unlawful means as the only means to obtain those possessions. Lawful means will not allow them to own a home or get an education. There is a link between socio-economics and rational choice (Zafirovski, 1998). Socioeconomic factors can be broken down to an exhaustive degree, as Zafirovski has done, but the result simply means that individuals make economic decisions on a rational decision making basis. An individual looks at where they are economically, and seeks some type of economic benefit through legal or illegal means. There may be underlying social explanations, such as poverty, but even then the individual rationally thinks of executing the theft and calculates the potential risks and benefits as well. A wealthy person makes a rational choice not to steal, but he also has no motivation to do so, since his standard of living is sufficient. Rational choice has its critics too. Boudon (2003) argues that rational choice is legitimate but weak. There are many variables and factors to explain a person's decision to commit a deviant act. There are other social factors to consider, even if a person makes a rational choice in committing crime, understanding his behavior requires an observer to see the big picture and understand the motivations for his actions. While the decision may be rational, the underlying circumstances of being poor will motivate many to steal. If a person is starving to death, it is difficult to resist the urge to steal in order to eat. Greene (1993) writes of Chicago neighborhoods plagued by poverty and violence. It is not clear which causes the other, or if that is irrelevant. The point is the two go together. Basic

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service workers have cancelled service in some neighborhoods because they are frequently robbed and assaulted. These crimes are committed by youth who, acting under social learning theory, learned that they could gain something by violence. In Calabar South crime rate seem to be more associated with a number of variables ranging from poor parental care, unemployment, peer groups influence among others. However, despite these numerous indicators that influences crime rate in the area, much have not been done with regards to which of these variables influences crime rate in Calabar South which is the bases of this research work to critically examine which of these variables most influence crime rate in the area.

Literature review

The social development model is not so much a theory for explaining crime, but a complex, systemic solution for addressing crime (Siegel, 2001). The idea is that risk factors must be reduced, increase the quality of life in the community, strengthen social institutions so as to strengthen social control, decrease family stress and family decay, and improve education and educational opportunities. Family and community must work to build prosocial bonds with young adults and children, giving them the positive influence they need to accept social norms. This is good, if the family has the means to supply family members with their material needs. Otherwise, theft may be seen as the only avenue to satisfy those needs. Interactional theory agrees with the social development theorists, that crime can be traced to a breakdown of social bonds, and accepts the position that social class and social disorganization can increase the risk of delinquency (Siegel, 2001; Thornberry, 1987). Interactional theory further postulates that delinquents will form bonds with peers who share the same poor values system, meaning that delinquents are bi-directional in seeking the company of other delinquents. The interactionist theory of crime is largely the same as other social constructs of criminal behavior, in that people define crime in the context of how they view the world around them (Dotter, 2004). The creation or determination of what is deviant derives from societal interaction and what society determines is reprehensible conduct.

Social control theory addresses the control that society has or influences over individual human behavior (Siegel, 2001; Hirschi, 1969). Most people willing submit to society's laws and norms. Their behavior is held in check by social elements, such as family, career goals, school and community organizations, and ethical standards. Durkheim argued that behavior is controlled by social reaction, such as punishment (Williams and McShane, 1999). He argued that social controls disappear where social norms and relationships breakdown. However, to be effective in maintaining desired behavior, social bonds must be between individuals who are compliant with social norms, not with deviants. In keeping with this theory, parents should remain close to their kids, discipline by family and society must be certain, and society must maintain a strong and intentional control over settings uniform norms for everyone to adhere to. Social reaction theory or labeling theory explains society's reaction to crime and how the labeled deviant reacts to the new label (Siegel, 2001; Barkan, 2006;

Williams & McShane, 1999; and Void, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). Labeling is a social construction, based upon what society determines is deviant (Liska & Messner, 1999). Labeling an individual a delinquent will lead him to live up to that lajpel. The individual responds to the image that others have created for him, such as when he is labeled as a troublemaker, ex-con, delinquent, or thief. Whether the offender likes it or not, society has given him a new identity. The offender is highly likely to adopt that identity, internalize it, and live up to the new, lower expectations for himself. It is a stigma that produces low self-image, self-esteem, and self-respect. It leads to secondary deviance, where individuals commit more deviant acts in keeping with their assigned label (Lemert, 1951). Empirical evidence supports that labeling influences offender behavior (Siegel, 2001), but the likelihood of an offender to re-offend could just as much be the result of the limitations put on his life by having a conviction on his record. As a corrective measure, a positive or supportive approach to labeling could be used to reduce the stigma and de-emphasize the criminal element, such as calling a convict an offender (Williams & McShane, 1999). In this sense, labeling theory touches on the humanistic side of the classical theory of criminology.

Conflict theory holds that crime is a weapon of the haves over the have-nots (Siegel, 2001). Marxists refer to this power-differential as the instrumental view, where the capitalistsMr. Walker suggests that a criminal involved in theft or property crime is largely motivated by greed and that he acts on rational choice. Even though the individual offender may not be very educated or have much work experience, he calculates the potential benefits and the risks of getting caught. While acknowledging that strain and social disorganization may be a contributing factor, individual criminals still think about what they are doing, and they do know right from wrong. Mr. Walker does not put much faith in social disorganization theory, except in high-crime areas. City slums where the entire community has become a run-down neighborhood that no one seems to care about would be the only exception. Social disorganization would not explain sporadic crime in an otherwise average community. An individual offender is not at gun-point. Whatever the societal or financial pressures, he still considers the costs before committing his crime. On the other hand, he believes that deterrence theory or the threat of greater punishment would only deter the rational, law-abiding person who is not likely to commit crime in the first place. The typical offender is going to commit the crime anyway, regardless of the risk of consequences.

He does believe strongly that poverty, unemployment, or even a sense of hopelessness about the future can motivate an individual to steal or rob. More than theft, drug crime and drug dealing are the crimes that he has seen most, which is seen as another easy way to make a lot of money by unlawful means. In either event, Mr. Walker acknowledges that strain theory is applicable to explain how a criminal may respond to the imbalance or inequality between his own financial position and what he sees in the world around him. However, many of the individuals who have been arrested for property crimes did have jobs, even if the job was not a high-paying job. This gets back to greed as being the more likely motivator.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper which seeks to x-ray the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on crime rate was conducted in Cross River State taking Calabar South Local Government Area as a case study. Three major streets which constitute streets with high rate of crime were used which include palm street, Etinyin-Abasi and Afokang streets. However, four hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire were used for this study of which one fifty copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to residents living within entertainment centres. The rational for using entertainment centres was due to the fact that these areas are vulnerable to high crime rate. Nevertheless, socio-demographic indicators such as occupation, peer group influence among others were captured in the questionnaire that was used for the study. The data collected were presented in tables and line graphs to show the trend and major indices that influence crime rate in the area.

Findings

Socio-demographic indicators influencing crime rate

The data collected in Palm streets on the major socio-demographic indicators that influence crime rate presented in table 1 show that 24.66% and 25.33% of the sampled population are of the opinion that unemployment and peer group influence are the major socio-demographic indicators that influence crime Palm streets. This implied that out of the one hundred and fifty sampled population seventy five affirmed to the above assertion. Although, illiteracy was another indicator that influenced crime rate in the area with a value of 10.66% followed by occupation and marital status with values 8.66 respectively while family background and lack of education were on the least side with values of 6.66% and 7.33% respectively.

Table 1. Major socio-demographic indicators that influences crime rate in Palm Street

Socio-demographic values	Sampled population	Percentage (%)
Unemployment	37	24.66
Illiteracy	16	10.66
Lack of education	11	7.33
Poor parental care	12	8.00
Family background	10	6.66
Peer group influence	38	25.33
Occupation	13	8.66
Marital status	13	8.66
Total	150	100

Source: Field survey, 2012.

Accordingly, this scenario was also applicable in Etinyin-Abasi Street as presented in table 2 with over 37% and 13.33 agreeing to the fact that the major socio-demographic indicators that influenced crime rate in the area were unemployment and peer group influence. Besides, it was noticed in table 2 that 20% of the sampled population attests to the fact that occupation and marital status were also socio-demographic indices that influenced crime rate in Etinyin-Abasi Street while 12.32% of the sampled population agreed that lack of education and family background were also socio-demographic indices that influence crime rate in the area.

Table 2. Major socio-demographic characteristics that influence crime rate in Etinyin-Abasi

Socio-demographic values	Sampled population	Percentage (%)
Unemployment	56	37
Illiteracy	14	9.33
Lack of education	10	6.66
Poor parental care	10	6.66
Family background	10	6.66
Peer group influence	20	13.33
Occupation	15	10.00
Marital status	15	10.00
Total	150	100

Source: Field survey, 2012.

It was also observed in table 3 that 32.6% and 18.66 of the sampled population affirmed that unemployment and occupation were the socio-demographic indicators that influenced crime rate in the area. This result show that over seventy-seven out of one hundred and fifty sampled population agreed to the fact that this two variables influences crime rate in Afokang. Furthermore, it was noticed that marital status and illiteracy were also another socio-demographic indices that influenced crime rate in the area with a value of 14% and 10% respectively followed by lack of family with a value of 9.33% while family background and peer group influenced were on the least sides with values 2.66 and 4.00% respectively.

Table 3. Major socio-demographic characteristics that influence crime rate in Etinyin-Abasi

| Socio-demographic values	Sampled population	Percentage (%)
Unemployment	49	32.60***
Illiteracy	16	10.60
Lack of education	14	9.33
Poor parental care	12	8.0
Family background	4	2.66
Peer group influence	6	4.00
Occupation	28	18.66
Marital status	21	14.00
Total	150	100

Source: Field survey, 2012

However, a line graph was further used to evaluate the socio-demographic indictors in the three streets under investigation as presented in figure 1 shows that unemployment and peer group influenced were major socio-demographic indicators that influenced crime in the area even though this scenario was not obtained in terms of peer group influenced in Afokang Street. It was noticed in the line graph that marital status and occupation have a low influence on crime rate in Palm Street and Etinyin-Abasi compared to Afokang Street. Nevertheless, the line graph revealed that there was a high fluctuation in the socio-demographic indicators that influenced crime rate in the three streets sampled for this study.

The socio-economic characteristics of the sampled population presented in table 4 revealed that majority of the sampled population were male with a value of 58.88% while 41.11% were female. It was also observed in table 4 that 58.88% of the sampled population were married and divorced followed by simple with a value of 26% while widow and separated were on the least side with values of 5.77% and 9.33% respectively. Accordingly, it was noticed that out of a population sampled of 450 people 64.66% sampled population obtained primary and

Table 4. Socio-economic characteristics of the sampled population in the three Streets

Socio-demographic variables	Sampled street (Etinyin-Abasi)	Sampled Street (Palm Street)	Sampled street (Afokang)	Total	Percentage (%)
Male	93	88	84	265	58.88**
Female	57	67	66	185	41.11
Total	150	100	100	450	100
Marital status	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Percentage (%)
Single	48	32	37	117	26.00
Married	42	51	40	133	29.55**
Divorced	38	41	53	132	29.33**
Widowed	10	6	10	26	5.77
Separated	12	20	10	42	9.33
Total	150	100	100	450	100
Education	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Percentage (%)
No formal education	29	32	41	102	22.66
Primary education	48	51	52	151	33.55**
Secondary education	52	49	39	140	31.11*
Tertiary education	21	18	18	57	12.66
Total	150	100	100	450	100
Occupation	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Sampled Street	Percentage (%)
Farming	7	8	6	21	4.66
Trading	23	24	23	70	15.55
Civil servant	42	45	47	134	27.77
Politician	7	11	10	28	6.22
Unemployed	71	62	64	197	43.77**
Total	150	100	100	450	100

Source: Field survey, 2012
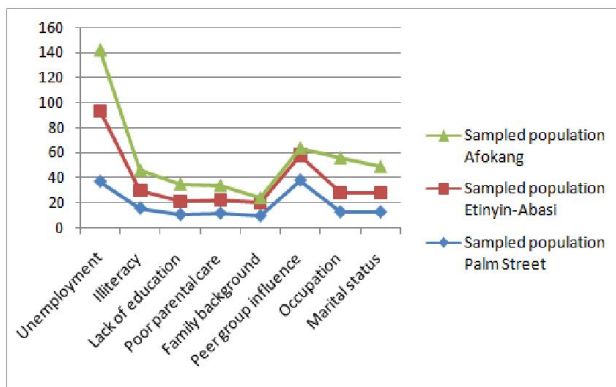
Source: Field survey, 2012

Fig.1. The socio-demographic indicators that influenced crime rate in the study area sampled

secondary education while 12.66% had tertiary education and 22.66 no formal education. However, the analysis in table 4 buttress the fact in table 3 which indicate that unemployment and illiteracy were the major socio-demographic indices that influenced crime rate in the three areas under investigation.

Conclusion

The rate of crime in most part of Calabar South Local Government is quite alarming despite government effort to restore peace in the area. However, it is quite clear that majority of the inhabitation in the area are migrants with little or no form of livelihood sustenance. Findings have shown that socio-demographic indicators influenced crime rate in the areas as observed in that data collected which show that unemployment and illiteracy are major socio-demographic indices that influenced crime rate in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State.

Recommendation

In order to cushion the effect of crime rate in Calabar South Local Government Area, the following recommendations are hereby put forward.

➢ The state government should provide a scheme that would cater for the youths in the area.
➢ The government should establish skill acquisition centres that would engage the unemployed.
➢ The government should provide incentives to boost the socio-economic activities of the people who are already engaged in one form of business and the other
➢ The government should provide a taskforce that would monitor those that are involved in crime related activities in the area
➢ The youth in the areas should be educated on the dangers of crime activities in economic development.

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