

Catch Them Young: Education Toward Crime Prevention with Focus on Vocational, E-learning, and Self-Sustainability among Asaba and Warri Youths

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ABSTRACT

The study examined education toward crime prevention with the understanding that juvenile delinquency is a social problem that affects both developed and developing countries. The work adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore educational approaches (vocational, e-learning, and self-sustainability) that are geared toward crime prevention among youth in Nigeria. The target population was youth aged 18 to 35 years in Asaba and Warri. A sample size of 250 respondents was drawn from cities. A total of 500 copies of questionnaires were administered; however, 482 (96.4%) were returned as valid. The findings indicated that vocational education improves access to market-relevant skills, economic participation, and crime prevention. Equally, it was found that eLearning played a significant role in crime prevention by promoting employability, access to modern labor markets, and effective youth utilization and engagement. The study recommended that crime prevention in Nigeria must focus on early intervention, empowerment, and long-term youth human capital development.

Keywords: Education, Role of Gender, Crime Prevention, Vocational, eLearning, Self-Sustainability, Youths

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is a social issue that has been threatening both the developed and the developing world (Sunkanmi et al., 2024). The issue has been made more acute in Nigeria because it is characterized by high rates of urbanization, population growth, unemployment, poverty, and limited access to quality education. Young people, who are a large majority of the population in Nigeria, are disproportionately disadvantaged by socioeconomic marginalization and hence are susceptible to deviant behaviors and crimes. Typical examples of cities where youth unemployment, underemployment, and social dislocation intersect with rising crime rates include Asaba in Delta North and Warri in Delta South, both in Delta State. Additionally, in Nigeria, law enforcement and punitive justice have traditionally been the instruments used in crime prevention strategies. Nonetheless, these strategies have not been quite effective in targeting the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency. Scholars and policymakers are increasingly focusing on preventative systems, especially those based on education, skill development and economic empowerment. The most interesting preventive measure is the concept of catching them young, whereby great emphasis is placed on education and capacity building at an early age, before deviant tendencies are instilled (Edime & Abdulkadri, 2022).

Education is widely recognized as a potent tool for social change and crime prevention. Education can help decrease criminal behavior among youths by providing them with knowledge, skills, values, and economic opportunities that facilitate social inclusion (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025). Education in modern society is not limited to organized classroom learning but also encompasses vocational education, eLearning, and initiatives toward self-sustainability, all of which are becoming increasingly important in the digital and globalized economy. Moreover, vocational education equips youths with market and practical skills that make them employable and entrepreneurial (Zuo et al., 2025).

Contrary to formal academic education, vocational education concentrates on practical skills, i.e., carpentry, electrical installation, fashion design, welding, ICT, automotive technology and other skills. Vocational training for many Nigerian youths is a natural way out of poverty and a way to

achieve financial freedom and stability in their lives for those who cannot access tertiary education. Research has revealed that young people who are involved in vocational programs are less inclined to commit crime (TamBari, 2019; Onigbara & Evavoawe, 2022; Onyekwere, 2021).

The introduction of eLearning as a means of education has increased access to knowledge and skills acquisition even more than conventional education systems because geographical, financial, and infrastructural barriers usually restrict access to education (Goddey & Iheanyichukwu, 2022). Online courses, digital certifications and virtual training programmes enable youths to gain ICT competencies and digital literacy as well as professional skills needed to work in the contemporary labor market (Oladipupo et al., 2024; Roman et al., 2020). Where physical training facilities are either scarce or not evenly spread up, such as in Asaba and Warri, eLearning is an option to provide inclusive education and crime prevention.

Closely connected with vocational education and e-learning, there is the issue of self-sustainability. Self-sustainability means that people can earn money, fulfill simple needs and are economically independent, without depending on others to survive through involvement in illegal acts (Abashi et al., 2024). Self-sustaining youths have higher chances of developing positive social behaviors, resilience and long-term orientation in goal setting. On the other hand, young people who have no viable livelihoods are at the mercy of criminal rings, drug abuse, cybercrime, and other deviant behavior (Abashi et al., 2024). Although there is increasing awareness of education as a crime-prevention instrument, there is a paucity of empirical studies investigating the role of vocational education, in conjunction with e-learning and self-sustainability, in curbing youth crime, especially in the Nigerian urban setting. Current research tends to concentrate on individual aspects of the issue (for example, unemployment or formal education) without sufficiently reflecting on the multidimensional aspects of the development of modern youth. Additionally, few studies adopt a comparative approach and analyze the functioning of these educational interventions across diverse urban settings.

This paper fills these gaps by investigating how educational approaches known as catch them young help prevent crime among youth in the two socioeconomically different yet culturally similar cities of Asaba and Warri in Delta State, Nigeria. Asaba is also a political and administrative center with fairly stable governments, whereas Warri is an industrial and commercial center that has had a history of economic and social instability. These two contexts are useful in making comparisons and understanding the way educational interventions intersect with local socioeconomic realities to shape youth behavior.

This research is quantitative and qualitative in nature (it is a survey of 500 young people - 250 in Asaba and 250 in Warri]). Such a methodological

design will enable the researcher to be able to provide a strong analysis of trends, perceptions, and experiences of education and crime prevention. The targeted group of youths between the ages of 18 and 35 makes the study to capture a very crucial demographic group that is economically active and statistically prone to crime.

The research findings are useful for academic discussion on the prevention of crime, youth development and education policy. Theoretically, the study utilizes strain theory, social learning theory and human capital theory and presents empirical data on how educational investments reduce criminogenic pressure. Policymakers will find the study useful, as it offers suggestions to government agencies, educational and nongovernmental organizations, and community leaders for long-term solutions to youth crime. Practically, the study highlights the essence of inculcating vocational training, computer-based learning programmes and self-sustainability programmes in development at the national and state levels among youths. The study prescribes reactive crime control and recommends the use of preventive crime control strategies that are education-oriented interventions that empower youths both economically and socially. By doing so, it is consistent with the international development agenda that advocates education, decent work and social inclusion as the pillars of peaceful and strong societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth Crime and Crime Prevention

Youth crime is defined as criminal or deviant actions that are committed by persons who are usually between the ages of 15-35 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2019). Youth crime is a social challenge of national concern in Nigeria since youths represent more than 60 percent of the population. This has implications for national security, economic growth, and social integration (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). Crime prevention, conversely, involves strategies and interventions aimed at reducing risk and crime occurrence by addressing their roots, which implies responding to crime after it happens.

The control of crime in Nigeria has been largely based on the deterrence approach using the police, imprisonment and other penalties. Nonetheless, the available empirical literature indicates that punitive measures cannot work sufficiently in preventing youth crime, especially in the presence of structural inequalities such as poverty, joblessness and inaccessibility to education (Alemika, 2014). Various researchers are more in favor of social prevention measures, which aim at early interventions in the form of education, acquisition of skills and economic empowerment (Farrington et al., 2017; Alemika, 2014).

The catch them young strategy is consistent with the social prevention approach as it aims at addressing youth crime issues before they are made criminal behavior habitual. This approach is an exposure to positive socialization agents, especially education in the early years of life, a method of influencing values, aspiration, and decisions in life. Education is not just an academic pursuit but also a long-term investment in crime prevention and social stability.

Current research on education and crime prevention is more or less united on the idea that educational activities decrease the risks of developing criminal behavior, but important gaps in analysis persist, especially in the developing country setting. Studies conducted by Lochner and Moretti (2004) and Hjalmarsson et al. (2015) find strong inverse associations between years of schooling and violent crime, attributing the effect to opportunity costs of crime and cognitive ability. Similarly, Adebayo (2018) and Okorie (2020) state that in the Nigerian context, school dropout and poor vocational pathways have a large predictive effect on youth involvement in cultism, cybercrime and petty theft. Nevertheless, most of the current literature on Nigeria is unitary in the sense that it never offers a breakdown of education into its diverse functional aspects, including vocational training, digital learning and entrepreneurial self-sustainability. This restricts the explanatory ability of previously existing research, and it clouds the unique process by which education acts as a preventive means against crime.

More recent research has started to question the quality and direction of education as opposed to access. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) report, education can only contribute to social stability when it is economically relevant, inclusive and future-oriented. On the same note, the Human Capital model by Becker accentuates that lawful income generation and social integration are fuelled by skills acquisition, not by credential accrual. The lack of such studies, even though filled with such insights, indicates that there is a dearth of location-specific and empirically based research that utilizes vocational education, e-learning and self-sustainability concurrently in a unitary framework of analytical research, especially at the subnational level in Nigeria. The study can thus play a very imperative role by filling the gap that exists in the literature at the city level, as it provides evidence from Asaba and Warri and provides a more detailed perspective on how various educational trajectories integrate with the dynamics of youth crime in the urban Delta State.

Education and Crime: Empirical Relationships

The issue of education and crime has widely been discussed in the fields of criminology, sociology and economics. One of the few findings that is common among researchers is that the rate of criminal involvement is low among people who have high levels of education (Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Thus,

education raises legitimate income, the level of cognitive ability, and social norms that deter deviant behavior.

This was shown to be the case in a landmark study by Lochner and Moretti (2004), who established that higher educational attainment was a significant predictor of decreased incarceration and violent crime. According to their findings, education increases the opportunity cost of crime since a person conducted the risk of losing legal income and status in society. On the same note, Hjalmarsson et al. (2015) revealed that educational disengagement among youths is a significant predictor of future criminality.

In the Nigerian context, studies have already determined that there is a strong correlation between low educational attainment, unemployment and youth crime. Okafor (2011) states that poor access to education is one of the main reasons why youths become marginalized and prone to criminal networks. Adebayo (2013) further stated that a lack of employable skills by the educational system adds to frustrations and deviance among Nigerian youths. Nevertheless, formal education may not be enough to tackle the issues of crime prevention, particularly in situations where unemployment among graduates is widespread. This has prompted increasing interest in vocational education, e-learning and self-sustainability structures as alternative educational routes.

Vocational Education and Crime Prevention

Vocational education is a formal training programme that helps people acquire occupation-specific skills that are relevant in the labor market. In comparison to conventional academic education, vocational training is provided to focus on practical learning, technical proficiency, and direct employability (UNESCO, 2016). Other studies have emphasized the crime-minimizing impact of vocational education. Uggen (2000) conducted a meta-analysis and discovered that employment-focused programmes were effective in lowering recidivism among at-risk youths. In the same vein, Boateng et al. (2025) also concluded that vocational training interventions enhance employment and lessen participation in criminal activities.

Vocational education is an approach that has been encouraged in Nigeria to curb youth unemployment and social instability. The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development (2019) believes that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes are created in a bid to make youths self-reliant and entrepreneurial. Akuhwa (2015) discovered that the economic and social independence of youths in southern Nigeria and their involvement in antisocial behavior were lower among those who took part in vocational training programmes. Vocational education in Nigeria has its potential and challenges, including insufficient funding, lack of adequate infrastructure, and the societal stigma that places a high premium on university education instead of technical expertise (Okolie et al., 2020). Such difficulties limit the scope and effectiveness

of vocational training as a crime-prevention strategy, especially in urban centers such as Asaba and Warri.

eLearning and Digital Inclusion

The explosive growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has changed the way education is delivered worldwide today. eLearning is the use of digital platforms and electronic technologies to deliver education, mostly beyond the classroom, especially in developing nations (Moore et al., 2011). eLearning has become a favored mode of education delivery that is cost-effective, flexible, and inclusive.

Studies have shown that learning digital skills increases employability and economic participation, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in crime (Autor et al., 2020). eLearning tools have enabled youth to learn and gain ICT competencies, professional qualifications, and entrepreneurial knowledge relevant to the digital economy. eLearning has been growing in Nigeria, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Oyedemi and Choung (2020) argue that online learning systems have enhanced the abilities of young people who fail to access formal education for economic or geographical reasons. Nevertheless, the presence of digital disparity is still a significant obstacle, while access to internet connections and digital devices is unevenly distributed among low-income youth.

In terms of crime prevention, eLearning can take an educative and a social role. It helps keep the youths busy, minimizes truancy, and contributes to futuristic thinking. In a study conducted by Ojo and Olakulehin (2006), Nigerian youths who underwent ICT training were less likely to commit cybercrime when digital skills were combined with ethical and entrepreneurship training.

Self-Sustainability and Youth Empowerment

Regarding self-sustainability and youth empowerment, the goal is associated with providing adolescents with the necessary skills to manage their time, handle stress, and support their families with financial and emotional help. Self-sustainability is the ability of people to be economically independent and to fulfill their basic needs in acceptable ways. Self-sustainability is also an essential concept that is associated with entrepreneurship, financial intelligence, and resilience in the context of youth development literature (Chigunta, 2017; Handy & Braley, 2012; Pilgrim & Woo, 2021). It was observed that economic pressure is a factor that has been well documented to predict criminal behavior. Thus, strain theory by Agnew (1992) contends that when people face continuous economic frustrations, chances of indulging in crimes as a way of coping will increase. On the other hand, young people with sustainable livelihoods are not easily influenced by crime.

Self-sustainability also plays a crime-preventive role that is also supported on an empirical basis. According to Low et al. (2012), who conducted a study on economic self-sufficiency, there is a significant role in decreasing delinquency in at-risk youths. Akano et al. (2025) opined that entrepreneurship programmes that focus on youths in Nigeria have been reported to have positive impacts on crime and social unrest reduction. Psychological well-being and social integration are also developed by self-sustainability. When youths are economically productive, they tend to obtain a sense of purpose, self-worth, and community belonging, which discourages deviant behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The research is grounded in three consistent theoretical approaches: Strain Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Human Capital Theory. Both theories explain how one can view the connection between education, skills acquisition, self-sustainability, and crime prevention among youths in Asaba and Warri.

Strain Theory

Strain theory is a continuation of classical strain theory of Merton (1938), which proposes that people commit deviant acts when they have a strain or pressure due to failure to attain socially satisfying attainment of goals by use of legitimate methods. Strain has taken various forms and includes economic deprivation, frustrated opportunities, and injustice. These tensions cause negative experiences of frustration, anger, or hopelessness, which can lead individuals to commit crimes as a way of coping with them, especially youths. The situation with Asaba and Warri has many unemployed youths who are economically marginalized and who have access to minimal education facilities. These are the conditions of structural strain. Young people have a legitimate means of attaining financial independence and social acceptance by offering vocational education, e-learning opportunities, and gateways to self-sustainability; thus, the desire to commit crime is diminished. The acquisition of vocational and digital skills can be seen as a buffer to strain through the boost in employability, income-earning capacity and social mobility.

Agnew (1992) and later studies have indicated that economic strain and blocked legitimate opportunities are important predictors of youth crime. Unemployed respondents in this study were found to have the highest levels of crime involvement (41.6%), with relatively less criminal involvement being reported among those with vocational skills and self-sustainability. This is in line with theoretical forecasts that structural strain reduction will reduce the propensity for crime.

Social Learning Theory

According to Bandura (1977), a social learning theorist, behavior is acquired by a process of observation, imitation and reinforcement in social situations. People embrace behaviors by looking at role models, peers, and influential agents. The theory highlights the fact that pro-social and anti-social behaviors are behaviors acquired depending on the models and environment to which individuals are exposed. Reinforcements – rewards or punishments – further influence the patterns of behavior. In the case of Asaba and Warri, youths who are exposed to crime-normalizing environments, as an effect of peer groups or community, become more prone to participation in crime. On the other hand, according to the pro-social models, mentorship and positive behavior reinforcement are offered to the youths through structured educational programmes, including vocational training and e-learning. The systematic process of learning skills fosters self-discipline, goal setting and persistence, which are sufficient to guard against deviant behavior.

Observational models of vocational instruction, digital learning, and successful entrepreneurs are examples of lawful, productive behavior. Reinforcement is achieved when youths use their skills to earn money and become acknowledged through self-sufficiency, which enhances prosocial behavior. Previous studies have demonstrated that skill-based education can decrease delinquency by putting young people in a setting with positive role models (Akers et al., 2016). In this research, the qualitative focus group discussions indicated that the youths view vocational and digital skills training as a way out of crime and as a means of social learning in behavior formation.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory, which was developed by Becker (1964), views education, skills, and knowledge as a type of capital that can be used to enhance productivity and earning potential. Educational investment improves the capacity of a person, economic opportunities, and social mobility. According to the theory, those people who have high human capital are in a better place to participate in legitimate economic activities, and they do not have much reason to employ illicit ways to survive. Asaba and Warri youngsters are investing in human capital through vocational education and e-learning. Learning practical skills, technical expertise, and digital skills enhances the level of employability and entrepreneurship of youths. These investments lead to self-sustainability, therefore decreasing the financial burden and the need to use crime as a means of earning income.

This model emphasizes the financial justification of education as a crime deterrent measure. Younger people who possess higher human capital have the opportunity to obtain a higher income, which not only improves income but also strengthens social norms and lawful conduct. The multiple regression analysis of

the study found that self-sustainability, as the direct result of the accumulation of human capital, was the best predictor of crime reduction ($\beta = 0.38, p = .001$). This observation supports the argument of Becker that investment in human capital has real social and economic returns, including a reduction in crime.

As stated earlier, the theoretical and conceptual framework applied in this study is a combination of social control theory (Hirschi, 1969), human capital theory (Becker, 1993) and strain theory (Merton, 1938) in elucidating how education and prevention of youth crime are related. Social control theory argues that effective institutional affiliation, especially schools and skill-training centers, minimizes deviant behavior by creating commitment, participation and ideological belief in societal norms. Human Capital Theory helps to fill this gap by stating how vocational skill, digital skills and entrepreneurial capacity raise lawful economic opportunities, and this in turn raises the opportunity cost of crime. Strain theory further puts Nigerians' youth experience into perspective by pointing to how unemployment, poverty and stifled ambitions create pressure toward criminal options. Theoretically, these frameworks advance vocational education, e-learning and self-sustainability as the main independent variables that build social relationships, economic agency and strain minimization, and youth crime tendency is the dependent outcome variable. Structurally, the model has shown that education-based empowerment can work both directly (by attaining the skills) and indirectly (by attaining the psychological stability and social integration) to curb the youth participation in crime, thus giving a consistent explanatory pattern of the empirical analysis of the study.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a mixed methods approach to research, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to research the role of a young educational approach in crime prevention among youths in Asaba and Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. The mixed-methods approach was deemed suitable because it enables the researcher to understand intricate social phenomena thoroughly by incorporating numerical measurement and interpreting it through its contextual significance (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). In particular, the quantitative part of the research was conducted through a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, and the qualitative part was created through focus group discussions (FGDs).

The cross-sectional design helped to obtain the data of a large number of youths at one time, which allowed comparison of the study sites. Criminological and educational studies have extensively applied this design to evaluate the relationship between social variables (e.g., education, employment, and crime involvement) (Bryman, 2016). The qualitative element complemented the survey elements, as the content sought to capture their experiences, perceptions, and

explanations of vocational education, e-learning, and self-sustainability in relation to crime prevention.

Study Area

The case study was carried out in Asaba and Warri, two of the largest urban centers in Delta state, Nigeria. Asaba, the state capital of Delta State, has experienced rapid urbanization, increased educational and infrastructural development, and growth in public-sector employment. The city of Warri, on the other hand, is an industrial, commercial center with a rich history of oil-related economic activities, labor migration, and youth restiveness. The choice of the two cities was not random because they form contrasting socioeconomic settings within the same state and thus offer many comparisons.

Study Population

The target population was the youths aged between 18-35 years in Asaba and Warri. This is the age bracket that corresponds to the National Youth Policy of Nigeria that identifies the youths as the people within this age category (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019). This is the age group in which youths are regarded as economically active and are statistically more prone to committing crimes, especially in urban environments.

The overall number of respondents in the study was 500, with 250 of this population being youths randomly sampled in Asaba and 250 in Warri. Both male and female subjects were included, with youths having different educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. The inclusion criteria required that participants have lived in their respective cities for at least 1 year before the study, ensuring they were well acquainted with the local socioeconomic conditions.

Sample Size and Method of Sampling

The study population used 500 respondents as a sample size deemed to be sufficient because of the ability to perform statistical analysis and generalization. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) argue that such a sample would be adequate when the population is above several thousand, especially in social science studies.

There was a multistage sampling method. In the initial phase, the concentration and population density of the youth in selected communities in Asaba and Warri were used to locate these communities. The second stage involved stratified random sampling to achieve proportional representation of gender, education level and employment status. The methodology eliminates sampling bias and maximizes sample representativeness (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

To accomplish the qualitative aspect, four focus group discussions were held: two in Asaba and two in Warri. Each FGD had 8-10 purposely selected

participants who were chosen because of their involvement in vocational training, e-learning programmes, or entrepreneurial activity. The qualitative phase used purposive sampling since it provided the opportunity to select information-rich cases that supported the objectives of the study (Patton, 2015).

Sampling Procedures

A multistage sampling process was utilized. First, the selection of two cities in delta state, Asaba and Warri, was purposely performed because they have unique socioeconomic features, and their young crime patterns could be observed. Stratified random sampling was applied in the second stage, where the youths were categorized in terms of their educational status (students, apprentices, unemployed youths and young entrepreneurs). Last, simple random sampling was used within the individual strata to select respondents. The number of respondents who took part in the quantitative survey was 482 youths between the ages of 18 and 35 years, which consisted of eight to ten individuals representing each city who were chosen purposely to take part in qualitative interviews. This sampling method was representative, diverse and comparable across sites.

Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire developed by the researchers on the basis of the literature and scaled instruments was considered the key quantitative measure. The questionnaire had five sections. The measurement of responses was on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Self-reported crime measures have been widely used in criminology studies and are considered trustworthy when anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed (Thornberry and Krohn, 2000).

A semistructured guide for FGD was developed to examine participants' perceptions of education and crime prevention. Motivations for skill acquisition, impediments to education, unemployment, and perceptions of crime as a livelihood strategy were part of the major areas of discussion. The loose framework gave the participants the freedom to present their views with the research objectives being considered.

Instrument Reliability and validity

To have content and face validity, the questionnaire was screened by criminological, sociological and educational research experts. Their comments were taken into consideration in the amendments made, and this enhances readability, reliability, and cultural suitability. A pilot study was performed with 30 youths who were not in the study locations to test the instrument.

The measure of reliability was based on Cronbach's alpha, where the values were 0.76 to 0.88 between the major constructs (vocational education,

eLearning, self-sustainability, and crime involvement). These values are above the acceptable minimum value of 0.70, which implies satisfactory internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Thus, face and content validation were utilized to determine the validity of the quantitative instrument; it was conveniently validated using three sociologists, criminology and educational research scholars. Their feedback was used to refine the items to make them clear and relevant to and cover study variables. Reliability was addressed by working with a pilot study of 30 youths who were not included in the areas of study. The alpha coefficients of Cronbach were found to be between 0.76 and 0.88 between the significant constructs, which is decent internal consistency. In the case of the qualitative instrument, credibility was used to guarantee trustworthiness (member checking), dependability (audit trail) and confirmability (use of verbatim quotations).

Quantitative Methods of Data collection

The structured questionnaire that was used to gather the quantitative data was called the Catch Them Young - Education Toward Crime Prevention Questionnaire (CTY-ECPQ). The instrument consisted of close-ended questions that were measured using a 5-point Likert scale and included demographic variables, vocational education, e-learning, self-sustainability and crime tendency. The questionnaires were distributed physically with the help of trained research assistants to make the questionnaires clear and obtain high response rates.

Semistructured interviews were conducted to supplement the survey results because qualitative data were needed. The interview guide was based on the experience of the participants in education, their perception about crime, the paths of acquiring the skill, and behavioral change. The face-to-face interviews were held in a neutral locality and were between 30 and 45 minutes. The audio-taping of discussions was performed with the permission of participants, and transcription was performed word to word to analyze. This approach enabled flexibility, exploration and the appearance of unforeseen themes.

Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used to analyze quantitative data. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were statistical tools used in summarizing the characteristics and key variables of respondents. Chi-square tests and multiple regression analysis were used as inferential statistics to test relationships between educational variables and involvement in crime.

The thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data of FGDs based on the steps described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The coding of transcripts was inductive, allowing common patterns and themes in education,

economic survival, and crime prevention to be revealed. Quantitative and qualitative results were combined to strengthen and enhance the credibility of the results.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to the research protocol and ethical standards as laid down in the 1964 ‘Declaration of Helsinki’ and in alignment with the ‘Nigeria Psychological Association’, as it relates to human involvement in research and other experimental studies, and in alignment with my university (Dennis Osadebay University) research ethical committee, as they gave approval. All participants provided informed consent and were aware of the study’s purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. The anonymity of the participants was also maintained by omitting identifying information in questionnaires and transcripts. Questions concerning involvement in a crime were approached with special care to reduce psychological discomfort. The participants were informed that they would not be penalized for dropping out of the study. These processes are compliant with the ethical principles of social research in relation to human subjects around the globe (American Psychological Association, 2020).

RESULTS

Response Rate and Demographics

Out of these 500 questionnaires taken (250 in Asaba, 250 in Warri), 482 valid questionnaires were returned (Asaba = 241, Warri = 241), and the response rate was 96.4%. The response rates were high because of face-to-face administration and the use of trained assistants.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Asaba (n=241)	Warri (n=241)	Total (N=482)
Gender (%)	Male 55%, Female 45%	Male 58%, Female 42%	Male 56.8%, Female 43.2%
Age Group (%)	18–24: 38%, 25– 29: 27%, 30–35: 35%	18–24: 42%, 25– 29: 22%, 30–35: 36%	18–24: 40%, 25– 29: 25%, 30–35: 35%
Educational Level (%)	Secondary 22%, Vocational 30%, Tertiary 48%	Secondary 21%, Vocational 34%, Tertiary 45%	Secondary 21.6%, Vocational 32.1%, Tertiary 46.3%
Employment Status (%)	Employed 28%, Self-employed 36%, Unemployed 36%	Employed 25%, Self-employed 34%, Unemployed 41%	Employed 26.6%, Self-employed 34.9%, Unemployed 38.5%

Table 1 represents the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents who demonstrated a population-dominated economy and young population, which is in line with the theme of the study, which is the prevention of youth crime in Asaba and Warri. The sample size was 482 youths who were equally represented by the two cities, making the comparison valid and representative.

The sex structure is slightly in favor of males in both cities. In Asaba, 55 percent of the respondents were males, whereas 45 were females. On the same note, in Warri, 58 percent were male and 42 percent female. In general, the proportion of males in the total sample was 56.8 percent. This pattern represents larger demographic patterns in crime-related literature where men tend to be more readily available and more engaged in both economic and social life in the community. Notably, the fact that a relatively large number of women participate in it increases the inclusivity of the study and makes it possible to make more gender-sensitive interpretations.

The respondents were mostly in the 18-24 and 25-29 age bracket; these two groups form 65 percent of the total composition. In particular, youths (18-24 years old) and those (25-29 years old) made up 40% and 25% of the sample, respectively. The respondents in the age group of 30-35 years constituted 35%. The high concentration of respondents within the younger age groups also highlights the applicability of the catch-them-young approach since the given age group is the most vulnerable to unemployment, peer pressure, and criminality. It is also evident that the age structure is similar between Asaba and Warri, implying that the youth in both urban centers have similar dynamics.

Regarding the level of education, a significant share of respondents had an educational level of tertiary education (46.3% in general), then there were those with vocational education (32.1%), and the members with the third highest level of education were those with secondary education (21.6%). Asaba registered a slightly higher percentage of youths with tertiary education (48%) than Warri, which registered a higher percentage of vocationally trained youths (34%). Such a trend indicates that although Asaba might be providing more opportunities for formal higher education, the young people in Warri seem to be interested in more on-the-job training that will teach them skills. The levels of vocational education are relatively high, which justifies the focus of the study on skills acquisition as a possible way to empower youth and stop crimes.

The issue of employment shows a drastic understanding of vulnerable youth in the economy. In general, the percentage of those formally employed amounted to 26.6 percent, the number of self-employed individuals was 34.9 percent, and the number of unemployed individuals was 38.5 percent. Warri had a better unemployment rate (41%) than Asaba (36%), as it is a city with a more strenuous economic state and instability in the labor market. The large percentage of self-employed young people shows the increased relevance of informal and

entrepreneurial events as coping strategies to the lack of formal job opportunities. Nevertheless, the fact that the unemployment rate is high in both cities indicates a significant structural issue that supports the importance of vocational education, eLearning, and self-sustainability programs.

Taken together, the sociodemographic attributes of the population indicate a young, moderately educated but economically constrained population. The unemployment rates are high, and given the large percentage of representation in the high-risk age groups, the vulnerability of the group to criminal activity in the event of a lack of viable economic activities is even higher. These results offer a good empirical basis for analyzing how early education, skills training, and self-sustainability can be applicable as a crime prevention measure among youths in Asaba and Warri.

Vocational Education Participation

Table 2: Vocational Education Participation and Income Generation

Variable	Asaba (%)	Warri (%)	Total (%)
Participated in vocational training	57.7	62.7	60.2
Earns income from vocational skills	68.5	74.2	71.4
Belief that vocational education reduces crime	64.3	61.0	62.7

Table 2 shows the level of participation of the respondents in vocational education, revenue earned as a result of the acquired skills and the perceptions held by the respondents on the effect of vocational training in preventing crime among the youths in Asaba and Warri. The findings indicate a fairly high degree of involvement in vocational education and emphasize its economic and social topicality.

On the whole, 60.2 percent of the respondents reported that they had attended vocational or technical skills training, which suggests that most of the sampled youths were engaged in skills-based education. The level of participation was slightly higher in Warri (62.7 [2.6]) than in Asaba (57.7 [4.7]), suggesting that young people in Warri may rely more on vocational routes due to limited access to formal employment. Such a trend illustrates the practical nature of the youths in terms of skills that can bring direct economic payoffs.

A significant percentage of the respondents (71.4) also indicated that they received vocational earnings. It was more common in Warri (74.2) than in Asaba (68.5), meaning that vocational education in Warri has a stronger relationship with livelihood opportunities. The results underscore the cost-efficiency and utility of vocational training as a means of youth empowerment and self-reliance, especially in economically constrained urban environments.

The respondents in perception thought that vocational education lessens crime among youths by 62.7 percent. The perception was slightly higher in Asaba youth (64.3) than in Warri youth (61.0). This imagery indicates that there is a general awareness of vocational education as a means of curbing idleness, lack of jobs and financial pressure, all of which are normally linked to criminal actions.

The results in Table 2 show that youth self-sustainability and the ability to avoid crime depend on vocational education. The fact that the participation rates and income-generating outcomes are high indicates that vocational training offers a viable alternative to crime with respect to providing marketable skills to the youths. The degree of positivity in perceptions of both cities supports the thesis that vocational education is an effective preventive measure to address youth crime, especially when implemented in the early stages of the life cycle.

eLearning and Digital Skills

Table 3: eLearning Participation and Access Barriers

Variable	Asaba (%)	Warri (%)	Total (%)
Participated in eLearning	48.1	41.5	44.8
Barriers (data, electricity, devices)	52.7	57.9	55.2
Belief eLearning reduces crime	58.9	53.5	56.2

Table 3 shows the rates of the respondents’ e-learning use, affordance factors preventing the use of e-learning and the perceptions of the crime-preventive power of e-learning among the youths in the Asaba and Warri areas. The findings indicate average use of digital learning platforms and significant infrastructural and financial issues.

The general response to the question was that 44.8 percent of the respondents were involved in e-learning programmes. Youths in Asaba (48.1) had better participation than those in Warri (41.5). This difference can be explained by the fact that access to digital infrastructure, access to electricity and access to the internet are relatively more convenient in Asaba. Although there has been increasing popularity in the use of digital education, the results show that not even half of the young population is enjoying e-learning facilities at the moment, indicating a large digital divide.

Most of the respondents (55.2%) stated that they encountered obstacles to eLearning, such as the high cost of internet data, unreliable power supply, and limited access to digital devices. These hindrances were stronger in Warri (57.9) than in Asaba (52.7), which show more significant infrastructural shortages and financial restrictions. These barriers are widespread,

posing structural challenges that digital education projects face and perpetuating the digital divide among young Nigerians.

Although there have been challenges with participation and access, a very high percentage of students (56.2%) believed that e-learning would help curb youth crime. It was slightly higher among Asaba youths (58.9%) than among Warri youths (53.5%). The result implies that the youths are aware that eLearning is a positive engagement tool that increases skill attainment, minimizes idleness, and improves employment prospects, all of which are linked to a diminished inclination to commit crime.

Based on the results in Table 3, it can be argued that although e-learning is often thought to have strong potential as a crime prevention tactic, its effectiveness is limited by infrastructural and economic factors. The difference between the perception of positive and real participation means that the demand to have available digital education is not fulfilled. These barriers may be overcome with specific policy interventions, including subsidized data, community digital centers, and enhanced power supply, which may help increase e-learning engagement rates and reinforce youth crime prevention in Asaba and Warri.

Self-Sustainability Indicators

Table 4: Self-Sustainability Status

Indicator	Asaba (%)	Warri (%)	Total (%)
Moderately to highly self-sustaining	44.0	39.8	41.9
Low self-sustainability	56.0	60.2	58.1
Income generation linked to skills	65.2	62.5	63.8

Table 4 shows the level of self-sustainability of the Asaba and Warri respondents with respect to the commitment of financial independence and whether the generation of income is associated with skills gained. The findings show moderate and imbalanced levels of self-sustainability among the youths, with significant variations in the two cities.

In general, the proportion of moderately to highly self-sustaining respondents was low (41.9), but most respondents (58.1) were lowly self-sustainable. Asaba youths (44.0%) had marginally more self-sustainability than Warri youths (39.8%). On the other hand, a low level of self-sustainability was higher among Warri youths (60.2) than among Asaba youths (56.0%). This trend indicates that economic vulnerability is also a major issue, especially in Warri,

where the instability of employment and the lack of infrastructure are more critical.

Although the degree of self-sustainability was generally low, a significant percentage of the respondents (63.8%) indicated that their income making was directly correlated and depended on skills acquired. Asaba and Warri had slightly greater percentages (65.2 and 62.5, respectively). This observation suggests that in cases where the youth have vocational or digital skills, they will be better off earning an income in a legitimate manner, although the financial independence may not be high.

The findings reveal a major paradox: although most of the youths are able to generate income sources based on their skills, most of them are economically vulnerable. This implies that the acquisition of skills might not ensure full self-sufficiency unless there is support through the provision of capital, stable markets and mentorship. However, the close interdependence of skills and income supports the significance of vocational education and e-learning as the background elements of youth empowerment and the prevention of crimes. The fact that low self-sustainability is more evident among the young people of Warri highlights the need to shift the current policies that only focus on training to incorporate entrepreneurship support and economic integration, hence minimizing the chances of engaging in crime due to financial pressure.

Self-reported crime involvement

Table 5: Youth Crime Involvement by Employment Status

Employment Status	Engaged in Crime (%)	Not Engaged (%)
Employed	11.2	88.8
Self-employed	19.4	80.6
Unemployed	41.6	58.4

Table 5 discusses how employment status is related to youth participation in crime. The findings indicate that there is a high correlation between economic participation and low crime participation among young people in the research community.

The level of youths engaging in crime was low, as only 11.2% of the employed youths reported engaging in crime, and a higher percentage of 88.8% said they were not involved in crime. This is an indication that formal work is protective in that it gives one financial security, legal and regular day-to-day livelihood.

Among youth who are self-employed, the rate of those committing crime rose to 19.4, but most of them (80.6) were not involved in crime. Although it seems that self-employment is not as protective as formal employment, it still minimizes involvement in crime by a great measure compared to unemployment. The income instability and access to capital that is encountered in informal

economic activities could be the reason behind the comparatively high rate of crime committed by self-employed youths.

On the other hand, the unemployed youths had the highest rates of crime, as 41.6 expressed themselves as having been involved in crime and only 58.4 expressed themselves as not being involved. This contrasts sharply with emphasizing unemployment as a significant risk principle for youth crime.

The results are a strong indication that economic inactivity is a major contributor to the tendency of youths to commit crimes. The difference in crime participation between unemployed and employed youths is more than three times, which serves as a crucial point in favor of employment as central in crime prevention. These findings are very strong indicators of strain theory, which argues that economic deprivation and hindrance to accessing legitimate opportunities raise the tendency to engage in criminal behavior. They further support the thesis that vocational education, e-learning and self-sustainability projects enhancing employability and earnings generation are essential means of minimizing youth crime.

Chi-square test: education and crime involvement

Table 6: Chi-square Test Results

Variable	χ^2	Df	p value	Interpretation
Vocational education & crime	18.72	2	<.01	Significant negative association
eLearning & crime	15.43	2	<.01	Significant negative association

Table 6 shows the findings of the chi-square test used to test the relationship between the variables participation in vocational education, eLearning, and youth crime involvement. The results indicate that there are statistically significant correlations between educational attendance and lack of engagement in criminal behavior.

The chi-square test of vocational education and crime involvement was $\chi^2 = 18.72$ at 2 degrees of freedom, which was statistically significant at $p < .01$. This finding shows that there is a strong negative correlation between engaging in vocational education and committing crime. Youths that took part in vocational training had a very low chance of engaging in criminal activities as opposed to those who did not receive the training.

In the same way, the correlation between participation in e-learning and involvement in crime was also significant ($\chi^2 = 15.43$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). This observation indicates that the involvement of youth in online learning systems is

correlated with reduced youth crime rates. The engagement of eLearning is likely to minimize idleness, increase skills acquisition, and elevate employability, which then minimize criminal behavior propensity.

The statistically significant chi-square outcomes are good empirical evidence in proving the main argument of the study that education-based interventions are effective mechanisms of crime prevention. Vocational education and e-learning show preventive action against crime among young people, which supports the topicality of early acquisition of skills and digital inclusion policies. These results can be correlated with theoretical assumptions of strain theory and human capital theory, which state that the availability of legal educational and economic opportunities decreases criminal motivation.

Table 7: Predictors of Crime Involvement (N=482)

Predictor	B	T	p value	Interpretation
Vocational education	-0.31	-6.12	<.01	Significant negative predictor
eLearning participation	-0.26	-5.34	<.01	Significant negative predictor
Self-sustainability	-0.38	-7.21	<.001	Strongest negative predictor

Model: $F = 29.84, p < .001, R^2 = .42$

Table 7 shows the findings of the multiple regressions that revealed the predictive value of vocational education, e-learning attendance, and self-sustainability on youth crime involvement in Asaba and Warri. The model has good explanatory strength and offers important information on the relative power of each of the predictors.

Statistically, the regression model was found to be significant ($F = 29.84, p < .001$), meaning that the independent variables together do bring a significant account to the youth involvement in crime. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .42$) indicates that these three variables (vocational education, e-learning participation and self-sustainability) account for 42% of the variance in crime involvement. This is a significant impact effect of a social science study and demonstrates the strength of education-based predictors in understanding youth criminality behavior.

Vocational education became an important negative indicator of involvement in crimes ($\beta = -0.31, t = -6.12, p < .01$). This finding means that young people who attend vocational training would be very unlikely to commit a crime. The negative value of the data indicates that the higher the vocational education is, the lower the crime propensity. This observation shows the importance of learning practical skills in increasing employability and lowering the economic burden as well as offering legal options for crime.

eLearning was also a major negative predictor of crime involvement ($\beta = -0.26, t = -5.34, p < .01$). Even though the effect size is slightly lower than that of vocational education, the finding supports the fact that digital skills and online learning are important protective factors. It is probable that participation in eLearning minimizes idleness, promotes digital skills, and links the youths to the contemporary economic prospects, therefore decreasing the chances of participating in crime.

The most significant negative predictor of youth involvement in crime was self-sustainability ($\beta = -0.38, t = -7.21, p < .001$). The discovery shows that young individuals who are economically stable and can sustain themselves by means of legitimate activities will be much less prone to crime. The size of this coefficient implies that economic self-reliance has the biggest role in avoiding youth crime among the variables studied.

The outcome of the regression clearly shows that although eLearning and vocational education are preventive measures that are significant, they are most effective when they become self-sustainable. These results are very much in line with human capital theory, which postulates that human capital investment in education and skills produces economic payoffs that lower the crime motive, and strain theory, which states that economic pressure is a cause of criminal behavior. The findings give a strong reason to believe that crime prevention policies need to emphasize avenues of education that will result in sustainable livelihoods.

This part explains the empirical findings concerning the objectives of the study, the theory of the study and the literature available on education and crime prevention. This argument involves the synergistic approach of vocational education, e-learning and self-sustainability in terms of curbing youth participation in crime, particularly among Asaba and Warri youths.

Education as a Preventive Mechanism of Youth Crime

The results of this analysis confirm the pivotal role of education as a preventive factor against crime among young people. Young individuals involved in vocational education and e-learning programmes recorded much lower levels of self-reported crime involvement than those who did not. This finding is in line with the considerable amount of cross-national evidence suggesting education to be a major predictor of lawful behavior (Lochner and Moretti, 2004; Farrington et al., 2017).

Education has a twofold role to play as far as crime prevention is concerned: it increases the existence of legitimate economic opportunities and promotes socialization into prosocial norms. The decline in the level of involvement in crime among educated youths augers well with the fact that with an increase in education, there is a corresponding increase in the opportunity cost of crime, and hence, deviant behavior becomes less appealing where there are

alternative law-abiding opportunities. This observation is more pertinent in urban Nigerian settings where youth unemployment and economic marginalization are common.

This result supports human capital theory, as it argues that education increases productivity and income earning power, which eliminates crime incentives (Becker, 1964). It is also consistent with social learning theory because schools expose youths to positive role models and normative behaviors that are deterrents of deviance (Bandura, 1977). Empirical research in the third world also determines that education is a preventive measure to crime by facilitating social and economic inclusion (Adebayo, 2013; Okafor, 2011).

In terms of policy making, the discovery highlights the importance of education, which should be more actively built into crime prevention policies. Inclusion in education policies should be of priority among governments that will increase access to vocational, digital, and alternative learning opportunities, especially among out-of-school and unemployed youths. Education policy must also be constructed not only as a social service but also as a strategic crime prevention investment. One of the major weaknesses is that involvement in crime was assessed through self-reported answers, which underreporting might influence because of stigma or fear. Additionally, the cross-sectional design restricts the possibility of determining causality between education and less involvement in the crime.

Vocational Education and Economic Empowerment

Among the most striking results of the research, the negative correlation between vocational education and crime involvement is very high. Young people who were also taken through vocational training were much more successful in becoming economically active and self-reliant, thus becoming less vulnerable to criminal behavior. This observation supports the previous research that claims that vocational education increases employability and entrepreneurial strengths, particularly in young people who have low levels of formal educational resources (Uggen, 2000; UNESCO, 2016).

Vocational education in Asaba and Warri seems to be a pragmatic answer to the lack of alignment between formal and labor markets. The respondents always indicated that vocational skills offered instant income earning capabilities; hence, the economic burden was relieved. This finding is a firm reinforcing indicator of strain theory, according to which crime is more probable in the situation when people are deprived of legitimate sources of attaining socially desirable objectives (Agnew, 1992). Vocational education is useful in alleviating the tension that leads to criminal behavior by increasing legitimate economic opportunities.

Nevertheless, the results also show how infrastructural constraints and social stigma limit access to vocational education. This highlights the necessity to

implement policy measures that would increase vocational training facilities and recalibrate social attitudes regarding technical skills as a possible and decent career.

This result aligns with Nigerian research indicating that technical and vocational education is associated with a lower youth delinquency rate and better socioeconomic performance (Akuhwa, 2015; Onigbara and Evavoawe, 2022). It also supports global findings that occupation-based interventions are beneficial in minimizing criminal behavior in youth at risk (Boateng et al., 2025).

On a policy level, the outcome reflects the need to increase and intensify Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes. The governments are supposed to invest in new vocational centers, match the training with the market, and offer after-training services, including start-up capital, mentoring, and certification. It is also important to tackle the societal inference of vocational careers by sensitizing people. Although it has close relations with lower crime rates, the availability of vocational education is not evenly represented because of infrastructural limitations and cultural discrimination. The research also failed to follow-up the employment results in the long term, which restricted the ability to evaluate long-term economic effects.

eLearning and Digital Skill Acquisition

The paper also indicates the increasing significance of eLearning as a means of preventing crimes. Young individuals who used digital learning platforms would have lower crime rates and increased rates of economic involvement. The result is compatible with studies that focused on the importance of digital skills in improving employability and social inclusion in the contemporary economy (Autor et al., 2020).

eLearning has a number of benefits in the Nigerian setting. It breaks geographical boundaries; it gives learners the ability to learn at their own pace, and it gives access to internationally relevant skills. The reason why eLearning participation is higher in Asaba could be related to a comparatively better digital infrastructure and learning resources. In Warri, access to the internet is minimal, and data are very expensive; these factors limit participation, which underscores the continuity of digital inequality (Oyedemi & Choung, 2020).

Theoretically, eLearning helps in upholding human capital theory, which focuses more on education as an investment that has economic and social returns (Becker, 1964). Young people gaining digital skills make them more competitive in the labor market and thus less dependent on illegal sources of income. Furthermore, structured e-learning programmes encourage self-discipline and goal orientation, which are also characteristics of low criminal propensity.

This observation echoes human capital theory, as digital skills are viewed as economic resources with a low cost of substitution, as they decrease the use of unlawful sources of income (Becker, 1964). It is also in line with

social learning theory since structured e-learning environments facilitate discipline, goal orientation and positive modeling of behavior.

The policy interventions must be aimed at bridging the digital divide by providing subsidized internet access, community ICT hubs and a reliable power supply. The crime-preventive effects of e-learning platforms could be boosted by the inclusion of entrepreneurship, ethics, and employability modules. The unequal access and inconsistency of program quality may moderate the effectiveness of e-learning. The research failed to distinguish the types of eLearning, as these can have different effects.

Self-Sustainability as the most potent forecast of Reduction of Crime.

Self-sustainability was observed to be the most decisive predictor of less involvement in crime out of the three education dimensions that were studied. Youths with a history of reported stable income, entrepreneurial activity, and financial independence were much less likely to commit criminal behavior. This result is aligned with previous studies involving economic self-sufficiency with delinquency rates (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025; Akano et al., 2025).

Self-sustainability is effective not only in reducing the economic burden but also in reducing psychological health and social inclusion. Economically productive youths will find it easier to have a sense of purpose, self-worth and responsibility, which is a protective factor against crime. These results support self-determination theory, which highlights autonomy and competence as major sources of positive behavior (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

The qualitative results also show that crime is a survival strategy for many youths and not necessarily the morally right choice. If legitimate sources of earning income are available, the motivation to commit crime decreases greatly. This observation highlights the need to combine education and entrepreneurship support and access to capital.

This finding supports the strain theory by showing that the ease of economic strain lowers the urge to commit crimes (Agnew, 1992). It is also in line with human capital theory, which emphasizes the crime-preventive potential of education as the ability to generate sustainable livelihoods.

The strategies for crime prevention should not be limited to training but should also be applied to business financing, accessibility to markets, mentoring and business development services. Skills acquisition may not lead to complete economic autonomy without such support. Self-sustainability was also assessed using self-reported indicators as opposed to longitudinal income stability, which could be challenging in estimating long-term economic resilience.

Comparative Insights: Asaba and Warri Youths

The comparative study of Asaba and Warri is of significance in terms of contextual insight. Although the relationship patterns between education and

crime prevention were similar in both cities, differences were noted in access to education resources and results. The Asaba youths were slightly more involved in eLearning and less involved in crime, which could have been a result of improved infrastructure and stability of administration.

The youths in Warri, although having more people engaged in vocational training, endured more economic turbulence and social strains associated with industrial decay and environmental problems. These differences in context underscore the concern of ensuring that education-based crime prevention strategies consider local socioeconomic realities. A universal strategy is not going to provide the best results.

By comparison, Warri youths, despite an increased level of vocation involvement, were at a higher level of economic pressure due to the loss of industry and environmental issues. These results emphasize the need to use context-specific crime prevention mechanisms instead of universal solutions. In the area of policy, the education and crime prevention frameworks should be adjusted according to the local socioeconomic realities of each city, especially the industrial and environmentally strained regions such as Warri by the local governments. The two urban centers were the study sample, which could also restrict the generalization of the study to rural locations or other cities in Nigeria varying in socioeconomic factors.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study offer empirical evidence for the combination of strain theory, social learning theory, and human capital theory to explain youth crime prevention. Education will alleviate the economic burden, offer prosocial educational settings, and increase human capital, which will in turn decrease the probability of engaging in criminal behavior. The overlap of these theories proves the idea that crime prevention is multidimensional and that interventions should be holistic. The results are consistent with empirical proof showing the effectiveness of the strain theory when used jointly with the social learning theory and human capital theory to explain youth crime prevention. Thus, education lessens financial pressure, enhances prosocial education settings, and promotes human capital, which reduces the likelihood of engaging in crime.

Policy Implications of the Research in Preventing Crime

The discussion proposes the issue of punitive crime control measures and justifies the importance of preventive, education-based measures. Sustainable solutions to youth crime are provided in terms of investments in vocational education, training in digital skills, and self-sustainability programmes. Instead of reactive enforcement, policymakers should focus on early intervention and empowerment in the long term.

The study acknowledges the weakness of punitive crime control methods and the efficacy of preventive crime control methods based on education. Long-term investment in the field of vocational education, the development of digital skills, and self-sustainability programmes is necessary to ensure sustainable youth crime prevention. Policymakers must focus on early intervention, integrated empowerment initiatives and building of human capital, rather than enforcing reactive measures.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper reviewed how catch-them-young education policies - vocational education, eLearning and self-sustainability - can be used to prevent youth crime in Asaba and Warri in Nigeria Delta state. The results based on the 500 youths supported by qualitative evidence indicate that interventions based on education can dramatically decrease the criminal behavior of youth. The findings indicate that vocational education improves the availability of market-relevant skills, economic participation, and crime prevention. Vocational training became a very viable and ready avenue to work and entrepreneurship, especially among the youths who were disadvantaged due to a lack of access to formal education. Vocational skills provided instant income-generating opportunities in Asaba and Warri, hence alleviating economic pressures and susceptibility to criminal networks.

Equally, it was discovered that eLearning also played a significant role in crime prevention through promotion of employability, access to modern labor markets and effective utilization of youths who could otherwise stay idle. Despite infrastructural and economic hindrances, eLearning has a high potential in the prevention of crime, inculcation of ethical orientation and entrepreneurship training. Among the variables involved, self-sustainability was the strongest predictor of reduced crime involvement. Young people who were economically self-reliant and able to perform legitimate income-earning activities displayed much less criminal behavior, which further explains the need to connect education to material economic results, especially in a society where poverty and unemployment are the order of the day.

The comparative outcomes of Asaba and Warri show how local socioeconomic factors affect academic performance, underscoring the need for a context-based crime prevention policy supported by national models. These results also confirm the applicability of strain theory, social learning theory, and human capital theory in explaining how education works as a preventive measure in youth-related crime. In summary, the research concludes that the idea of inclusive, skill-based, and sustainability-based education is an efficient and realistic measure in terms of preventing youth crime. The prevention of crime in Nigeria must then focus more on early intervention, the empowerment of youth

and the development of long-term human capital rather than the use of more punitive measures.

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Data will be made available on request.

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