



## POVERTY AND CRIME IN OLD PORT-HARCOURT TOWNSHIP, RIVERS STATE.

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**ABSTRACT:** The study examines Poverty and Crime in Old Port-Harcourt Township in Rivers State. The interest is on how poverty has led to crime in the study area. The study is guided by four research questions, and adopted Anomie theory by Emile Durkheim & Strain theory developed from Anomie by Robert K Merton (1893) as the theoretical framework. The study utilized descriptive qualitative research design, where both primary and secondary data were utilized. The population of the study is 319,700 with a sample size of 178 using an interview schedule to elicit data from respondents. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Person Interview (KPI) was applied for data collection with Purposive and snowballing sampling methods used in selecting participants for this study. Data is analyzed thematically, the study concludes that the provision of basic amenities should be critically looked into to better the living conditions of those in the slums. The government should improve on wages of workers with good remuneration, create jobs by building manufacturing companies for youths, Scholarships should be awarded to brilliant students to further their educations to desired levels, Lastly, restructuring, embankment construction, and reclaiming to decongest the study areas, as well as peace talk to reach a consensus.

**Keywords:** Poverty, Crime, Unemployment, Low Education, Financial Standing

### Introduction

Poverty and crime remain two interrelated social problems confronting urban communities in Nigeria, particularly in rapidly growing cities such as Old Port Harcourt Township in Rivers State. Old Township is one of the oldest and most densely populated areas of the metropolis, it is characterized by overcrowding, aging infrastructure, unemployment, and limited access to basic social amenities like portable drinking water, steady electricity, sordid environment etc. These conditions have exaggerated socio-economic deficiency among residents and have twisted an environment where criminal activities such as theft, burglary, substance abuse, drug addiction, cultism, molestation, drug racketing and street violence are increasingly reported. Understanding the interconnectedness between poverty and crime in this locality is therefore crucial for actual social development and crime prevention.

In urban settings like Old Port Harcourt Township, poverty is often manifested through informal housing, underemployment, and income inequality. Scholars argue that persistent poverty weakens social control mechanisms and increases frustration, which may push individuals especially youths towards criminal behavior as a means of survival or expression of grievance. Merton, (1938 & Agnew, (1992) respectively. This situation is worsened by rapid urbanization and rural–urban migration, which place pressure on limited economic opportunities and social services, this is the case of Old Port-Harcourt Township. Crime rates tend to be higher in this area because it is characterized by high unemployment, low educational attainment, and poor living conditions which is in accordance with Alemika, (2013) view on crime. In Old Port Harcourt Township, the concentration of poverty alongside weak institutional presence and inadequate community policing and vigilante has contributed to the

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persistence of criminal activities, thereby threatening public safety and social stability. There is a strong correlation between poverty and crime, particularly in urban communities where socioeconomic inequalities are pronounced according to Becker, (1968), Shaw & McKay, (1942), this is also in agreement with Alemika's (2013) point of view. When legitimate means of achieving societal goals are blocked, individuals may resort to illegitimate alternatives, including crime. In the perspective of Old Port Harcourt Township, this nexus is further moulded by local factors such as youth restiveness, drug trafficking, cultism and the breakdown of traditional and social structures.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Poverty has a great influence on the crime rate in Old Port-Harcourt Township, in Rivers State, it can be relative or absolute poverty, the later is where there is lack of the basic resources needed to maintain minimum protection, security, child's right, and right to life. Crime and violent conflict is growing due to disparities in wealth, increasing unemployment among the youths, population pressure, land and resources leading to environmental degradation which provokes social discontent, polarization leading to social strife in the region.

According to vigorous approach theory, societal conditions of deep spread and deep poverty is essentially deprivation suffered by a large segment of some important essentials for sustenance such as sufficient income to provide housing, clothing, food and education, health facilities, adequate opportunities for production employment which leads to societal stress. Stress leads to increase in anger and frustration of the poor who are then exploited by violence promoting war bent demagoguery. Indeed, scarcities of the basic needs amongst the population causes social segmentation, group formation and strengthen group's identity which creates violent collective action that forms war, terrorism, riots, civil insurgencies, political repressions to its ultimate forms.

There are no income generating investments as factories, plantations (cash crops) to employ the youths and working population in the study areas thus, leading to severe unemployment and crime in the region.

Several studies have been conducted on poverty and crime all over, in a study conducted by Adeboye, (2013), on Poverty and crime in Nigeria: Implications for national development, he examined the relationship between widespread poverty and the increasing rate of crime in. Using secondary data and sociological analysis, it was discovered that unemployment, income inequality, and lack of basic social services significantly contribute to criminal activities such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and fraud. The study concludes that poverty reduction is essential for crime control in Nigeria.

In another study, Okafor, & Duru, (2010), carried out research on the Socio-economic Determinants of Crime in the study analyzed how poverty, unemployment, and poor education influence criminal behavior in Nigeria. Findings revealed that communities with high poverty levels experience higher crime rates. The study concluded that economic hardship pushes many youths in to crime as a survival strategy.

Chukwuma, (2014), examined Poverty, Unemployment and Crime by investigated the link between poverty, unemployment, and crime using descriptive and statistical methods. The study established a strong positive relationship between poverty levels and crime rates in urban areas of Nigeria. It recommended job creation and social welfare programs as effective crime-reduction strategies.

However, from the above related studies it was discovered that there existing studies of Poverty and crime in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, but none covered Old Port Harcourt Township to our limited knowledge, it is against this backdrop that this study has evolved, to examine the nexus between poverty and crime in the study area, this study is therefore carried out to bridge this gap in knowledge. By exploring how socio-economic deprivation influences criminal behavior in the area, the study aims to contribute to sociological knowledge and provide evidence-based insights that can inform policies and interventions targeted at poverty reduction and crime control within urban communities especially the study area.



### Research Questions

To guide the study scientifically, the following research questions:

- i. How has financial standing contributed to poverty and crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township, Rivers State?
- ii. In what way (s) has unemployment led to poverty and crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township, Rivers State?
- iii. How has level of education contributed to poverty and crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township, Rivers State?
- iv. How has possession of property led to crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township, Rivers State?

### Objectives

The main objectives of the study is to investigate the influence of poverty on crime in Old Port Harcourt Township, to achieve the above objectives of the study, the following specific objectives were stated:

- i. To examine how financial standing has contributed to poverty and crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township Rivers State.
- ii. To investigate way (s) unemployment aides' poverty and crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township, Rivers State.
- iii. To ascertain how level of education contributes to poverty and crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township, Rivers State.
- iv. To examine how possession of property has led to poverty and crime in Old Port- Harcourt Township, Rivers State.

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Anomie theory by Emile Durkheim and Robert K Merton (1893). The Environmental and Economic Problems Theory establish a relationship between crime and environment. He explored how environmental factors influences social behavior and economic activities. Tarde argued that people learn crime through imitation or contact with criminals in their environment. This is imitation by innovation and also environmental influence, where people imitate others in their environment, shaping social and economic behaviors. And where the environment and economic conditions cannot shape human interactions and societal

development, then it is certain that the unhealthy exposure to certain environments would induce criminality.

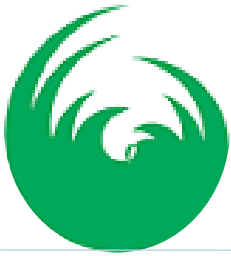
Anomie Theory is a sociological concept first introduced by Émile Durkheim (1893), it refers to a state normlessness or lack of social regulation, leading to disintegration of social bonds. Anomie focuses or causes social change, lack of clear norms as people behaves as they deem fit since there is weak social institutions. And as a result of these, deviant behavior, crime becomes the order of the day, and births social disintegration. Durkheim used anomie to describe a state of disruptive social change that weakens moral guidance and societal cohesion. Anomie theory explains how societal pressures and lack of opportunities can lead to deviant behavior, including crime. This was later developed into Strain theory by Robert K. Merton, (1938).

Anomie also arises from a disjunction between cultural goals and institutionalized means. Where poverty and economic inequality can create strain, leading to frustration and deviant behavior, limited access to legitimate opportunities like (education, jobs).

Strain theory propounded by Merton, (1938), argued that when people can't achieve societal goals through legitimate means, they could turn to deviance. Merton also identified ways people adapt to anomie (conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, rebellion), individuals are Strained due to pressures or stress caused by inability unmet expectation objectives. This in turn leads to dissatisfaction, frustration, conflict, and deviance.

### Conceptual Clarification

It is no longer news that Nigeria is blessed with numerous natural/mineral resources, despite this, the country is being ravaged by poverty. As a result of Poverty, and means of survival has immensely contributed to the level of crime experienced and recorded on daily basis in Nigeria. Contemporarily, the rate at which crimes are being perpetrated in Nigeria has climax, across the nation. Cases of crimes and criminal activities are being reported on timely through the mass media especially as it affects individuals, communities, states and the nation at large. As contributed by Alemika, (2011), he opined those Crimes and criminal activities continue to flourish in the nation as



a result of weakness in Nigeria's administrative and governance system. Nevertheless, in Nigeria, owing to what could be termed as bad governance, the hijacking of governance apparatus by the powerful Cabals in Nigeria, widespread impunity became prevalence among the government actors, corruption thrives, poverty blossoms and consequently, crime breeds, and permeated the nooks and crannies of the nation. It is on this note that the study examines the nexus between poverty and Crimes in the study area.

World Bank Development report (2000), defines poverty "as an unacceptable deprivation in human well-being that can compromise both physiological and social deprivation". Poverty is the deprivation of basic resources that are necessary for maintaining the quality of life in terms of food, clothing, shelter and other rights and resources that can impinge on living conditions and guarantee human dignity. Amaike, (2011) quoted in UNILAG Sociological review says poverty can be described as a social problem that limits and constrains the life chances of individuals, groups and society in terms of access to valued resources without which human existence will be threatened. In its most extreme form, poverty is a lack of basic human needs, such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, housing, clean water, and health services. Persistent poverty creates frustration and hopelessness, especially among youths, thereby increasing vulnerability to social vices and criminal behavior Adebayo, (2013). Thus, poverty is not only an economic problem but also a social condition that affects behavior, relationships, and community stability.

Townsend, (1979), defines poverty as a condition where individuals lack the resources necessary to obtain the diet, participate in activities, and have the living conditions that are customary in the society to which they belong.

Poverty is not just lack of income but exclusion from ordinary living patterns.

Sen, (1999), defines poverty as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely low income, emphasizing what people are able to be and do.

Crime according to Clinard & Meier, (2016) refers to any act or omission that violates the laws of a society and is punishable by the state. It includes behaviors such as theft,

armed robbery, kidnapping, assault, fraud, cultism, and drug trafficking. Crime is a social phenomenon influenced by economic, cultural, psychological, and environmental factors. Sociologists Okafor & Duru, (2010), viewed crime as a product of social disorganization, inequality, and weak social control mechanisms. High crime rates are often linked to poor living conditions, lack of education, and limited legitimate means of achieving societal goals. Crime does not only threaten lives and property but also undermines social order and economic development. Sociological perspective by

Karl, (1867), Unemployment is part of the "reserve army of labour," created by capitalism to keep wages low and control workers. Unemployment is not just individual failure but often a structural economic problem. According to Max, (1922), financial standing refers to an individual's or household's economic position based on income, wealth, employment, and access to resources.

Financial standing is linked to one's "life chances," determined by economic resources and market position.

Pierre, (1986) financial standing is shaped by economic capital, which influences social mobility and power. Financial standing affects access to education, health, security, and social status.

### **Methodology**

The Population of Port -Harcourt City Local Government Area is 774,600 (projected 2022, National Bureau of Statistic). Data saturation was proposed since the study is anthropological (ethnographical) research, after the field work was completed, a sample size of 178 was arrived at from all the 13 axis of Old Port Harcourt Township that was researched on. The respondents were engaged differently with the aid of an interview guide (schedule) structured with open ended question. Data was gathered differently through Key Persons Interview (KPIs), and Focus Group (FGDs). The study adopted purposive sampling, accidental and snowballing techniques in reaching out to the respondents, this is to enable the researcher to purposively choose respondents from the various axis of Old Port Harcourt Township, like Bundu community, Ibeto and Macoba, Abuja and Nembe, Ibadan and Oru-polo, Borikiri Sandfield, New Road and Borikiri



Water-fronts, Ndoki and Tourist Beach, Baptist and Enugu, Okujagu and Aggrey Estate, Ogu and Okrika, Marine Base Victoria, Bende, Niger & Bonny Streets in Port Harcourt city local government area, Rivers State. Purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies for group participant that is used to purposively select respondents, which forms the Sample sizes that may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depending on the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives. Snowballing also known as chain referral sampling was well utilized to get to respondents from the different axis of Old Port Harcourt Township. Snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit "hidden populations," that is, groups not easily accessible to

researchers through other sampling strategies (Natasha et al. 2005).

The method of data analysis employed by the researcher was the use of Thematic Analysis to analyse the qualitative data which was retrieved from **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**, and **Key Person Interviews (KPIs)**. It is also a point to note that Old Port Harcourt Township is highly populated by not just Rivers indigenes, but also people from other states, like the Northerners (Hausa-Fulanis), Akwa-Ibomites, Cross- River State, Bayelsa State, Igbos, Yorubas etc. infact, the

Old Port Harcourt Township is considered '*A No Man's Land*' as the population cuts across every state in Nigeria.

**Table 1: Showing numbers of Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and Key Persons Interview (KPIs)**

Areas in Old Port Harcourt Township	FGD Done Participants/Sessions	KPI Done Participants/Session	Total No. of Respondents
❖ Bundu-Community	Two (2) FGD Sessions with: Men Three (3) Women Three (3) Youth Two (2)	Chiefs Two (2) Leaders (4)	14
❖ Ibeto & Macoba Communities	Two (2) FGD Sessions with: Men Two (2) Women Three (3) Youth Three (3)	Chiefs Two (2) Leaders Two (2)	12
❖ Abuja & Nembe Water front	Two (2) FGD Sessions with: Men Three (3) Women Four (4) Youth Three (3)	Chiefs Two (2) Leaders Three (3)	15



❖ Ibadan & Orupolo Water front	One (1) FGD Session Men Two (2), Women Two (2) Youth Three (3)	Chiefs Two (2) Youth Two (2)	11
❖ Sand-field (Borikiri)	Two (2) FGD Session with: Elders Six (6) Women Six (6)	Leaders Three (3) Chiefs Two (2)	17
❖ New Road (Borikiri)	Two (2) FGD Session with: Men Three (3) Women Three (3) Youth Two (2)	Chiefs Two (2) Youth Three (3)	13
❖ Borikiri Water fronts	Two (2) FGD Sessions with: Men Five (5) Women Two (5)	Chiefs Two (2) Youth Three (3)	15
❖ Ndoki & Tourist Beach Water front	Two (2) FGD Session with: Men Three (3) Women Three (3) Youth Three (3)	Chiefs Two (2) Youth Three (3)	14
❖ Baptist & Enugu Water front	Two (2) FGD Session with: Elders Four (4) Women Four (4)	Leaders Two (2) Chiefs Two (2)	12
❖ Aggrey Estate & Okujagu Water front	Two (1) FGD Sessions with: Men Two (2)	Chiefs Two (2) Leader (1)	12
	Women Three (3) Youth Two (2)	Youth Two (2)	



❖ Ogu & Okrika Water front	Two (2) FGD Sessions with: Men Two (2) Women Three (3) Youth Two (2)	Chiefs Two (2) Leaders Two (2) Youth Two (2)	13
❖ Marine-Base (Fisherman, California, Oneman, Black man, Down Base, Nepa, Iyo-polo)	Two (3) FGD Session with: Men Five (5) Women Five (5) Youth Five (5)	Chiefs Two (2) Youth Four (4)	21
❖ Victoria, Bende & Bonny Streets	Two (3) FGD Session with: Men Five (5) Women Five (5) Youth Five (5)	Chiefs Two (2) Youth Four (4)	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>Twenty-six (26) FGDs Sessions with 124 Participants</b>	<b>Twenty-eight (28) KPIs Sessions with Participants</b>	<b>178</b>

**Source: Researchers field work, 2022.**

From the above, table 1 reflects the analysis from Focus Group Discussions and Key Person Interviews Data; it shows that the study recorded a total of 26 (FGDs) sessions with 124 participants and 28 (KPIs) sessions with 74 participants. Subsequently, the table reveals that: a total number of 26 Chiefs Participated in the study, 17 community leaders, 45 Men, 49 Women, and 52 Youths, making it is a total of 178 respondents.

Furthermore, the table also revealed that the study was conducted in 13 major axis of Old Port- Harcourt Township in Rivers State. The study purposively selected the number of respondents from this different axis.

### Thematic Analysis of Data

This section discusses findings from the Focus Group Discussions and Key Person Interviews Thematically.

#### 1: Nature of Poverty in Old Port Harcourt Township Rivers State.

The nature of poverty and crime in Old Port-Harcourt Township is not different from the ones experience from other big cities in Nigeria and other parts of the world. From the study, Lowincome earning has been a cause of poverty as many residents (River’s indigenes) are government workers with meagre salary. Unemployment



has hiked the nature of poverty in Old Port –Harcourt Township both of Old and contemporarily, for young graduates, secondary school drop -outs and non- primary school attendees. Other residents are mostly self-employed, and petty traders with small scale businesses and low income. The

living conditions that speaks of the nature of poverty are, poor and horrible living conditions in the water fronts, buildings are old, with inadequate sanitation, poor ventilation, and lack of access to clean water, environmental degradation the study area suffers from pollution, poor waste management, and lack of proper drainage system, limited access to basic services where residents faced challenges in accessing healthcare, education, and other essential services. Contemporarily, there are cases of overcrowded slum, sordid conditions, some waterfronts are plagued, many residents living in substandard houses, flood as a result of rain and Big Tide commonly known as (Big water) which penetrates into living rooms causing major damage of household items, (half block, half play-wood. This indicates a high level of poverty in Old Port Harcourt Township.

### **Theme 1.1: Origin of Crimes and Cultism in Old Port Harcourt Township, Rivers State**

Crimes in Old Port -Harcourt Township, are largely linked to cultism and gang-related violence, as a result of Political thuggery in Rivers State dating back to the 1999 democratic dispensation. The state's politicians have been accused of sponsoring and arming cult groups to achieve their goals, leading to violence and instability.

Old Port- Harcourt Township was a hot-bed for cult groups who engaged in violent clashes leading to heinous crimes. Factors contributing to cultism are poverty and unemployment, many youths joined cults due to economic hardship and lack of opportunities, Political Patronage often sponsor cult groups for protection and intimidation, and social inclusion, cults provided a sense of belonging and identity for marginalized individuals. The notorious Cult Groups were Dey-well which happen to be in affiliation with the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Dey-gbam, affiliated with the All-Progressives Congress (APC)

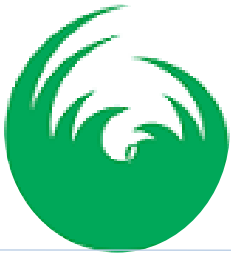
Ice-landers, a violent cult group operating in Port Harcourt, Klans-men according to Oruwari, & Owei, (2006).

Consequences of these cult groups are violence and killings, cult clashes led to numerous deaths and displacement. It hampered economic activities by deterring investors and economic growth in Rivers State and also caused Social Breakdown. From (2001-2002) armed robbery increased cases were reported, especially with the advent of mobile communication. Cult clashes and emergence of cult groups like Icelanders, Greenlanders, and Dey-Well, leading to violent clashes took place (2004-2007). Political thuggery, cult groups became involved in River's politics, leading to increased violence and killings. Oil bunkering by cultist groups engaging in oil theft, fueling violence and economic instability from (2015-2018). Kidnappings and rape and other violent crimes, often linked to cult activities also emerged. Recent developments on crimes and cultism in Rivers State from (2020-2025) has recorded renewed cult clashes and violence between cult groups, resulting in deaths and displacement (e.g., Oyorokoto community, Andoni LGA, December 2025).

### **1.2 Prevalent Crimes in Old Port Harcourt Township**

The prevalent crimes in Old Port-Harcourt Township includes:

Kidnapping which has being a major concern, people are often targeting locals for ransom, kidnapping for organ trafficking and for ritual killing and Yahoo plus-plus. Armed robbery is also common, with incidents of gunpoint robberies and thefts, others are Sea Piracy along the coastal regions of Old Port -Harcourt Township with pirates targeting passenger boats and cargoes. Car Thefts are rampant, stolen vehicles are reported some are discovered, many are not. Burglary thefts are the most prevalent crimes in Old Township, where houses are burgled and items like phones, generator set, household items such as television, food items, clothes etc. are being stolen. Other kind of crimes are Sexual Violence like rape, homosexuality, lesbianism, molestation, child abuse cases. Drug and substance abuse is another prevalent deviant behavior in Old Port- Harcourt Township. Substance and drug cases are the root causes of crimes in the study area especially



the water-fronts currently. There are high rate of drug and substance consumption in the study area, where boys and girls alike gather to do drug and take substance like, Colos, Indian hemp, Pawpaw, and also mix substances just to get high and misbehave.

### **Theme 2: Financial Standing and Crime**

From a Focus Group Discussion, and Key Person Interview;

On financial standing and crime Chief Dagogo T. Brown spoke on how low financial standing among people in the study area could lead to crime. He said there is every tendency that when the family income is low as a result of divorce, death of earning member or family head, domestic violence, separation, murder etc. which very common among Township dwellers. He reiterated, that such mishap could bring reduce or bring the family in a state of lack and want to run daily household expenses, in other to survive without right counsel, young people can take to crime to suffice the house-hold expenditure. **(Male FGD, 65 years).**

Another interviewee from Key Person Interview added; He spoke as a victim of circumstance, in his words, my father was working with a private firm where the salary was not okay, but we were managing, until he met his demise, our mother was a petty trader in Creek Road Market (Vegetable seller), she couldn't run the household as my father 'share of money stopped coming. My sister and I dropped out from school, so I started to pick things from yard, until I joined my friends and we started operating from anywhere we see things to steal. But, I have never killed before. **(Male KPI, 25 years).**

### **Theme 3: Unemployment and Crime**

From a Focus Group Discussion, and Key Person Interview;

A youth spoke in connection with unemployment in the study area, he said there are no jobs for young people so they can plan their lives early and become responsible to their families. He said as a graduate, he has applied to several companies for employment but to no avail. He bitterly reiterated that the interview he was called upon in an oil company, they were 5 Rivers indigenes and 3

outsiders, to his greatest astonishment the 3 outsiders were considered, even the one that performed poorly because there was a call for him to be employed, he said only 1 Rivers indigene was employed in a company located in his state as he puts it. He said his illiterate brothers would seldom taut him for going to school only to become unemployed while they are the big boys ruling the area with deviant behaviours. He added this is the country we find ourselves, illiterates see school as scam because unemployment does not spare even the educated. **(Male KPI, 36 years).**

Also from Focus Group Discussion:

A community leader in Borikiri New Road Port-Harcourt spoke, that previously communities are asked to provide companies with some quota to be employed, but currently, instead of going into the communities to get suitably qualified people for the positions available, politicians have hijacked these opportunities. They give the slots to their wife's girlfriends, family members etc. He said the main positions are given to outsiders since some of the politicians do not have professional candidates for the jobs, they are being given menial jobs to do (Man no Man), increasing the number of unemployed people in the society. In his words' what will the unemployed do at this point, they must survive, these same politicians will now use them, and give them peanuts to commit crimes of kidnapping, killing, etc. **(Male KPI, 58 years).**

### **Theme 4: Level of Education and Crime**

From a Focus Group Discussion, an interviewee contributed;

A woman spoke from the focus group discussion, Mrs. Beresiri Ngozi Isegba said education a way of moulding the characters of students. No wonder the school certificates would always read in character and in learning. She said when a reasonable youth attains a degree, putting into considerations all the suffering, hardship he or she had gone through, it becomes a little bit difficult to just throw that certificate into a trash to pick up crime as source of livelihood. She added that parents should try as much as possible to train their children above secondary education that, those that are prone to deviant behaviours are those with low education, primary six and secondary school



drop- out. She said the low level of education makes them perpetrate evil of any kind and perpetrate crimes without a thinking it through (**Female FGD, 68 years**).

Still on interview with Focus Group Discussion'

A leader in Marine Base community, Iyo –Polo precisely Mr. Obele Ogan stated that most miscreants in the area are those of secondary school age, some are drop-outs, others are still in school or young school leavers, they are the ones terrorising the area with various kinds of crimes. He said in other to curb this level educated people from committing crimes, there are so many Rules and Regulations drafted by the leadership (no smoking) on the streets in Iyo –Polo in Marine Base. Yet, some other neighbouring community people smoke with pants on the streets, and this affected the Rules of other places. These boys live in one community but, commit crimes in other community and return as innocent dwellers. He added that majority of the boy into these crimes are not River's indigenes. (**Male FGD, 65 years**).

Another community leader in Fisher- Man Estate, stated that months ago, security operatives came all the way from Bayelsa State to arrest 2 brothers that were into Sea piracy business. He said they are tenants in the community, but they were caught in the Creeks of Rivers State as Sea Pirates but they are occupants (tenants) in Marine Base, but Bayelsans.

He added that they were just between the ages of 25 to 40 years of age, without any form of education whatsoever. Another KPI Mr. Ariweriokuma Silas contributed on level of education and crime, in his words' *people wey go school never see work do, na hm make them dey thief up and down, e com be the people wey no go school, how them wan manage now, check am out tell me madam' make una tell our govemnt make them try help us so that all thaing bad-bad things go stop, see no body like as we they do this things shebi you get the okpata I dey yarn*. (**Youth FGD, 42 years**).

#### **Theme 5: Possession of Property and Crime**

MR. Omiete Uwa said burglary theft has been on the increase in most of the water- fronts and even on the streets of old Port - Harcourt township, houses are burgled, house hold items are stolen. He said people lose their possessions

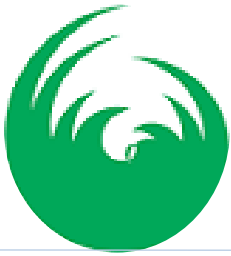
to burglary theft and also because of acquisition of some property people commit heinous crimes, like Yahoo plus-plus, robbery, kidnapping for ransom and use the ill-gotten wealth to beef up their houses with, exotic upholsteries, big screen television, musical instruments, generators, solar panels, inverters etc. He reiterated that initially the crimes committed were petty like carting away of soup pots and phones, money, valuables like jewelleries to pawn just to survive, but currently, they have stepped up theft games, high level of crimes are been perpetrated. They challenge themselves on whose house becomes the finest and for the sake of these challenge they go extra miles to commit heinous crimes just to hit it big, and stay afloat with these ill wealth. (**Female KPI, 56 years**).

On Focus Group Discussion,

Mrs. Ibierembo Deinma Iyaye said, the possession of property is the root cause of all crime, it not that they want money to feed or further education. But the want to acquire, houses that they buy and re-sell when the chips are down, they want to drive expensive cars, carry big-big phones, for themselves and their girlfriends, wear very expensive clothes, because they don't even price in the markets and boutiques, whatever price they give them, they just buy, pay by cash or transfer. They just want to be rated as someone that has this and that. She added that because of the acquisition of these worldly pleasures they can commit any crime such as ritual killings, kidnapping for organ harvesting for Juju men and women, car theft, Yahoo-Yahoo, Sea Piracy, etc. (**Female KPI, 54 years**).

A chief in Bundu (1) contributed that these boys for the quest of material gains and to show –off power and wealth could go to any length to acquire and satisfy their desires, he further narrated a story about 2 brothers that used their both parents. One used the mother, and the other used their father, all just to belong and possess as much property as possible. He reiterated, that as they acquire these wealth, they plunge themselves into all kinds of drugs, smokables, sniffables, drinkables. For some, when the drug intake is excess, the money flow diminishes, they return to selling off of the properties they did all manner of crimes to buy, thereby, falling back to poverty.

Conclusively, he added it's a two- way thing. (**KPI, 72 years**).



### **Discussion of findings**

1. Poverty and crime in recent years, has been on increase, occurrence of crimes and criminal activities are not less either. This has aggravated fear and tension among the citizens, especially when it is dawned on the populace that security of lives and properties are no longer guaranteed. The high wave of crime has therefore, negatively affected the socioeconomic life as a result of negative influence of political activities in the study area.

2. It was discovered that crimes are perpetrated from most of these slums (water-fronts) as the criminals used those areas as their hide-out and escape route. Simply put, some of the slums prohibits security agents from entering to make arrest, except for very heinous crimes with obvious evidence. Secondly, there are many access roads in these slums known only to the residents, very confusing to trace, as such they serve as escape routes to miscreants after committing heinous crimes (plenty roads), thirdly, when they criminals are been chased, or if there is any Cult clash, they run to the sea shores, dive into the River and are gone.

3. Also from findings, some kingpins have several homes, they interchange using them as their hide-outs, especially those into crimes such as; Sea Piracy and Armed robbery, kidnapping etc. they hardly stay in one locality for long. They can rent a place in Marine Base, another in New Road Borikiri, they furnish and probably keep either a relative or friend, third abode maybe abode outside of Township.

4. It was also discovered that some of these miscreants are not Rivers indigenes, they are boys from all over Nigeria, infact, most of the broad day theft are committed by Hausa-Fulani boys that picks up condemn scraps and empty plastics, pots and plates, buckets that are kept outside of the house is picked and bagged by them. There are also Igbo, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta Edo boys etc.

5. It was also discovered that some of the slums have leaders that comply with them, some of the youth community executives are either retired or current Bad Boys or relations to them, thereby, favouring them and condoning their actions.

6. Overpopulation, overcrowded, poor drainage and sewage disposals, more of Bachers (half- block, half-wood), no portable water, very wrong and risky electrical connection, no community policing or vigilante were also discovered.

7. Also from findings, it was discovered that, all the water- fronts have no embankments and as such, they are being ravaged by Big Tide commonly known as (Big water). Residents of these areas record property loses when during high tide, the River flows into houses, household items floats and damages belongings. Also, they suffer the issue of flood as a result of heavy down pour as well.

8. Finally, it was also discovered that most of these criminals have dealings with top politicians who play God-fatherism with them, making untouchable they assist with their shady deeds. When they are apprehended by the police, these politicians release them by paying any amount requested.

### **Conclusion**

Areas with high poverty levels such as Old Port Harcourt Township tend to experience higher rates of crime, economic hardship, coupled with weak law enforcement and social inequality, encouraging criminal activities, especially among unemployed youths Chukwuma, (2014). Therefore, addressing poverty through job creation, education, and social welfare policies is essential for effective crime reduction.

The study investigated Poverty and Crime in Old Port-Harcourt Township, how low financial standing can lead to poverty and crime, ways in which unemployment can cause poverty and crime, how low level of education can trigger poverty and crime, and also how possession of property leads to poverty and crime. This phenomenon can be averted if workers remuneration will be reviewed higher, minimum wage is also increased, and jobs should be created for all cadre, free education and scholarship to tertiary and even Post Graduate levels.

The study concludes that there is need for serious dialogue between slum leaders for restructuring, the government should reach a consensus since some of these boys are more influential that the Chiefs and community leaders. Thereby using the community as a shade or hide-out.



### Recommendations

Given the above findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

The government should improve on wages of workers with good remuneration. Cost of living is on the increase, but workers remuneration remains static. Increase in the minimum wage will suffice.

Government should provide jobs for as many youths as possible that desire to do a white-collar job, build manufacturing industries both unskilled and professional. Scholarships should be awarded to brilliant scholars that want to further their educations to desired levels. To avoid low level of education in Old Port -Harcourt Township and Rivers State at large.

Lastly, government should develop slums. Restructuring, embankment construction, and reclaiming to decongest the areas, as a matter of policy the government should engage in peace talk (dialogue), to reach a consensus on how to develop infrastructurally.

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