

COMBATING UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH CRIMINALITY IN ALA IGBO USING AKURUOULO PRINCIPLE: A FOCUS ON IMO STATE OKOBI

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ABSTRACT

This research titled “Combating Unemployment and Youth Criminality in Ala Igbo Using Akuruoulo Principle with a Focus on the One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI)” seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI), rooted in the Igbo Akuruoulo principle (of investing at home), in addressing youth unemployment and criminality in Southeast Nigeria’s Ala Igbo region. Using questionnaires to collate data, a survey of 54 Traditional Rulers and Youth Presidents across Imo State’s 27 Local Government Areas assessed OKOBI’s impact. Descriptive statistics and Spearman’s correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations: OKOBI reduced unemployment ($r = 0.568$, $p = 0.001$) and criminality ($r = 0.681$, $p = 0.001$). Respondents agreed (mean scores: 3.2–3.26) that OKOBI engages youths in vocational skills and community enterprises, displacing incentives for crime. The findings highlight the efficacy of culturally embedded models in fostering economic inclusion and social stability. Recommendations include scaling OKOBI through investments in vocational training, infrastructure, and mentorship while integrating the Akuruoulo principle into policy to incentivise communal wealth redistribution. Addressing structural barriers like access to capital and formalising kinship-driven businesses are critical for sustainability. This study underscores the potential of indigenous, community-centric strategies to combat systemic unemployment and crime, offering a replicable framework for similar contexts.

Keywords: *Unemployment, Criminality, OKOBO, Akuruoulo.*

JEL Codes: *O15, O17, O55*

1. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment remains a pressing, complex, and wicked global challenge, exhibiting regional nuances and disparities that defy simple solutions (Aigheyisi & Edore, 2021; Dang & Soepding, 2024; Mutuah et al., 2021; Nwogbo & Onyemaechi, 2023; Ochinyabo, 2021; Olakunle, 2022; Onyeoma, 2020). It leads to financial crises, reducing purchasing power and contributing to poverty. Unemployment exacerbates income disparities, causing widespread economic inequality, particularly in developing economies (Giupponi & Machin, 2024; Hacibedel et al., 2024). It causes retarded economic growth, hence breeding poverty and

aggravating poor well-being (Schubert & Turnovsky, 2018). There has been evidence of a significant positive relationship between unemployment and crime (Hooghe et al., 2011). Furthermore, unemployment reduces families' disposable income, purchasing power, economic output, and above all impacts negatively on employees' morale (Lindemann & Gangl, 2019).

As a wicked challenge, developing countries have more widespread figures of unemployed. Using Africa as an example, unemployment rates are alarmingly high, particularly among youths. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Djibouti leads with a staggering 76.4% youth unemployment rate, followed by Eswatini, Libya, and South Africa, where youth unemployment stands at 52% (Galal, 2023; ILOStat, 2023). These figures buttress the persistence of systemic labour market inequalities, with projections indicating little improvement in 2024.

Unemployment challenges lead to widespread loss of public trust in the government. This in turn fuels criminal activities (Ojo et al., 2021) exacerbating various agitations. This has made various agitators find unemployed youths as willing tools for the perpetration of their nefarious activities. This is not more peculiar and pronounced in *Alaigbo*, Southeast Nigeria. The Nigerian streets including those of southeast Nigeria are filled with youth hawkers who could have found gainful employment in some enterprise (Okafor, 2011). This high unemployment rate poses a threat to society, as many have found solace in engaging in “*okeite*” money rituals, some have made kidnapping their source of livelihood while masquerading under cybercrime (Willie et al., 2022) as “yahoo-yahoo”.

Furthermore, others are engaging in online fraud and even armed robbery. All these results in an escalating and uncontrolled increase in crime rate, hence becoming an existential problem as being witnessed presently in Southeast Nigeria and beyond. This undermines the stability and progress of *alaigbo* and Nigeria in general (Ayanda & Alapata, 2011).

As Southeast Nigeria known as *Ala Igbo*, is currently facing a multifaceted socio-economic crisis, with youth unemployment and criminality at the forefront, it is important to note that the (Unemployment Report, 2020) reports an alarming level of unemployment across Nigeria, but the situation is particularly dire in the Southeast, where cultural, economic, and political factors have intersected to exacerbate these problems. Youth, defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2020) as those aged 15-24, make up a significant portion of the population, and a growing number of them are unemployed or underemployed. This has had a profound impact on the region's security, and economic growth (Dankumo et al., 2024; Nwosu et al., 2019; Ojide et al., 2016) with increased reports of armed robbery, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and other forms of criminality (Ihensekhien & Miedideke, 2023).

Efforts to address these issues, primarily through government intervention and international development initiatives, have yielded limited results. Many programs have been criticized for their top-down approaches, which fail to consider the specific socio-cultural dynamics of the region. In contrast, indigenous economic models, particularly the *Akuruoulo* principle and the One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI) offer a promising alternative. These homegrown solutions tap into the indigenous community's values and structures to foster entrepreneurship, create jobs, and reduce crime.

The *Akuruoulo* principle is a traditional Igbo philosophy that emphasises communal reinvestment of wealth. It encourages individuals to contribute their resources back into their communities rather than using wealth for personal luxury. This principle is the foundation of OKOBI, which promotes entrepreneurship at the kinship level. Each kindred, or extended family group, is encouraged to establish a business that provides employment for its members

and contributes to the local economy. This is what is needed in *Alaigbo* presently in the face of numerous challenges.

Alaigbo faces an existential crisis driven by unemployment and insecurity, which fuel criminality, necessitating indigenous, culturally rooted solutions like the One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI) beyond conventional government approaches. The escalating insecurity is fundamentally linked to rampant youth unemployment, which drives criminal activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and cybercrime, undermining societal stability. Addressing this crisis requires culturally grounded, community-driven initiatives that target unemployment as a root cause, moving beyond conventional state-led security measures.

This research seeks to explore how indigenous economic solutions can be harnessed to combat youth unemployment and criminality in *Ala Igbo*. Framed by the research questions (i) *How does OKOBI-Akuruulo reduce unemployment?* and (ii) *How does it curb criminality?* The research employs null hypotheses (i) H_{01} : OKOBI does not reduce unemployment and (ii) H_{02} : OKOBI does not reduce crime, to test causal linkages, focusing thematically on unemployment-crime dynamics rather than broad geographic coverage. In prioritising Imo State's 27 LGAs, the scope ensures methodological rigor, and actionable policy insights, and avoids data dilution, balancing localised analysis with broader relevance for sustainable solutions in Southeast Nigeria. Furthermore, this ensures community-centered solutions to the problems of youth unemployment and crime as it draws from the experiences of individuals and communities actively engaged in OKOBI to assess the model's potential to catalyse economic development and reduce social unrest. This paper is divided into five sections. While section one is the introduction, section 2 reviews both theoretical and empirical literature. Section 3 explained the methodology; section 4 presented and discussed the results while section 5 concluded the paper and offered policy recommendations and implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical literature

Economic theories suggest a strong link between unemployment and criminal behaviour, particularly in regions like *Alaigbo*. Becker's, (1968) foundational work posits that unemployment, by reducing income, heightens the incentive to engage in illegal activities as individuals seek alternative means to sustain themselves. Ehrlich, (1973) builds on this by framing criminal participation as a calculated decision where individuals allocate limited time between legal and illegal pursuits to maximise personal benefit. According to Ehrlich, crime is viewed as a high-risk, high-reward activity that could boost financial or physical well-being but carries penalties like fines, imprisonment, or reputational damage. Conversely, legal work offers stability but may lack immediate rewards. Crucially, Ehrlich's model emphasizes that individuals often balance both activities simultaneously, adjusting their time investment based on perceived risks and returns, with no barriers to shifting between sectors. This fluidity implies that criminal behaviour is not a binary choice, but a dynamic optimization strategy shaped by economic conditions.

To combat unemployment-driven crime in *Alaigbo*, policies must address both economic deprivation and systemic vulnerabilities. Job creation programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship incentives can reduce reliance on illegal activities by offering viable, sustainable income sources. Simultaneously, enhancing law enforcement transparency and rehabilitating offenders could lower the appeal of crime by increasing perceived risks. However, long-term solutions must also tackle root causes such as educational gaps, social inequality, and lack of access to capital. By fostering inclusive economic growth and strengthening community trust in legal institutions, *Alaigbo* can disrupt the cycle where

unemployment fuels criminality, encouraging individuals to invest time in lawful, productive endeavours instead.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Persistent youth joblessness is a central factor influencing criminal trends in Nigeria's southeastern region, where systemic gaps such as under-industrialization, weak job creation frameworks, and misaligned education-to-employment pathways—intensify the problem. Studies note the area's economic stagnation, with Okafor, (2011) emphasizing its reliance on limited sectors, leaving educated youth without formal employment channels. This void has spurred participation in illicit economies, including cybercrime, robbery, and cult-related violence, as unemployed individuals seek survival strategies (Obadiora, 2014).

Scholars widely correlate unemployment with rising crime. Obadiora, (2014) identifies economic precarity as a trigger for youth involvement in illegal activities, while Nwokocha, (2015) links prolonged unemployment to psychological distress, fostering antisocial behaviors. Quantitative analyses, such as Willie et al., (2022), reveal robust statistical ties ($\chi^2 = 156,234.88$) between joblessness and cybercrime, attributing this trend to urban migration pressures and post-education unemployment. Proposed remedies include rural development, vocational training, and digital oversight to reduce reliance on illicit income.

Other scholars such as Ojo et al., (2021) examined the link between Nigeria's unemployment and crime rates (1990–2020) using time-series data from the World Development Indicators. Methodologically, it applies the Augmented Dickey-Fuller test (to assess data stationarity), the ARDL Bound test to identify long-term relationships, and the ARDL model (to estimate associations). Findings reveal a 1% rise in unemployment increases crime rates by 0.0830%, suggesting unemployment significantly drives crime. Recommendations include job creation, fostering entrepreneurship through skill development, and enforcing stricter offender penalties to deter criminal activity.

Ezeajughu, (2021) adopting the review method attributes Nigeria's higher urban crime rates to urban poverty, unemployment, social disorganization, and inadequate infrastructure, with violent crimes like kidnapping and terrorism worsening economic instability. The study links rising youth unemployment to criminal activities for example armed robbery, and militancy, which hinder national development. Statistical analysis confirms a stable, significant correlation between unemployment and crime. The paper advocates addressing youth joblessness through targeted policies to curb crime and accelerate growth.

Jawadi et al., (2021) employed a time-varying VAR model across France (1975Q1–2013Q4) and the UK (1983Q1–2018Q2), analysing unemployment, output, migration fear, and crime shocks. Results reveal unemployment shocks significantly increase crime rates during economic contractions, while economic expansions reduce crime, with migration fears driving crime in France and unemployment dominating in the UK. Panel data from 24 countries (1998–2016) and UK quarterly analysis confirm unemployment's robust link to non-violent crime. The study underscores economic stability as critical to curbing crime, highlighting migration-related anxieties as politically salient in Europe

Using panel data and replicating Small and Lewis' New Zealand study Papps & Winkelmann, (2000) found unemployment significantly impacts total crime rates, particularly dishonesty crimes such as theft, and fraud after controlling for confounding factors. Despite decades of debate, no consensus exists on the unemployment-crime link, reflecting methodological ambiguities and data limitations. The authors suggest integrating variables like income inequality to reduce omitted bias and advance models. Echoing M., McDowell & Webb, (1998),

the field grapples with an elusive "certainty," urging improved data and techniques to reconcile economic principles with crime dynamics

Beyond crime, unemployment amplifies vulnerabilities like food insecurity. Haini et al., (2023) demonstrate how joblessness exacerbates inequality-driven hunger, a pattern mirrored in Ethiopian research where pandemic-related unemployment worsened food access (Endris Mekonnen & Kassegn Amede, 2022; Etana & Tolossa, 2017). Canadian data echoes this, though U.S. policies like unemployment benefits softened the blow (Men & Tarasuk, 2023). Delgado et al., (2023) further connect joblessness to social unrest, as economic despair disrupts food systems and fuels conflict.

The roots of unemployment and its criminal outcomes lie in intersecting cultural, institutional, and economic forces. Cultural norms, including gendered roles and age hierarchies, deepen disparities and reduce job-seeking motivation, especially where welfare systems exist (Albanesi & Şahin, 2018; Hailu Demeke, 2022). Conversely, regions with strong work ethics see shorter unemployment spells due to communal expectations (Ivanov et al., 2020). Education emerges as a mitigator, equipping youth with skills to navigate technological shifts (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2018; ILO, 2021).

While government programs aim to boost employment, overreliance on welfare risks inertia (Walter, 2010). Corporate practices like automation also contribute to job scarcity, though sustainable models could counterbalance these effects (Autor et al., 2020). Despite policy efforts, short-term fixes like vocational training dominate, neglecting systemic reforms (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). This gap has spurred interest in culturally rooted solutions.

There is an existing gap in all the literature reviewed stemming from the fact that all of them talked about government and the conventional use of security apparatus in combating criminality and unemployment. This work set out to close this gap by exploring indigenous entrepreneurship models and philosophies such as “Akuruoulo – OKOBI (One Kindred One Business Initiative) concept.

Employing embeddedness theory (Granovetter, 1985) and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000), this study explores combating unemployment and criminality in *Alaigbo* using the Akuruoulo principle. Embeddedness theory posits that economic practices are shaped by social ties and cultural norms. In Southeast Nigeria, kinship networks enable informal financing and collective enterprises, exemplified by initiatives like OKOBI, which taps into communal trust for youth entrepreneurship (Ivanov et al., 2020). Yet, rigid traditions, such as gender restrictions, may stifle opportunity (Hailu Demeke, 2022), revealing how social structures can both empower and exclude.

Social capital theory emphasises networks and shared norms as economic drivers. In *Alaigbo*, the Igbo principle of collective upliftment (“Onye aghana nwanne ya”) manifests in systems like *Umunna* (kinship groups) and *Igba Boi* apprenticeships, which pool resources and mentor youth (Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2024; Okeke & Nwankwo, 2021). While such bonding capital fosters collaboration, it may also perpetuate exclusion, as seen in patriarchal barriers to women’s economic participation (Hailu Demeke, 2022). Initiatives like OKOBI bridge these networks to external markets, fostering inclusivity (Ivanov et al., 2020). Historical distrust in state institutions has bolstered community-led solutions of adopting cooperatives, and vigilante groups to tackle unemployment and crime.

Furthermore, through harmonising bonding, bridging, and linking capital, OKOBI exemplifies how localised social networks can drive equitable growth, addressing unemployment while

navigating cultural constraints. This model underscores social capital’s dual potential as a tool for collective progress and reinforcement of exclusion, depending on its application (Bourdieu, 1986).

3. METHODOLOGY AND JUSTIFICATION

This study employed a survey design, engaging all 54 Chairmen of Traditional Rulers and Youth Presidents across Imo State’s 27 LGAs as both population and sample, ensuring representativeness while maintaining anonymity for ethical compliance. This is to ensure more accuracy, precision, and manageability. Given the manageable population size, a census approach was adopted, administering structured questionnaires (primary data) alongside secondary data from texts, journals, and online sources. Instrument validity was reinforced through expert review and alignment with research questions, while reliability was confirmed via a pilot study yielding an 82% Cronbach’s alpha ratio. Data analysis combined descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential Spearman’s correlation ($p < 0.05$ threshold) to test hypotheses. This approach balanced rigor and practicality, leveraging robust statistical tools and a focused sample to generate credible, generalizable insights, underpinned by methodological transparency and ethical accountability.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data Presentation & Analysis/Discussion of Results

All 54 questionnaire copies distributed to the respondents were properly filled in and returned. There was therefore 100% return.

Research Question 1: How does OKOBI-akuruulo principle reduce unemployment in Ala Igbo?

Table 1: Respondents’ responses on OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle and unemployment in Ala Igbo

Q/No	Item	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	With OKOBI, youths become gainfully engaged in their various communities.	13	14	10	5	12	54	3.2	0.331
2	When youths become properly engaged in various businesses, the government becomes encouraged to invest more in each community.	15	12	9	7	11	54	3.24	0.281

Field Survey (2024) – through OKOBI Akuruoulo can create decent jobs

Table 1 above indicates that respondents agreed to the facts that: with OKOBI, youths become gainfully engaged in their various communities. This is with a mean score of 3.2 and a standard deviation of 0.331. Also, when young people become properly engaged in various businesses, the government becomes encouraged to invest more in each community as the result shows a mean score of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.281.

Research Question 2: How does OKOBI-akuruoulo principle reduce youth criminality in Ala Igbo?

Table 2: Respondents’ responses on kidnapping and customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities

Q/No.	Item	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
3	With OKOBI, the crime rate in the various Igbo communities has been reduced.	15	13	9	5	12	54	3.26	0.362
4	More youths are now involved in learning different vocational skills as against involvement in criminal activities.	17	11	7	5	14	87	3.22	0.461

Field Survey (2024) – Akuruoulo through OKOBI can reduce crime

Table 2 above indicates that respondents agreed to the fact that with OKOBI, the crime rate in the various Igbo communities has been reduced. This is with a mean score of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 0.362. Also, more youths are now involved in learning different vocational skills as against involvement in criminal activities as the result shows a mean score of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 0.461.

Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: OKOBI-akuruoulo principle does not positively and significantly reduce unemployment in Ala Igbo.

Table 3: Correlation analysis between OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle and unemployment in Ala Igbo

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
OKOBI-akuruoulo	3.2	0.331	0.568	0.001
Unemployment in Ala Igbo	3.24	0.281		

SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2024). – OKOBI-Akuruoulo and unemployment relationship

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis between OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle and unemployment in Ala Igbo. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and a correlation coefficient of 0.568. The result shows a p-value less than 0.05 being the level of significance; therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle positively and significantly reduces unemployment in Ala Igbo.

H₀₂: OKOBI-akuruoulo principle does not positively and significantly influence youth criminality in Ala Igbo.

Table 4: Correlation analysis between OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle and youth criminality in Ala Igbo

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
OKOBI-akuruoulo	3.26	0.362	0.681	0.001
Youth criminality	3.22	0.461		

SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2024) - OKOBI-Akuruoulo and unemployment criminality.

Table 4 presents the correlation analysis between OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle and youth criminality in Ala Igbo. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and a correlation coefficient of 0.681. The result shows a p-value less than 0.05 being the level of significance; therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle positively and significantly influences youth criminality in Ala Igbo.

4.1 Key Findings

After the data analysis, the study finds thus:

1. OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle positively and significantly reduces unemployment in Ala Igbo.
2. OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle positively and significantly influences youth criminality in Ala Igbo.

4.2 Discussion of Findings and Interpretation of Results

The study demonstrates that the OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle significantly reduces unemployment in Ala Igbo by engaging youths in community-centric economic activities. Survey data (Table 1) reveal moderate agreement (mean scores: 3.2–3.24) that OKOBI promotes youth engagement and incentivises government investment, supported by low standard deviations (0.281–0.331), indicating respondent consensus. Correlation analysis (Table 3) confirms a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.568$, $p = 0.001$), rejecting the null hypothesis. This aligns with the Akuruoulo philosophy of reinvesting wealth into local businesses, which creates sustainable jobs tied to the community's needs, thereby curbing unemployment. By fostering vocational training and kinship-driven enterprises, OKOBI redirects youth energy toward productive economic roles, reducing reliance on external employment and stimulating grassroots development.

Similarly, OKOBI correlates with reduced youth criminality, as respondents agreed (mean scores: 3.22–3.26) that crime rates declined, and vocational skill uptake increased (Table 2). The stronger correlation coefficient ($r = 0.681$, $p = 0.001$; Table 4) underscores its significant impact. By channelling youths into legitimate, skill-based livelihoods (e.g., community farms, retail), OKOBI displaces incentives for criminal behaviour, fostering social stability. The initiative's success hinges on its cultural alignment with the Akuruoulo principle, which prioritizes equitable wealth distribution and collective responsibility over individual luxury. These findings are reinforced by qualitative parallels in Njoku's (2023) work, emphasizing that community-driven economic policies not only address unemployment but also mitigate crime by instilling purpose and accountability.

The above findings buttress the findings of Ojo et al (2021), Ezeajughu (2021), and Jawadi et al (2021) and are also in line with their recommendations of a multi-pronged approach to combatting crime in Nigeria, including job creation, fostering entrepreneurship through skill development programs, and implementing stricter penalties for offenders. It aligns with their suggestions for targeted policies to address youth unemployment, recognizing it as a key driver of criminal activity and a significant impediment to national development, and the need for maintaining economic stability that reduces income inequality, particularly by mitigating the impact of unemployment shocks.

4.3 Implication of the results

The findings underscore the transformative potential of culturally rooted economic policies like OKOBI-Akuruoulo in addressing systemic challenges. By prioritizing community-driven

job creation and vocational training, OKOBI offers a replicable model for regions grappling with youth unemployment. The statistically significant reduction in unemployment ($r = 0.568, p = 0.001$) highlights the efficacy of aligning economic strategies with local values, such as the Akuruoulo principle's emphasis on reinvesting wealth into communal enterprises. This approach not only fosters self-sufficiency but also incentivizes government and private stakeholders to support grassroots initiatives, creating a multiplier effect for sustainable development. Policymakers globally could adapt similar frameworks to empower marginalized youth, reduce dependency on external job markets, and revitalize local economies through culturally resonant, inclusive growth strategies.

The strong correlation between OKOBI and reduced criminality ($r = 0.681, p = 0.001$) further demonstrates how economic empowerment directly impacts social stability. By diverting youths from illicit activities to skill-based livelihoods, OKOBI addresses the root causes of crime, idleness and lack of opportunity, while reinforcing communal accountability. This dual focus on economic and social outcomes positions OKOBI as a holistic intervention, countering the fragmentation often seen in top-down policies. The success of Akuruoulo's wealth redistribution ethos also challenges conventional development paradigms that prioritise individual wealth accumulation over collective welfare. For Ala Igbo and similar contexts, scaling OKOBI requires targeted investments in education, infrastructure, and mentorship to sustain its impact, offering a blueprint for leveraging cultural capital to achieve both economic resilience and societal harmony.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendation

The study conclusively affirms that the OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle effectively addresses unemployment and youth criminality in Ala Igbo by leveraging community-centric economic engagement. Statistically significant correlations (unemployment: $r = 0.568, p = 0.001$; criminality: $r = 0.681, p = 0.001$) underscore its dual impact, aligning with the Akuruoulo philosophy of redistributing wealth into local enterprises and vocational training. By fostering grassroots job creation and displacing incentives for crime through skill-based livelihoods, OKOBI not only revitalises local economies but also cultivates social stability, demonstrating the power of culturally rooted strategies to tackle systemic challenges.

Therefore, to maximise OKOBI's impact, governments and philanthropists in Ala Igbo should prioritise investments in vocational training, infrastructure, and mentorship programs to scale community-driven enterprises. Policymakers must integrate the Akuruoulo principle into regional development agendas, incentivising wealthy individuals to redirect resources from personal luxury to communal projects. Additionally, addressing structural barriers such as limited access to capital and business training, will ensure sustainability. By institutionalising this model, stakeholders can replicate its success in similar contexts, fostering economic resilience and reducing youth vulnerability to unemployment and crime through culturally attuned, inclusive growth.

5.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This study advances the discourse on indigenous economic solutions by empirically validating the OKOBI-Akuruoulo principle as a culturally resonant strategy to address unemployment and youth criminality in Southeast Nigeria. While prior research explored the *Akuruoulo* philosophy theoretically, this work fills a critical gap by demonstrating its operationalisation through OKOBI, offering quantitative evidence (unemployment: $r = 0.568, p = 0.001$; criminality: $r = 0.681, p = 0.001$) of its dual socio-economic impact. By integrating embeddedness and social capital theories, the study reveals how kinship-driven entrepreneurship, vocational training, and communal wealth redistribution foster grassroots

economic resilience and social stability. This challenges conventional top-down development paradigms, proving that culturally rooted models can outperform impersonal policies in contexts like Ala Igbo, where communal ties remain strong.

The research further innovates by linking unemployment reduction to crime mitigation through a single framework, illustrating how economic empowerment disrupts cycles of idleness and criminality. It provides a replicable blueprint for leveraging indigenous values such as collective responsibility and equitable wealth distribution to achieve sustainable development. By contextualising OKOBI within global debates on inclusive growth, the study bridges the gap between cultural specificity and scalable policy design, offering actionable insights for regions grappling with similar systemic challenges. This underscores the transformative potential of hybrid models that harmonize tradition with modern economic strategies, advancing scholarship on decolonized development and community-led innovation.

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