



Publisher homepage: www.universepg.com, eISSN: 2663-6913

American Journal of Pure and Applied Biosciences

Journal homepage: www.universepg.com/journal/ajpab



OPEN ACCESS | Research Article



The Impact of Youth Unemployment on Crime Rates in Galkayo, Mudug, Somalia

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Received Date: 22 June 2026

Accepted Date: 23 July 2026

Published Date: 2 August 2026

Abstract

Youth unemployment is a critical driver of rising crime rates in Galkayo, Mudug, Somalia, where economic instability and systemic barriers perpetuate cycles of poverty and insecurity. This mixed methods study, conducted in 2025, examines the socioeconomic dynamics linking unemployment to criminal behavior among youth aged 15-35. Drawing on surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with 108 respondents- including unemployed youth, policymakers, law enforcement officers, and community leaders- the research reveals alarming trends: 88.1% of unemployed youth admitted considering illegal activities, while 57.1% knew someone involved in crime due to joblessness. Drug related crimes (41.18%) and gang violence (23.53%) dominated the crime landscape, fueled by prolonged unemployment (64.3% jobless for over a year) and systemic challenges like corruption (47.6%) and scarce formal opportunities. Stakeholders emphasized institutional failures, with 70.37% of policymakers criticizing inadequate government efforts. Community driven solutions emerged as vital, with 98.1% advocating entrepreneurship and rehabilitation programs receiving strong support (91.7%). The study concludes that sustainable interventions require multi-sectoral collaboration to break the unemployment crime cycle and foster stability in fragile urban contexts.

Keywords: Youth unemployment, Crime rates, Galkayo Somalia, Socioeconomic factors, Policy interventions.

1. Introduction

Youth unemployment is a major socioeconomic challenge that affects economic growth, social stability, and public security worldwide. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024), young people continue to experience significantly higher unemployment rates than adults, increasing their vulnerability to poverty, social exclusion, and criminal activities. In fragile and conflict-affected

countries such as Somalia, prolonged unemployment has been associated with rising levels of theft, drug-related offenses, gang violence, and insecurity (UNDP, 2024; Sema, 2019; World Bank, 2024).

Galkayo, one of Somalia's largest commercial cities, faces persistent youth unemployment due to limited employment opportunities, weak governance, inadequate investment, and rapid population growth.

These challenges have contributed to increasing crime rates, particularly among unemployed youth. Criminological theories, including Strain Theory and Rational Choice Theory, suggest that economic deprivation and limited legitimate opportunities may encourage some individuals to engage in criminal behavior (Cornish & Clarke, 1986; Merton, 1938; Rashid and Islam, 2020).

Although previous studies have established a relationship between unemployment and crime, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on Galkayo, Mudug Region. This study therefore examines the impact of youth unemployment on crime rates in Galkayo by exploring the socioeconomic factors contributing to unemployment, assessing its relationship with criminal behavior, and providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and development partners.

Background

Economic instability in Somalia has intensified youth unemployment, with limited formal employment opportunities, inadequate education, and corruption excluding many young people from the labor market (Abdullahi, 2021; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022). In Galkayo, unemployment has contributed to increased theft, drug trafficking, and gang violence, while extremist groups continue to exploit unemployed youth for recruitment (Ahmed, 2023; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021).

2. Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design with a mixed methods approach. Data was collected from 108 participants across key stakeholder groups using questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. The data was analyzed using SPSS for quantitative trends and thematic coding for qualitative insights

Research Design

A mixed methods approach combined surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 108 purposively sampled respondents in Galkayo (2025).

Data Collection

- Quantitative: Structured questionnaires assessed employment status, crime exposure, and policy perceptions.
- Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews explored lived experiences and solution frameworks.

Analytical Approach

- SPSS 20.0 facilitated descriptive statistics; thematic analysis interpreted qualitative insights.

3. Results and Discussion

Most respondents were youth (38.9%), males (82.4%), and university graduates (64.8%). Despite high education levels, job access remained limited. 88.1% of unemployed youth considered illegal activity, and 57.1% knew someone involved in crime due to lack of work. Most common crimes were drug related offenses (41.18%) and gang violence (23.53%). Law enforcement officers cited corruption and weak judicial systems as barriers. Policymakers acknowledged limited government efforts. NGOs emphasized the need for entrepreneurship support.

Driving Factors

- Barriers to Employment: Lack of opportunities (66.7%), corruption (47.6%).
- Survival Strategies: Criminal activities (9.5%), family support (64.3%).
- Skills Mismatch: High education levels did not guarantee employment.

Stakeholder Perspectives

- Government Failure: 70.37% deemed state efforts insufficient.
- Solutions Advocated: Vocational training (66.67%), public works (77.78%).

Theoretical Implications

Findings align with-

- Strain Theory: Economic deprivation pushes youth toward crime.
- Rational Choice Theory: Low risk, high reward crimes attract jobless youth.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Unemployment in Galkayo is a major catalyst for crime. To address it, the study recommends expanding vocational training, encouraging youth entrepre-

neurship, strengthening job creation efforts, and improving government transparency. Public private partnerships and rehabilitation programs must also be integrated into policing strategies. Despite rising crime, empirical studies quantifying the unemployment crime nexus in Galkayo remain scarce. This research fills that gap by analyzing primary data from diverse stakeholders to inform targeted interventions.

5. Ethical Clearance

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Green Hope University, Mogadishu, Somalia, before the commencement of data collection. Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to their involvement in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and advised of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. All data were used solely for academic research purposes and handled in accordance with the ethical principles for research involving human participants as outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) and the International Ethical Guidelines for Health-related Research Involving Humans (Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences [CIOMS], 2021).

6. Author Contributions

M.H.F.: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, formal analysis, writing-original draft preparation, visualization, and project administration; A.B.F.: Methodology, literature review, data validation, writing-review and editing; A.A.A.: Investigation, data curation, validation, and writing-review and editing; M.A.M.: Supervision, conceptual guidance, critical revision of the manuscript, and final approval of the version to be published. All authors read and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

7. Acknowledgment

The authors sincerely thank all respondents, community leaders, law enforcement officers, and

Green Hope University for their valuable support and cooperation during this study.

8. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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Citation: Farah MH, Farah AB, Awil AA, Mohamoud MA. (2026). The impact of youth unemployment on crime rates in Galkayo, Mudug, Somalia. *Am. J. Pure Appl. Sci.*, **8**(4), 529-532.
<https://doi.org/10.34104/ajpab.026.05290532>

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