

## **EXPLORATION OF CYBERCRIME AMONG SOME SELECTED NIGERIAN YOUTHS**

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### **Abstract**

The proliferation of digital technology, and the convergence of computing and communication devices, has transformed the way in which we socialise and do business. While overwhelmingly positive, there has also been a dark side to these developments. Proving the maxim that crime follows opportunity, virtually every advance has been accompanied by a corresponding niche to be exploited for criminal purposes. The purpose of this study was to explain the trend of cybercrime among youths in South-west, Nigeria. The study adopted cross sectional survey design with a sample size of two thousand eight hundred and ninety-three (2893) randomly selected adolescents from South-West, Nigeria took part in the study. A self-developed instrument was used for collection of data. Upon consent, participants were asked to complete the "Intent Towards Internet Fraud Scale (ITIFS). Findings revealed that no significant gender difference in intent towards cybercrimes among the youths ( $t\text{-cal.} = 1.661 < t\text{-crit.} = 1.96, P < 0.05$ ), while significant age difference ( $t\text{-cal.} = 8.083 > t\text{-crit.} = 1.96, P < 0.05$ ). Also, the results further revealed that 27.1% of the variance in the intent to engaged in cybercrime among the youths was accounted for by level of education. It was concluded that gender, age, level of education are predictive factors for cybercrime among youths, while both formal and informal education should be used as a tool to guide the youths aright.

**Key words:** Cybercrime, youths, Nigeria

### **INTRODUCTION**

The emergence of modern technology has brought about advancement in globalization. This has caused many countries to develop and expand their communication network which enables a faster and easier networking and information exchanges. Though, the importance of advancement in technology is not far-fetched as it is now used in our everyday activities. The usage of computers, and most importantly, the internet is now so common that in homes where computers cannot be afforded, youths desperately resort to using cyber cafés just to have a feel of the internet. Recently, Egbe, Ojewunmi, and Olasupo, (2013) noted that the use of the internet has also been

extended to use on the mobile phone i.e. global system of mobile communication. Surfing the web can be done almost anywhere that mobile phones can reach.

Duah (2013) in a meta-analysis study reported a global data that in the year 2011 alone, there were over 2 billion internet users and over 5 billion mobile phone connections worldwide 2 and over 294 billion emails and 5 billion phone messages are exchanged every day. Most of the world's population now depend on constant access to the internet for survival. Due to the over dependence on digital networks by businesses, societies and governments, criminals on the other hand have also come to the realization of changing their ways of operations.

Cybercrime as an epidemic is a borderless menace. It cuts across faiths, religious denominations and political systems and affects both young and old, male and female alike. As noted by Odo and Odo (2015) technological advancement in cyber space has made computer an integral component in national development. Criminal activities within the cyberspace are now on a global scale. Matthew (2010) sees cybercrime as any form of crime propagated by any individual through the use of a computer and internet. Debarati and Jaishankar (2011) view cybercrimes as offences that are committed against individuals or groups of individuals with a criminal motive to intentionally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly or indirectly, using modern telecommunication networks such as Internet (Chat rooms, emails, notice boards and groups), and mobile phones (SMS/MMS).

All over the world today, so people has embraced cyber-crime as a means of livelihood at the expense of others physical and mental wellbeing. Tade and Aliyu (2011) affirmed that many have become rich through cybercrime while some others have been caught by the law. Folorunso, Vincent, Adekoyo and Ogunde,(2010) conducted a study at university of Agriculture Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria on the 'Diffusion of Innovation in social Networking sites among university students.' One of the major findings of the study shows that the respondents had attempted to try social networking sites before adopting its uses. Thus, the users of the sites often examine it and probably know the gratifications they could derive from the media before accepting to use any of them Folorunso, et al, (2010).

Chawki (2005) states that educating young people would help decrease the risk of students in cyberspace. Asokhia (2010) finds that the level of education contributes significant differences to the students' perceptions of cybercrime. Knowledge helps people to be more aware on cybercrime (Levin *et al.*, 2008). The number of cybercrime victims could be reduced by introducing proper awareness activities such as training programs, sufficient resource for compliance, develop policies & regulations and sufficient protection of personal information (Choi, 2008; Levin *et al.*, 2008; Chawki, 2005; Bougaardt and Kyobe, 2011).

Odo & Odo (2015) investigated the extent of involvement in Cybercrime activities among students' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state of Nigeria. Their findings showed that students of higher institutions in Enugu state are involved in cybercrime. It also showed that students' involvement in cybercrime is dependent on gender and Institution type.

Bamatraf and Al Anouti (2014) investigated the level of knowledge about cybercrimes among young adults within the United Arab Emirates, and found a statistical significant difference in the level of knowledge in terms of student major but

not gender. Students specializing in Computer Information Technology (accounting for 21.5% of the participants) had the highest levels of knowledge as compared to all other students from other majors. This was in concordance with another finding in the study which revealed a strong correlation between the level of knowledge and the use of the internet/digital technology. Participants with heavy use of internet technology had a high level of knowledge about cybercrimes.

In Nigeria today, cybercrimes are performed by people of all ages ranging from young to old, but in most instances the young (Olaide & Adewole, 2004, Ayodele & Wilson, 2014). Several youths engage in cybercrime with the aim of emerging as the best hacker, or as a profit making venture since the tools for hacking in our modern world has become affordable by many (Hassan, David-Lass, & Makinde, 2012). Mbaskei (2008) in his publication on "Cybercrimes: Effect on Youth Development" noted that secret agents of the UPS (United Parcel Service) smashed a record scam with a face value of \$2.1billion (about N252 billion) in Lagos. The interception was done within three months. Some of the instruments uncovered by the UPS were documents like Wal – Mart Money orders, Bank of America cheques, U.S postal service cheques and American Express traveler's cheques. This record scam is made possible as a result of the large number of young people who now see Cybercrimes or internet fraud as a source of livelihood. This study tends to look at Cybercrime among Nigerian youths.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to assess the trend of cybercrime among youths in South-west, Nigeria. This will help the governments of Nigeria who have displayed a burning desire to curb cybercrime as it poses great danger to its citizens by drastically reducing the nation's capacity for rapid development. And also help guidance counsellors to change the orientation of youths' fraudulent acts in totality. Therefore, this study is crucial to the understanding of the factors predicting the intent to involve in cybercrime among Nigerian youth.

### **Hypotheses**

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested at the .05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the Nigerian youths' engagement in cybercrime based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the Nigerian youths' engagement in cybercrime based on demographic factors age.
3. There is no significant difference in the Nigerian youths' engagement in cybercrime based on education level.

### **Methodology**

**Design:** This study adopted a survey research design of an ex-post-facto type in which questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents on the variables under study.

**Population/Sample Size:** The sample for this study consisted of 2,893 adolescents drawn from three out of the six States in South-west Nigeria. The States are Lagos, Ogun and Oyo. The sample was selected through stratified and purposeful random sampling techniques. Schools and computer training centres/cyber cafe are the major study area of this study in order to have an armful number of participants. The random nature of the sampling procedure ensured that the sample selected is a true representative of the population.

**Sampling Procedure:** One thousand questionnaires were given out to each of the three State. In this quantitative study, the research made use of some proctors in the administration of the questionnaires. Out of the 3000 questionnaires sent out, 103 were either not returned or not properly filled, which invalidate them for the purpose of the study. It can however, be said that there was (2893) 96.4% return rate of questionnaire administration.

**Instrumentation:** The biographical data information sheet was used to collect information on the participants' gender (male or female), age in years, and field of study. Researcher developed questionnaire tagged "Intent Towards Internet Fraud Scale (ITIFS) was used to assess undergraduate computer science students' intent to engaged in cybercrime. The scale consists of 30 items on the use of internet sources for scam activities. The items were answered on a 5-point likert scale ranging from "very likely of me" to "Not very likely of me". The reliability of the ITIFS was ascertained with the use of Guttman split-half coefficient of internal consistency. The result of the analysis yielded a coefficient reliability.81.

**Procedure:** A set of questionnaires for assessing biographical data information, technology use, self-efficacy and students' academic standing questionnaire were administered on the sample through the assistance of two (2) research assistants.

**Data Analysis:** Student t-test and multiple regression analyses were used to analyse the data collected.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted on data to determine the frequency, means and motives for accessing the websites. The study variables was analysed with the descriptive statistics as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Adolescents' Usage of Websites to Perpetuate Fraud**

S/N	Variable	Category N=(2893)	Frequency	%
1	Sex	a. Male	1964	67.9
		b. Female	929	32.1
2	Age	a. Under 18years	1116	38.6
		b. 18years above	1777	61.4
3	Educational Status	a. Still in Primary School	312	10.8
		b. Still in Secondary School	710	24.5
		c. Secondary School Leaver	870	30.1
		d. Higher Education	1001	34.6
4	Frequency of Web Usage	a. Hardly Ever	Nil	Nil
		b. Daily	2771	95.8
		c. Two to three times/Week	109	3.8
		d. Two to five times/ month	13	0.4

The result of the analysis of the demographic variables of the study revealed that male respondents were 1964 representing 67.9% while female respondents were 929 (32.1%). Respondents less than 18years of age were 1116 (38.6%) while those above the ages of 18 years were 1777 (61.4%). The educational status of the respondents were grouped into two four namely primary (10.8%), secondary school (24.5%), secondary school leaver (30.1) while the highly educated were 1001 (34.6%). Statistics on the frequency of web usage show that 2771 (95.8%) respondents make use of the web daily to perpetuates fraud; 109 (3.8%) about two to three times per week; while 13 (0.4%) respondents make use of the web two to five times per month.

**Table 2: T-test analysis showing difference between male and female adolescents' intent to engaged in cybercrime**

Gender	N	X	SD	Mean diff.	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	P
Male	1964	67.465	14.876	.552	2891	1.661	1.960	N.S
Female	929	66.913	15.021					

*Not Significant at 0.05 alpha level*

The results revealed that the obtained value of t is 1.661 for the gender which is less than the t- critical value of 1.96 at 2891 degree of freedom and  $p < 0.05$ . This implies that there is no significant gender difference in the Nigerian youths' engagement in cybercrime. Further analysis of the result based on the respondents' mean scores reveal that male adolescents with average mean score of 67.465 significantly engage more in cybercrime than their female counterparts with mean score of 66.913. The implication of this is that male youths to a degree have higher intention of involving cybercrime compared to their female counterpart. However, the hypothesis that stated there is no significant difference in the Nigerian youths' engagement in cybercrime based gender was sustained.

The outcome of this findings on the basis of youths engagement on cybercrime lend credence to the findings of Odo and Odo (2015) who investigated the extent of involvement in Cybercrime activities among students' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state of Nigeria and showed that students of higher institutions in Enugu state are involved in cybercrime. However, this finding contradicts the findings of Bamatraf and Al Anouti (2014) in their investigation of the level of knowledge about cybercrimes among young adults within the United Arab Emirates, and found no statistical significant gender difference.

**Table 3: T-test analysis showing difference adolescents' intent to engaged in cybercrime based on age**

Gender	N	X	SD	Mean diff.	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	P
Under 18years	1116	64.917	17.600	6.369	2891	8.083	1.960	Significant
18years above	1777	71.286	14.114					

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level*

The results revealed that the obtained value of t is 8.083 for the age which is higher than the t- critical value of 1.96 at 2891 degree of freedom and  $p < 0.05$ . This implies that there is a significant age difference in adolescents' engagement in cybercrime. Further analysis of the result based on the respondents' mean scores reveal that adolescents of 18 years and above with average mean score of 71.286 significantly engage more in cybercrime than their counterparts aged less than 18 years with mean score of 64.917.

The implication of this result revealed that as these youths grow, they either gained more knowledge on computer applications and logics that propelled their intent to engaged in cybercrime the more or reduced it. This is in tandem with the previous findings that most of the criminal activities being experienced are perpetuated by the youths regardless the age (Olaide & Adewole, 2004; Ayodele & Wilson, 2014).

**Table 4: Model summary of the multiple regression analysis between respondents' level of education and intent to engaged in cybercrime**

Variable	Source of variation	Sum of Square	Df	Means of Square	F	Sig.
<b>Level of Education</b>	Regression	57.858	3	19.286		
	Residual	5827.113	2889	2.017	9.562	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Total	5884.971	2892			

*Adjusted R Square = .271, Std. Error of the Estimate = 10.321*

The research hypothesis which stated that "There is no significant difference in the Nigerian youths' engagement in cybercrime based on education level" showed that level of education ( $F_{(3, 2892)} = 9.562$ ;  $P < .05$ ) to a great extent will significantly influence the intent to engaged in cybercrime by the youths. The results further revealed that 27.1% of the variance in the intent to engage in cybercrime among the youths was

accounted for by level of education. This corroborates by the findings of Asokhia (2010) that the level of education contributes significant differences to the students' perceptions of cybercrime. Knowledge helps people to be more aware on cybercrime (Levin *et al.*, 2008).

### **Recommendations**

As a result of this investigation and review of the literature, several recommendations are encouraged. Results indicated that gender, age, level of education predicted cybercrime among youths. As a counsellor, both formal and informal education should be used as a tool to guide the youths aright. School counselors must play a vital role in the development and delivery of psychosocial based intervention for adolescents aimed at enhancing positive behaviour. Therefore, a collaborative effort by the school counselors, along with classroom teachers and other student support staff members may be the most effective intervention delivery mode. A team approach would encourage stakeholders from all disciplines within the school to take an active role in the implementation of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral techniques to re-orientate the youths.

As a matter of urgency, government and other related stakeholder and other key player of the Nigerian Economy should try and create more job opportunities for our young graduates in order to alleviate their involvement in negative societal behavior. A better economic system, creation of opportunities for the young Nigerian, would also make a lot differences. Since it was observed that majority of the respondents perceived the involvement of young people in cybercrime as a result of economic condition.

### **Conclusion**

Technological shift from analogue to digital has immensely changed some people's ways of life and how they manage their lives. It is something that cannot be wished away. Many teenagers have joined and many more are still joining Networking Sites (NS) for one thing or the other. However, the embracement of the internet has come with a lot of mixed feelings despite its numerous advantages to the people. Cybercrime is the use of computer/internet as an instrument to further illegal ends such as committing hacking, credit card fraud, phishing, pornography, software piracy and theft of intellectual property, stealing identities, unauthorized access, cloning of website amongst others.

This study concludes that gender, age and level of education significantly influenced the level at which youths get involved in cybercrime. This study found that both male and female youths were prone to the involvement of cybercrime. The study revealed a significant age difference in the willingness and propensity to involve in cybercrime, while educational level was equally found to be a predictive factor.

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