

SOCIOECONOMIC PREDICTORS OF CYBERCRIME AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The Nigerian society today is bedeviled by cybercrimes known in the local parlance as Yahoo Yahoo. Many people are losing their hard-earned fortune to this menace while the country is continually facing image damage in the comity of nations. It is necessary therefore to examine the causes of cybercrimes among Nigerian youths in order to proffer solutions. This study is an investigation into some socioeconomic predictors of cybercrimes among Nigerian youths in Ibadan Metropolis. Descriptive research design of survey type was adopted. Participants were one hundred and fifty youths within the age range of 18-35 selected through convenience sampling. Four hypotheses guided the study. Socioeconomic Predictors of Cybercrime Questionnaire (SOPOC-Q) designed and validated by the researcher was used to collect data for the study. Data collected were subjected to analysis using frequency count, percentage and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results shows that internet [$F_{(1,148)}=9.617$; $p<.002$] is the most significant contributor to cybercrime followed by peer influence [$F_{(1,148)}=1.768$; $p<.186$] and unemployment [$F_{(1,148)}=1.829$; $p<.176$] were significant contributors to cybercrime among the participants while economic hardship [$F_{(1,148)}=.66$; $p<.79$] was not significant. Stringent measures to curtail the activities of internet fraudsters, early orientation of children on the need to avoid bad and wayward peers and the need for government and non-governmental organization to provide jobs for unemployed individuals were recommended.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Nigerian youths, socioeconomic predictors, yahoo-yahoo.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigeria social and conventional media nowadays are awash with reports of cyber frauds. The rate of cyber fraud these days especially amongst the youths is so alarming. The cyber space has become insecure as a result, academic, financial, security institutions and even individuals have resorted to the use of passwords and security codes to secure their websites, portal and accounts. According to Alfakoro, Yushau, Ismaila and Ayodeji (2022) the social media aid the control of fraudulent practices and at the same time increases mechanisms for supporting governance. However, some Nigerian youths actively use the social media to practice one form of internet fraud or the cybercrime, otherwise known in the Nigerian parlance as *Yahoo Yahoo*. Bello (2017) noted that cybercrime is a fast growing crime that has continued unabated with the day-to-day involvement of many youths. These youths, according to Bello (2017), are obsessed with the get- rich-quick syndrome. These youths who are called *Yahoo* boys and girls are so desperate that they swindle others of their hard-earned income. They have resorted to using a blend of spiritual elements with internet surfing, in order to enhance victimisation rates on the web (Tade, 2018).

Socioeconomic factors are social and economic factors which may cause or influence cybercrime. Socio factors such as peer influence is likely to have influence on the decision of youths. This is because peer remains a very strong agent of socialization (Sennott & Mollborn, 2017). Peers form social groups and norms to which members are expected to conform. As noted by Jakaykody (2018), majority of adolescents engage in certain activities due to the need for acceptance, curiosity, and peer pressure. Many youths are

doing what their friends are doing, while those not yet doing such, as seriously yearning to be like their peers. Adebayo and Asebiomo (2019) observed that peer pressure contribute to decision-making, action and inaction of youngsters. In Bogani's (2017) view, some youths, especially adolescents do not have access to accurate information, and consequently, resort to friends and family relatives. Several other pieces of research have consistently revealed that peers are a prevailing source of control for adolescents (Sylvia, Frank, Omotosho, & Hagan, 2021).

Unemployment is another societal problem that could be responsible for criminal activities and vices. The study by Igbinedion and Ebomoyi (2017) revealed that inflation and unemployment positively impacted the crime rate, while Adekoya and Razak (2018) showed a negative relationship between the misery index such as unemployment and property crime. Nigeria is faced with the challenges of unemployment among youths – many youths who have graduated from higher institutions of learning are not able to get jobs that can earn them good livelihood. This has led to upsurge in crimes and criminal activities (Adekoya & Razak, 2018). Poor economy which is characterized by economic hardship such as inflation and lack of purchasing power often make lives unbearable. People may take to crime such as stealing and cyber fraud in order to earn living for survival.

Going by the remark of Glickman (2005), the incidence of cybercrime has led to global painting of Nigeria as a major corner stone of cyber fraud among the comity of nations. This is in spite of government efforts at curbing this evil trend in the society, the perpetrators have continued to up their game and remain continually elusive. This is one explanation why cybercrime has become an integral transnational threat since considering that the perpetrators have increasingly developed more boldness and hidden under complex online activities.

Statement of the Problem

The greedy desire to get rich quick in the face of gross unemployment has pushed the youths into cybercrime and ritual killings. Certainly cyber fraud has become major menaces among Nigerian youths, and continue to affect the image of Nigeria negatively. The incidence of cybercrime which is now reported almost daily in Nigeria has done so much damage to the reputation of Nigeria in the comity of nations. The rate of ritual killing has almost become daily occurrence and calls for serious attention. These two notorious activities must be put under the lens in order to curb further occurrence. In view of these, the researcher is motivated to study the socioeconomic predictors of cybercrime among Nigerian youths in Ibadan Metropolis. This ugly development is capable of scaring investors away from the country. Besides, individuals and institutions are counting their losses due to cybercrime and money ritual on daily basis. The desire to get rich at all cost seems to have become the heartbeat of many youths nowadays. Youths who become rich at tender age via this evil means can become bad influence on other law-abiding youths if these menaces are not curtailed. There is therefore the need to understand the causes of this crimes

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the socioeconomic predictors of cybercrime in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. Other objectives of the study are;

- i. to find out the effect of economic hardship on cybercrime in Ibadan Metropolis.
- ii. to examine the effect of unemployment on cybercrime in Ibadan Metropolis.
- iii. to investigate the effect of peer influence on cybercrime in Ibadan Metropolis.
- iv. to ascertain the effect of the internet on cybercrime in Ibadan Metropolis

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested:

- i. There will be no significant effect of economic hardship on cybercrime among youths in Ibadan Metropolis.



- ii. There will be no significant effect of unemployment on cybercrime among youths in Ibadan Metropolis.
- iii. There will be no significant effect of peer influence on cybercrime among youths in Ibadan Metropolis
- iv. There will be no significant effect of the internet on cybercrime among youths in Ibadan Metropolis

METHOD

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. All youths residing within Ibadan Metropolis were the population.

Sampling Technique

The participants for the study were 150 youths between the ages of 18-35 who are residing in Ibadan Metropolis were randomly selected via convenience sampling techniques.

Data collection tools

Instruments used to collect data is Socioeconomic Predictors of Cybercrime Questionnaire (SOPOC-Q) designed and validated by the investigator. The instrument has two sections: Section A is the biodata of the respondents and Section B is the question items on the subject of study, to which each participant is expected to respond. This section uses four likert- scale (*Strongly Agreed, Agree, Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*). Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Validity and Reliability

The reliability testing and consistency of the instruments tagged Socioeconomic Predictors of Cybercrime Questionnaire (SOPOC-Q) was done using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability coefficient was set at = .74. The instrument, was subjected to face validity by expert in the Department of Special Education and Educational Psychology to establish its suitability, clarity and content validity. Their suggestions and criticisms were incorporated into the final draft.

Analysis of the data

In the analysis of the results, the ANOVA was applied to variables displaying a normal distribution. The statistical significance level of the results was agreed as $p < .05$. By switching to the 25th edition of the statistical application called SPSS, the collected data was prepared for review (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

RESULTS

Findings regarding the participants' socio-demographic data.

Table 1. Participants' socio-demographic data

Sub-variable	n	%
Male	69	46
Female	81	54
Total	150	100
18-24 years	52	34.7
25-31 years	43	28.7
32-35 years	55	36.6
Total	150	100



Table 1 (Continued). Participants’ socio-demographic data

Sub-variable	n	%
Christianity	68	45.4
Islam	74	49.3
Others	8	5.3
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (2022)

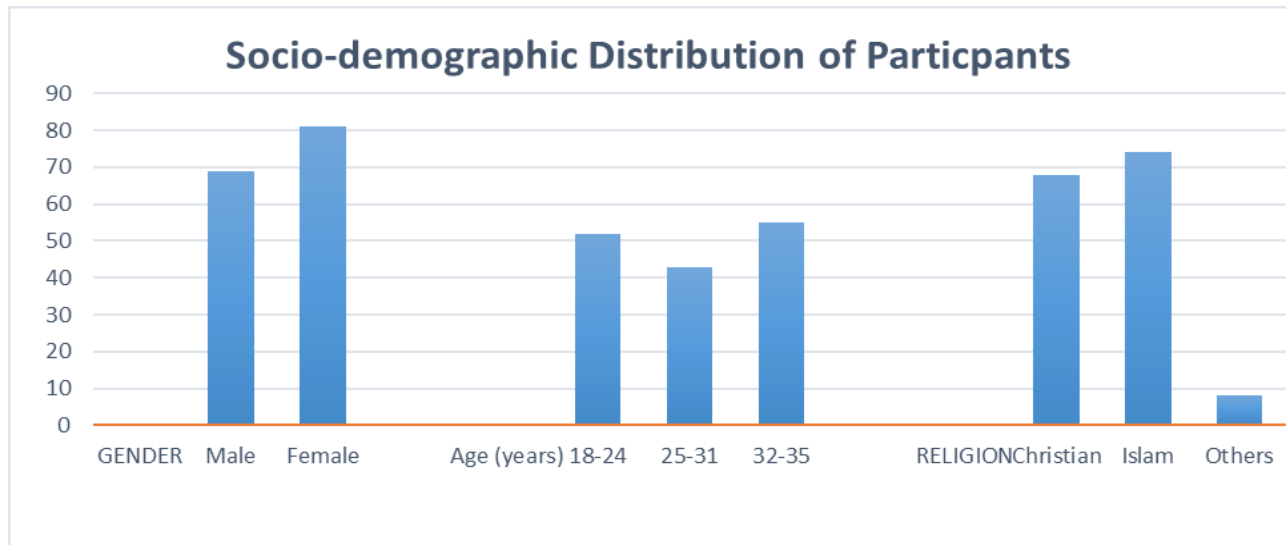


Figure 1. Socio-demographic distribution of participants

Table 1 above and the bar chart show the socio-demographic data of the participants. It shows that the participants were male and female youths within the age range of 18-35 years who are mostly Muslims and Christians.

The Table 2 depicts the statistical analysis of the data collected on the field. The analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the contribution of peer influence to cybercrimes. Find below the model summary of the analysis.

Table 2. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of contribution of peer influence to cybercrimes

MODEL SUMMARY					
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std Error of the Estimate	
1	.109	.012	.005	12.849	

ANOVA					
Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	291.885	1	291.885	1.768	.186 ^b
Residual	24434.275	148	165.095		
Total	4726.160	149			

a. Dependent variable: Cybercrime

b. Predictor: (Constant) Peer Influence

*Significant at .186

Table 2 above which has two parts which shows the model summary and ANOVA. The model summary reveals an R-square (the coefficient of determination) of 0.012. This means the proportion of variance of the dependent variable (cybercrimes) account for 1.2% of the difference in the independent variable (peer influence). The Table 2 further shows the analysis of variance of peer influence on cybercrimes. It shows

that F-ratio (1.768) is greater than the level of significance (.186) i.e. $[F_{(1,148)}=1.768; p<.186]$. Therefore, the null hypotheses is rejected. Peer influence therefore contributed to cybercrime in the study area.

Peers influence contribute in forming and consolidating organized social groups with unwritten norms that members are bound to obey. The need for acceptance, curiosity by peer puts pressure on many youths to tow the line of their friends while those not yet involved yearn for it. (Adebayo and Asebiomo 2019); Sylvia, Frank, Omotosho, & Hagan, 2021).

Table 3. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of contribution of internet to cybercrimes

MODEL SUMMARY					
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std Error of the Estimate	
1	.247 ^a	.061	.055	12.525	
ANOVA					
Source Of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1508.621	1	1508.621	9.617	.002 ^b
Residual	23217.539	148	156.875		
Total	24726.160	149			

a. Dependent variable: Cybercrime

b. Predictor: (Constant) Internet

*Significant at .002

Table 3 above has two parts which show the model summary and ANOVA. The model summary reveals an R-square (i.e. the coefficient of determination) of .061. This means the proportion of variance of the dependent variable (cybercrime) account for 6.1% of the difference in the independent variable (internet). The table further shows the analysis of variance of peer influence on cybercrimes. It shows that F-ratio (19.617) is greater than the level of significance (.002) i.e. $[F_{(1,148)}=19.617; p<.002]$. Therefore, the null hypotheses is rejected. Internet therefore contributed to cybercrimes in the study area.

In spite of governmental efforts at curbing cybercrime, there has been a repetitive outcry of being swindled. The perpetrators unfortunately, are increasingly developing more boldness as they are constantly perfecting their elusive ability.

Table 4. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of contribution of unemployment to cybercrimes

MODEL SUMMARY					
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std Error of the Estimate	
1	.110 ^a	.012	.006	12.846	
ANOVA					
Source Of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	301.830	1	301.830	1.829	.178 ^b
Residual	24424.330	148	165.029		
Total	24726.160	149			

a. Dependent variable: Cybercrime

b. Predictor: (Constant) Unemployment

*Significant at .178

Table 3 above has two parts which show the model summary and ANOVA. The model summary reveals an R-square (the coefficient of determination) of .021. This means the proportion of variance of the dependent variable (cybercrime) account for 2.1% of the difference in the independent variable (Unemployment). The table further shows the analysis of variance of peer influence on cybercrimes. It shows that F-ratio (1.829) is greater than the level of significance (.178) i.e. $[F_{(1,148)}=1.829; p<.002]$.



Therefore, the null hypotheses is rejected. Therefore, unemployment contributed to cybercrimes in the study area.

Unemployment has proved to be hydra headed societal problem that feeds criminal activities and vices. Adekoya and Razak (2018) in his findings highlights the relationship between unemployment and upsurge in crimes and criminal activities.

Table 5. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of contribution of economic hardship to cybercrimes

MODEL SUMMARY					
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std Error of the Estimate	
1	.021 ^a	.000	-.006	12.923	
ANOVA					
Source Of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	11.104	1	11.104	.066	.797 ^b
Residual	24715.056	148	166.994		
Total	24726.160	149			

a. Dependent variable: Cybercrime

b. Predictor: (Constant) Economic Hardship

*Significant at .797

Table 5 above has two parts which show the model summary and ANOVA. The model summary reveals an R-square (i.e. the coefficient of determination) of .000. This means the there was no variance between the dependent variable (cybercrime) and the independent variable (Economic hardship). The table further shows the analysis of variance of economic hardship on cybercrimes. It shows that F-ratio (0.066) is less than the level of significance (.797) i.e. $[F_{(1,148)}=.066; p<.797]$. Therefore, the null hypotheses is accepted. Therefore, economic hardship did not contribute to cybercrimes in the study area.

Economic hardship may force youths into cyber fraud for survival. Bello (2017), concluded that obsession over get-rich-quick syndrome pushes these youths (*Yahoo* boys and girls) to a point of desperacy that they see swindling others a way out in order to survive.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

The researcher investigated the effects of socioeconomic factors on cybercrimes in Ibadan, Oyo State. It was found that peer pressure contributed to cybercrime in the study area. This finding is consistence with the finding of Osuntuyi, Ireymi and Aluko (2021) as well as Esiri (2016) who reported that youths who engage in cybercrimes are often influence by their peers. Behaviour that does not conform to the cultural norms or laws of a given society at a particular time and is oftentimes negatively sanctioned, is referred to as criminal. This criminal behaviour, Esiri (2016) stated is sometimes influenced by peer pressure because of lack of proper parental care or upbringing.

The internet was also found to be a significant contributor to cybercrime in the study area. This finding is consistent with Oloworekende (2019) who reported that e various social media platforms have also help in sustaining the practice of cyber fraud as most of online personalities also known as online influencer’s are in one way or the other linked to the lifestyle of fraud. Flaunting their ill-gotten wealth over the various social media platforms and reiterating the notion of hard work which is mostly referred to as fraud or scamming is used to mount pressure on most youth massively to engage in all forms of cyber fraud so as to attain financial success in the face of economic hardship. Moreover, Ibrahim (2016) remarked that access to the internet allows youths to hack into other people’s account, disguise, and dupe unsuspecting people, perpetrate and perpetuate internet fraud,



Unemployment was also found to be a significant contributor of cybercrime in the study area. This aligns with the findings of Osuntuyi, Ireymi and Aluko (2021) who reported that inability to get a means of livelihood contribute to cybercrime. According to Ibrahim (2019), evidence has shown that people perpetrate a significant proportion of these general crimes in their youthful age mostly because they have no job. Given the fact that higher institutions in the country continue to churn out graduates with no corresponding means of employment whatsoever, the number of unemployed individuals has continued to go higher with over 20 million unemployed persons in the country (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020; Kazeem, 2020). Since the rate at which jobs are provided does not commensurate the number of labour force in the country individuals whose quest is to make a living at all cost end up in illicit activities when there are no meaningful avenues of making a living or improving their livelihood (Kazeem, 2020).

Lastly, it was found that economic hardship does not contribute to cybercrime in the study area. This finding however negate that of Lawanson and Afolabi (2020) who reported that factors responsible socio-economic situation such as economic hardship coupled with massive unemployment and educational mismatch between youths seeking employment and the labour market requirements. Economic hardship being faced by an average citizen which has exerted pressure on the way of life is a direct cause of cybercrimes such as internet frauds, *Yahoo Yahoo*, and banking fraud that is now common among youths (Amin, 2019).

Conclusion

Peer influence, the internet and unemployment are contributors to cybercrimes in the study area. Economic hardship does not have effect on cybercrime in the study area.

Suggestions

Based on the findings in the study, the following recommendations are necessary:

- i. There should be more stringent internet measures aimed at curtaining the activities of cyber fraudsters. Parents should warn and caution their children early on the need to avoid abuse and misuse of the internet.
- ii. Government and private organization should intensify efforts to provide jobs for the teeming unemployed youths in Nigeria. This will reduce the incidence of internet frauds among youths.
- iii. Individuals should be adequately oriented on the negative effect of peers. This can be done through the concerted efforts of parents, schools, religious organization and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Ethics

As the author of this study, I declare that I collected data in accordance with ethical rules during the research process and acted in accordance with all ethical rules

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