

Religious and Socio-economic Implications of Cyber Crime among Awka Youths

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Abstract

Cyber has been remarkably accentuated by many scholars but lately, it has turned out to be a tool of eminent danger. It is committed by criminals who make use of computer as a tool and the internet as a means of connection in order to reach a variety of objectives such as illegal downloading of music files and films, piracy, spam mailing, access to the account details of their victims and likes. In Nigeria, there is the scourge of internet fraudsters known as cyber boys, which have swindled many unsuspecting victims their hard-earned resources. Interestingly, the teeming youth population are the major players when it comes to this societal menace. Despite various efforts being put in place by the government to forestall the activities of these cyber crime youths, the propagators have sought other avenues to continue to be relevant in their nectarous acts. Broadly, the study was anchored on qualitative research design. Specifically, the study adopted explanatory research design that is based on interviews, logic, rigorous thinking, accessibility to sufficient extant evidences and alternative considerations both in the formulation of research propositions and analysis of generated data which is at the nominal and ordinal levels. It provided the researchers with a structured plan and sources for answering the questions posed in the study. The study traced the trend that led to the engagement of youths in cyber crime; its implication to the sustainable development of Awka. The work therefore recommends the need for social media platforms to regulate the activities of youths via online checkmate and track down those cyber fraudsters.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Implications, Religious, Socio-economic, Youths.

Introduction

Right from creation, human beings have always craved for things, their desires at times appears insatiable. Due to man's unquenchable quest for riches and better life, the tendency to commit criminal acts is certain. No matter how difficult the circumstances are he tries to tamper with technology devices, and burglarizes with smart move, until he is caught in the act. Cyber world has not found itself above the ingenuity of clever and dishonest minds; based on the advancement in science and technology, youths have engaged themselves in

exploring and using cyber technologies in pursuit of a better life. More so, the on-going hardship in Nigeria, due to hike in petroleum pump-prize and other essential commodities, the economic instability and inflation resulting from government policies that have negative influence on the poor masses, the tendency to commit criminal acts is certain, of which cybercrime is just one.

Take for example; at No 7 Isaiah Moriah close behind Kwata express road Awka, Anambra State, on Easter Sunday morning being 1st April, 2024. Anti-Crime Squad Security personnel heavily armed with two vehicles surrounded the area and apprehended one Obiadada Okechukwu known as 'Obi White Venza' for indulging in cybercrime. He was apprehended, seized his car, laptops, phones, and other valuables. Till date, he is still in their custody. When the researchers interviewed one of his street friends, he explained that; Obi Venza duped one white Lady, residing in America the sum of one million dollars. The money was transferred into his account that is how he was caught.

One can see that cyber inventions and its speed have revolutionized every aspect of man's lives in doing businesses both in private and corporate offices, academic environments, government offices and every other sector. The use of computers fascinates and challenges some people, that is why some develop intense fear to use it. This is called 'Cyberphobia. Unfortunately, such people normally fall victims of cyber-crime. To this end, computer has been used to commit crimes, and hacking of computer has become a 'rite of passage' for some teenagers, college students, undergraduates and graduates alike, job seekers and the youths in general both in local and in urban Areas.

Chinamerem Nnadi, 19years old, an undergraduate student of Imo State University (IMSU) was a phone addict, always pressing his phone at all time. One particular day, the researcher heard him discussing with someone on phone, so she followed him closely and discovered that; It was a white Lady from his phone screen. Through their conversation, he claimed to be a Brazilian, while he was a Nigerian. Whenever the deal was successful, all you will hear from him is "Mugu don drop, Mugu don drop" this means (The cyber victim has paid up). So, the researcher called him and advised him to stop but to no avail, instead, he told the researcher that; 'Aunty I'm doing what other youth out there is doing'. I had no order option but to call my husband attention to what was happening around. He called him and threatened to hand him over to the police, if he did not open up to him. Chinamerem, confessed that; There is a fraud code that interprets and translate languages of different countries of the world that, he installed into his phone, especially his iPhone, that a friend of him introduced him to, that was what he used to reached out to his/her victims. After the incidence, the researcher's husband asked him to leave our house that, he cannot condole a fraudster into his house.

So, after the incidence, the researcher began to ask these questions; Why the choice of cyber crime? Why not seek for genuine businesses on-line like; Content creation and its likes, instead of cyber crime? Why joining other youth to do this criminal act, knowing full well the family he came from, together with the consequences attached to such crime? One can see that cybercrime is alarming and worrisome in its spread. The extent of its occurrence in Nigeria is unknown. The dearth or absence of reliable statistics is more worrisome when it is narrowed down to Awka metropolis- a problem common with the Nigerian state. One reason for this trend is that many youths, see cybercrime as the fastest means to get rich quick through the creation of technological devices, crime-prone platforms or even the exploration of existing technological devices and its advancement. Thus, old fashion computers have given way to the new and more sophisticated versions. Today, the use of smart phones, laptops, and other electronic gadgets has added a more dynamic dimension to it. It has made communications and disseminations of information very easy and Awka youths are not left out in the global match to fully maximize the benefits of the internet. Since the internet appears to make life easy, every youth now wants to make it overnight, and live in luxury. Thus, they spend time in the internet- browsing, chatting, 'face-booking', 'instagraming', 'whatsapping' and a whole lot of other activities which enables organizations as well as individuals to engage in communications electronically, assists in the conduct of businesses; share and access already stored information.

Thus, the World Wide Web (www) of the internet system is the most widely used information channels ever (Laukkanen, 2007). Advancement recorded so far in technologies, especially those related to communications and information are attracting attention in business transactions; in schools, public and private sector (Lichtenstein and Willianson, 2006). Consequently, the adoption of the internet and internet provider services in the developed and developing world motivates the youths of the 21st century to consolidate and reach out to millions of people out there who invariably become victims of cybercrimes. Cybercrime is not a new breed of enterprise among the youth. It is on-going and typically involves the use of computers to illegally take possession of information, resources, or funds to enrich oneself. Youths use emerging forms of technology to commit criminal acts. In other instances, it is used illegally in copying and sale of computer soft wares, hacking, fraud and theft that runs in billions of dollars each year leading to bankruptcy of some companies and outright closure of some others (Sidden, 2005). For instance, Oladunmade (2023), reported that the Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) Nigeria's Momo, recorded N10billion loss in 2023 due to unauthorized transfers by cyber hackers. This loss was caused by system glitches by 'cyber crime boys'. These glitches resulted in the loss of data, network break down and poor communications that created the opportunities for other cybercrimes to be committed.

Cybercrimes have lasting effects on its victims. Victims can be traumatized, some develop sudden rise in their blood pressure, some end up closing all their accounts, refusing to help anyone in need while some even die as a result high blood pressure. A colleague of the researcher in the office once narrated an experience her mother had in 2023. She narrated how her aged and sick mother was duped and the whole money in her account withdrawn including the one she held in her hand for medical treatment at Anambra State University Teaching Hospital Amaku, Awka in the name of help. The yahoo boy, pretending to be one of her son's friends, assisted the woman to cross the main road and in the process cast spell on her. This spell made him to hack into her mother bank details and used the opportunity to empty her bank account. The woman became helpless, devastated and full of tears. The trauma and shock led to sudden rise in her mother's blood pressure (BP), if not for God divine intervention that revived her.

Some of the common techniques internet fraudsters use to attract their victims is to create beautiful websites; send false emails; pretend to come/call from a bank or other corporate organizations; requesting personals data that helps them to access their victim's bank details and funds. When they succeed, they leave their victims to count their losses in months or even years. Individuals, groups, corporate bodies, socio-economic and religious establishments, formal and informal organizations and so on, face the risk of cybercrimes both as producers of perpetrators of the crime or as victims of the crime. It is against this backdrop that the present study x-rays the religious and socio-economic implications of cybercrime among youth in Awka metropolis.

Conceptual Clarifications

For the purpose of easy understanding and appreciation of the contents and context of this research work, the following concepts are explained thus;

Youth(s): In this study, the term youth refer to a group of persons that are young usually between their childhood and maturity. It refers to their early period of existence, growth, or development as a young person whether male or female. It covers the period between adolescence and maturity. Specifically, youths refer to persons within the ages of 15 and 34 years. Sociologically, youth denote an interface between childhood and adulthood. Youths in any society are those who have the potentials to stimulate economic growth, social progress and overall national development. This is largely because they are the young, energetic and adventurous members of the society who are characteristically resourceful, optimistic, fearless and bold. In this study, young people and youth are used interchangeably.

Cybercrimes: These are crimes related to the wrong or inappropriate use of computers. It means crimes by means of computers or computer networks such as the internet. In this study, cybercrimes include all illegal act for which someone can be punished by the government, especially: a gross violation of law: a grave offense especially against morality. It is committed by criminals who make use of computer as a tool and the internet as a means of connection in order to reach a variety of objectives such as illegal downloading of music files and films, piracy, spam mailing, access to the account details of their victims and likes. The use of this term leans towards the explanation of Shinder (2002) as cited in Muraina and Muriana (2015). To him, any criminal offense committed using the internet or another computer network against individual or group of individuals with a criminal motive to internationally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly using modern telecommunication networks such as internet and mobile phones is a component of cybercrime.

Types of Cyber Crimes

The Trojan Horse: This is a type of malware virus that is downloaded into a computer disguised as a legitimate program. The delivery method typically sees an attacker, use social engineering to hide malicious code within legitimate software, to try and gain users' system access with their software. It is also a computer that is used to reprogram another for illicit purposes. In one incident, two high school-age computer users reprogrammed the computer at DePaul University, New York, preventing that institution from using its own processing facilities. The youths were convicted of a misdemeanor.

The Salami slice: Here, an employee sets up a dummy account in the company's computerized records. A small amount-even a few pennies-is subtracted from customers' accounts and added to the account of the thief. Even if they detect the loss, customers don't complain because a few cents is an insignificant amount to them. The pennies picked up here and there eventually amount to thousands of dollars.

Super-zapping: Most computer programs used in business have built-in antitheft safeguards. However, employees can use a repair or maintenance program to supersede the antitheft program. Some tinkering with the program is required, but the "super-zapper" is soon able to order the system to issue checks to his or her private account.

The logic bomb: here, a program is secretly attached to the company's computer system. The new program monitors the company's work and waits for a sign of error to appear, some illogic that was designed for the computer to follow. Illogic causes the logic bomb to kick into action and exploit weakness. The way the thief exploits the situation depends on his or her original intent-theft of money or defense secrets, sabotage, or the like. Logic

bombs present a major threat to computer systems, not just because of the damage they themselves can do, but because they provide a technique to facilitate more devastating crimes (Hassan, Lass and Makinde, 2012).

Password Sniffing: Password sniffers are able to monitor all traffic on areas of a network. Crackers have installed them on networks used by systems that they especially want to penetrate, like telephone systems and network providers. Password sniffers are programs that simply collect the first hundred and twenty-eight (128), or more bytes of each network connection on the network that's being monitored. When a user types in a user name and a password as required when using certain common internet services like file transfer protocol (FTP) (which is used to transfer files from one machine to another) or Telnet (which lets the user log in remotely to another machine) the sniffer collects that information (Peter, Kenneth, Lucasz, Tom & Michael, 2006).

Impersonation: An unauthorized person uses the identity of an authorized computer user to access the system. An impersonation attack is a type of targeted phishing attack where a malicious actor pretends to be someone else or other entities to steal sensitive data from unsuspecting employees using social engineering tactics. Hackers attempt to trick the victims into transferring money, giving up sensitive information, or providing business login credentials to leverage cyber-attacks and gain unauthorized access to systems and networks.

Cyber Stalking: Cyber stalking is essentially using the internet to repeatedly harass another person. This harassment could be sexual in nature, or it could have other motivations including anger. People leave a lot of information about themselves online (Acquisti & Gross, 2009). Such information can leave one vulnerable to cyber stalking, a term that essentially refers to using the internet to stalk (to illegally follow and watch somebody) (Lewis, Kaufman and Christakisin, 2005). Whereas content may be offensive in a non-specific way, harassment directs obscenities and derogatory comments at specific individuals focusing for example on gender, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation. This often occurs in chat rooms, through newsgroup, and by sending hate e-mail to interested parties (Nosrati, Hariri & Shakarbeygi, 2013).

Spam: This is the use of electronic messaging systems to send unsolicited bulk messages indiscriminately. While the most widely recognized form of spam is e-mail spam, the term is applied to similar abuses in other media: instant messaging spam, spam in blogs, wiki spam, mobile phone messaging spam, Internet forum spam, junk fax transmissions, television advertising and file sharing network spam and so on. Some of these address harvesting approaches rely on users not reading the fine print of agreements, resulting in them agreeing to send messages indiscriminately to their contacts. This is a common

approach in social networking spam such as that generated by the social networking site (Saul, 2007).

Computer virus: Installing a virus in a program that disrupts or destroys existing programs and networks, causing them to perform the task for which the virus was designed. The virus is then spread from one computer to another when a user sends out an infected by email, through a network, or by sending a disk. (Worms are similar to viruses, but they use computer networks or the Internet to self-replicate and “send themselves” to other users, generally via email, without the aid of the operator). (Heather Jacobson and Rebecca Green, 2002; 272-326). The foregoing provides a clear picture of the various forms of cybercrimes and related jargons that describe the heights and dimensions it has assumed in recent times. It however, failed to succinctly demonstrate the relationship between this crime and economic development especially as it affects Awka metropolis where the present study is situated. This constitutes a gap in the systematic treatment of cybercrime and economic development of Anambra state which the present study seeks to close.

Discourse on Awka Metropolis

Awka, also spelt as Oka is the capital of Anambra State, Nigeria has an estimated population of 301,657 as of the 2006 Nigerian census. The city is located 199.1 kilometers (123.7 mi), by road, directly north of Port Harcourt in the centre of the densely populated Igbo heart land in south east Nigeria. The West-East Federal highway links Lagos, Benin City, Asaba, Onitsha, and Enugu to Awka and several local roads link it to other important towns such as Okpuno, Amasea, Amawbia, Mbaukwu, Umuawulu, Enugwu-Agidi, Ekwulobia, Agulu, Enugwu-Ukwu, Abagana and Nnewi. Strategically, Awka is located midway between two major cities in Northern Igboland, Onitsha and Enugu which has informed its choice as an administrative center for the colonial authorities and today as a base for the Anambra State government. "Awka has a certain kind of aura about it, because it was the place of the blacksmiths that created implements which made agriculture possible." (Achebe 1958).

Awka is one of the oldest settlements in Igboland established at the centre of the Nri civilization which produced the earliest documented bronze works in Sub-Saharan Africa around 800 AD and was the cradle of Igbo civilization. The earliest settlers of Awka were the Ifiteana people which translate into people who sprouted from the earth. They were farmers, hunters, and skilled iron workers who lived on the banks of the Ogwugwu stream in what is now known as Nkwelle ward of Awka. The deity of the Ifiteana was known as Okiika-na-ube or the god pre-eminent with the spear and the Ifiteana were known as Umu-Okanube or “worshippers of Okanube”, which eventually became shortened to Umu-Oka and eventually Oka and its anglicized version "Awka". In ancient times, Awka was

populated by elephants with a section of the town named Ama-enyi and a pond Iyi-Enyi where the elephants used to gather to drink. The elephants were hunted for their prized ivory tusks (okike) which was kept as a symbol to the god Okanube in every Awka home with hunting medicine stored in the hollow of the tusk. Over time, the town became famous for metal working of a high level and its blacksmiths were prized throughout the region for making farming implements, Dane guns and ceremonial items such as Oji (staff of mystical power) and Ngwuagilija (staff of Ozo men).

In pre-colonial days Awka also became famous as the home of the Agbala Oracle a deity that was said to be a daughter of the great Long Juju shrine of Arochukwu. The Agbala Oracle (which Chinua Achebe drew on for inspiration in his book *(Things Fall Apart)* was consulted to resolve disputes far and wide until it was finally destroyed by colonial authorities in the early part of the 20th century. Before the inception of British rule, Awka was governed by titled men known as Ozo and Ndichie who were accomplished individuals in the community. They held general meetings or IzuAwka either at the residence of the oldest man (OtochalAwka) or at a place designated by him. He was the Nne Uzu or master blacksmith, whether he knew the trade or not, for the only master known to Awka people was the master craftsman, the Nne Uzu. In modern times Awka has adapted to the republican system and is currently administered by the Awka South Local Government Area. However, it still preserves traditional systems of governance with the respected Ozo titled men often consulted for village and community issues and a paramount cultural representative, the EzeUzu who is elected by all Ozo titled men by rotation amongst different villages to represent the city at state functions. Awka should not be confused with Awka-Etiti which is a town in Idemili South local government area that is often mistaken for the main capital. Today, Awka is the capital of Anambra state of Nigeria. Slogan: Sires of Smiths

Causes of Cyber Crimes in Awka Metropolis

Socio-Cultural Factors

Social-cultural/economic factors have become crucial in various social discourses. Because they are critical and play major role in the development and functioning of individuals within the society and youth malformation could result in negative social development and extreme situation of violence and crimes because of the characteristics of these factors (Ejike, 2014, Nwagwu, 2009). Some authors believe that people exploit socio-cultural factors to serve their interest, advocating that, this is the reason why violence; criminality all kinds and group interest and conflicts continue to exist (Salawu, 2010; Akpuru-Aja, 2007; Faleti, 2006). Socio-cultural factors are referred to forces found in cultures that have effect on the thoughts, belief, judgment, aspiration and behaviours of individuals. It

comprises of values, parental background, education, gender, age, religion, unemployment and poverty. Rahma and Farhana (2014) believe that it portrays the diversity of factors that influences behaviour and relationship among people. In other words, Socio-cultural factors include conditions, dispositions, and activities premised on the value judgment, which have implication for everyday life in the society (Ajibade & Adenike, 2009; Njoku, 2006). According to Kozenkow (2017), Socio-cultural factors affect the decision of individuals more specifically their attitude, language, materials choices and often linked to other different behavioural aspects like aesthetics, education, economic, politics and material culture. Hence, issues associated with youths' involvement in cyber related crimes Awka metropolis, may not be far-fetched from the influence of socio-cultural factors within the environments they find their selves.

Parental Background and Youths Involvement in Cyber Crimes in Awka

Parental background is a structural characteristic that delineate the functioning of a family and individuals within the cycle (Seyed, 2013). Likes and discriminations among children are often linked to their parental achievement (Khodaei, 2009). According to Lochner&Belley (2008), parental education and income level are positively connected to children's welfare. This suggests that children from well to do socio-economic background parents are likely to be accorded some type of preference or perform better in various facets of life better than those whose parents are average or not. This is the statement one of the parent that the researchers interviewed during their interview section in OkpunoAwka Metropolis.

According to Erikson and Goldthorpe (2002), an individual's social attainment is linked to their parents' social class. This suggests that an individual is rated, based on his or her parental socio-economic background. Alternatively, Bowes, Gintis and Groves (2005) contend that a person's parental socio-economic background plays important roles in his or her development from child to adulthood. Thus, parental socio-economic background tends to be a key factor that influences people's placement in the society. Though family background differs greatly, it is however substantial that parental socio-economic class is important in determining life opportunities. Parent income level influences young people's up-keep and significantly contributes to their status especially in the Nigeria society (Oyetade, 2006). In Nigeria, it is possible to argue that parental socio-economic background, affects the youth's social life, attitude, and quality of moral. This argument could equally translate to the view that youths with poor socio-economic background parents in Awka are more likely to face serious socio-economic strains that could push them into cyber crimes than those with good parental socio-economic background in AwkaAnambra State.

Unemployment and Youths' Involvement in Cyber Crimes in Awka

Unemployment is one of the major canker worm that affect social issues in Awka. It is a deep-seated social problem that affects the development of any economy and impacts negatively on the psychological disposition of its population (Ogun, 2010; Summer, 2010). International Labour Organization Convention (1982) referred as a condition in which one stays without work (meaning that one is not enroll in paid employment or even self-employed, during a particular period of time); that is one is currently available for work but is not forth coming because of unforeseen circumstances and the situation of the economy; and lastly, one who is seeking for work (meaning one who has taken specific action steps to seek paid employment or self-employment in recent times). Ejikeme (2014) opined that unemployment is a function of different variables: weak governance, improper policy formation and implementation; strained economic resources on one hand, and an army of unemployable youths and young school dropped-out and leavers, on the other hand which Awka youth are not exceptional.

In whatever form that unemployment is defined, the major issue of concern is that unemployment and joblessness tend to influence cyber criminality especially among the youth and teenagers in Awka Metropolis. This coincides Ejikeme (2014), who asserted that unemployment has a strong impact on crime occurrence in the State. The quality of available as determined by structure of labour market tends to effect 'employment' and 'crime'. That is why criminal acts among the young adult have been variously linked to high level of youth unemployment (Adebayo, 2013; Ejikeme, 2014, Ozeh&Ohajionu, 2019). There is a perception that unemployment is one of the major driving force that pushes youths into internet crimes. But could this be so, considering the fact that an unemployed person may lack the basic financial resources to acquire the basic facilities required for the internet related crimes such as Smart-Phone, Laptops, Computer gadgets, software and Data, as well as the needed skills for the act? This goes a long way to suggest that the present trend of cyber crime may have progressed beyond what was already known by previous scholars on the theme of internet crime. Hence this present study would unveil this gap by investigating to know if unemployment is still a major factor in the analysis of the current trend dynamics in cyber crimes.

Education and Youths' Involvement in Cyber crimes in Awka

There is an adage that said that; 'education is the key to successes. This means that formal schooling is an important factor that contributes to human capital development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2012) establish that;

education upgrades and improves the general standard of living of a person/people. For this reason, positive and negative social experiences are usually associated with the quality of education in a society (Obi & Obi, 2014). The quality of educational attainment, paved way and determined the success of a person and its economic status quo. (Chude&Chude, 2013) maintained that; ‘education conviction, encourages increased in economic growth. This is further encouraged by the belief that education has the ability to transform human, economic, social, and cultural aspects of human life. But the paradox associated with this belief is that despite its promise; education may equally trigger other negative consequences like cyber crime and other white-collar crimes (Odeleye, 2012; Lawal&Wahab, 2011). Education may translate into society with higher rates of innovation, higher overall productivity and faster introduction of new technology. Those 17youth caught along with MrIkechukwu by EFCC officers at Ukwutnife close IfiteAwka were all graduates. This means that individuals with higher education may develop methods of externalities and high-quality productive capabilities which may result to among others things higher crime rates. This is because the cognitive skills required for informed choices are based on the levels of educational attainment (Odeleye, 2012; UNESCO, 2012).

Get Rich Quick Syndrome

The youths believe in the system of “get rich quick”. This is because majority of them wish to get money quickly. They leave their lectures for money-making ventures, thereby engaged in illicit activities in order to drive the latest ‘Benz car’ and live in affluence. Some will not even wait to graduate, instead they move into cyber crimes believing it is the fastest way to make it, since all their desire is to be like those that have already “made it”. They are not prepared to struggle positively, they think less of legitimate means of money making rather, they want to be like ‘B. Lord, David Do., Flavour and R. Kelly the popular artists in world. Their activity gives credence to Achunike’s (1995) definition of materialism as “wealth or material possessions (the seen, the tangible) rather than deep spiritual matters”. Just like Hornby (2000) defines it as “an act or the tendency to have keen interest in material possessions, physical comforts, than involvement in spiritual values”. The youths today are always fond of aiming at owning very expensive electronic materials like Air condition, refrigerator and high quality advanced phones without putting into consideration the financial status of their parents.

Other causes

Other identifiable causes of delinquent acts include frustration or failures in school, the increased availability of drugs and alcohol, and the growing incidence of child abuse and

child neglect and so on. All these conditions tend to increase the probability of youths committing a criminal act, although a direct causal relationship has not yet been established.

Religious and socio-economic implications of cyber crime among Awka youth

Religious implication of cyber crime

Then on the part of religious implication of cyber criminality among Awka youth which is one of the societal trends of these period, Awka youth believed that; 'the spirit world controls the physical world'. Many Nigerians, like the people before them, believed that the spirit world is the true source of material wealth (Akanle and Adejare, 2018, Ellis, 2016). In particular, many Nigerians believe that no one can succeed in his or her career, whether in crime or legitimate professions, without securing divine blessings, first and foremost, from spiritual beings (Elli 2016; Rosen1989). 'There are certain events in life that hard work or physical strength cannot achieve except one understands and possess some spiritual powers' Notably, some qualitative studies have indicated that the Nigerian cybercriminals use magical powers to defraud victims all over the world which Awka youth are not exceptional (Melvin and Ayotunde2010; Ibrahim2016b). While some of these studies have implicitly observed the spiritual dimension.

In recent years, what is remarkable is that most of these victims are mainly swindled in the context of "love" and "friendship" (Trend Micro and INTERPOL2017). While some researchers hypothesized that the people who are most susceptible to the romance scam are those who describe themselves as seeking out perfect partners or "true" love (i.e., online profiles). This conjecture did not consider the role of charms and magic in romance-scam victimization. Many cybercriminals (Yahoo-Boys) control their "clients" (victims) with various spiritual means, known locally as "African Jazz" (Ajirola2015). Information Nigeria, 2017). Such spiritual means include for example, putting spells on victims' photographs in shrines and communicating with them via the telephone (Information Nigeria2017) through "words-of-power" (Peavy2016), locally known a "do-as-I-say" (Ajirola2015). The do-as-I-say spell or words-of-power include the use of verbal postulations to unlock cosmic forces that can make the spiritual manifest itself in the physical realm (Peavy2016). In this way, spells can be invoked or undone bywords-of-power or oratory postulations, depending on the invokers' intentions. For example, words-of-power could be invoked to enhance or inhibit a person's examination performance (educational-spiritualism), make a person fall in or out of love(love-spiritualism) or help a person recover from illness or become ill (health-spiritualism). Concerning the role of charms and magic in online scam victimization, the narratives of frontline law enforcement officers are revealing. According to Lazarus and Okolorie's (2019:24) study which interviewed 40 Economic and Financial Crimes Commission agents, one of the ritualized

practices used by some Nigerian cybercriminals to manipulate their victims is to put a victim's picture under the laptop [that is] after the spiritualist (native doctor) might have "worked on" the picture (cast a spell on it possibly in his/her shrine). It is then necessary and sufficient for fraudsters to simply place the photograph under the computer while chatting/messaging the victims of fraud. Also, in the words of one respondent, "fraudsters also talk to the [victims'] pictures repeatedly" which represent the words-of-power ("do as I say" rhetoric). A direct quote from one of Melvin and Ayotunde (2010: 369). For example, the incident that took place at Isaiah Moriah close behind Kwata express road Awka, explained how Obiadada Okechukwuswindled and hack the White Lady account in the context of "love" and "friendship" explained it all.

Names of Those Interviewed During the Research Work

S/N	GENDER	AGE	OCCUPATION	AREA	EDUCATION	RELIGION	ETHNICITY
1	Male	18	Student	Okpuno	Igbariam/Unizik	Christian	Igbo
2	Male	18	Student	Amaeyi	Unizik	Christian	Igbo
3	Male	18	Student	Amawbia	Unizik	ATR	Igbo
4	Male	19	Student	Amansea	Unizik	Christian	Igbo
5	Male	19	Job seeker	Ugwuoba	Oko	Christian	Delta
6	Male	20	Student	Okpuno	Igbariam	Christian	Igbo
7	Male	20	Student	Amaenyi	UNN	ATR	Igbo
8	Male	20	Student	Amawbia	IMSU	Christian	Benin
9	Male	20	Apprentice	Agulu	Technical School, Onitsha	Christian	Igbo
10	Male	20	Trader	Ezi-Awka	No Formal Education	Christian	Igbo
11	Male	21	Student	Okpuno	Igbariam	Christian	Igbo
12	Male	21	Student	Amaeyi	Umunze	Christian	Igbo
13	Male	22	Student	Amawbia	Umunze	ATR	Igbo
14	Male	22	Student	Amansea	Unizik	Christian	Igbo
15	Male	23	Job seeker	Ugwuoba	Oko	Christian	Delta
16	Male	24	Student	Okpuno	Igbariam	Christian	Igbo
17	Male	24	Student	Amaenyi	UNN	ATR	Igbo
18	Male	25	Student	Amawbia	Graduate	Christian	Kogi
19	Male	25	Apprentice	Agulu	Technical School, Onitsha	Christian	Igbo
20	Male	27	Trader	Ezi-Awka	No Formal Education	Christian	Igbo

However, the researchers interviewed 20 Yahoo-Boys on the Religious implications of cybercrime in Awka Metropolis while both studies relied on different groups as participants, i.e., parents and Yahoo-Boys, both agreed on the significance of spiritual and magical powers in the discussion of cyber-frauds that emanate from Nigeria Religions that has its implications on Awka Metropolis, 10 Yahoo-Boys commonly not only use spiritual means to increase the economic benefit of their fraudulent activities, but also use them as "spiritual insurance" so that no harm may befall them while carrying out their criminal

activities (e.g., Adebayo 2013; Lazarus and Okolorie 2019). More so the ramifications of a cybercrime attack on a religious institution are not just digital but deeply tangible and can profoundly affect its foundational pillars. Direct financial theft, either from the institution's coffers or its members through deceptive communications can debilitate its operational capacity and hinder its core missions. Concurrently, the very essence of the institution – trust – can suffer a significant blow. News of such breaches can quickly diminish the confidence of members and the broader community in the institution, leading to a challenging and prolonged trust-rebuilding process. Beyond these, the day-to-day operations, encompassing everything from service schedules and event management to vital communication channels, can experience severe disruptions, further magnifying the institution's challenges in the aftermath of an attack. Failing to be proactive in confronting cyber threats can lead to severe repercussions for religious institutions. Without robust cyber security measures, these institutions become easy targets, akin to low-hanging fruit for cybercriminals. Additionally, the erosion of trust members could feel, knowing that their personal information is vulnerable, could lead to a decline in membership and exert substantial fiscal pressure on an institution's resources.

Socio-economic implications

The following are some of the notable effects of cyber-crime

Reduces the Competitive Edge of Organisations in Awka Metropolis

Computer crimes over the years have cost a lot of havoc to individuals, private and public business organization within and outside the country, communities and states thereby causing a lot of financial and physical damage (Das & Nayak, 2013). Due to cybercrime, there has been loss of billions of dollars annually globally speaking, such crimes may threaten a nation's security and financial health, as a company can suffer losses due to computer crime when a hacker steals confidential information and future plans of the company. And he simply sells the information to a competitor company; this will automatically reduce the competitive strength of the company. Take for example early last year, (MTN) tell communication recorded great loss in Awka Metropolis because of network break down caused by internet fraudsters, many people were making calls without charges and if you recharged old MTN used cards it enters as well. Fidelity and Zenith Banks experienced the similar issues earlier this year because of network break down in Awka, these made them to lose many of their customers to other banks.

Loss of life, Time Wastage and Slows Financial Growth

At January 17 2025 earlier this year, EFCC officer Mr Salisu was killed and his colleague wounded by internet fraud Master Ikechukwu at Ifite Awka, in the process of discharging their duties. Many has been killed because of cyber crime in Awka, others committed

suicide, while many in critical health conditions because of Yahoo cyber crimes. Wastage of time is another problem because many IT personals may spend a lot of time on handling, rectifying harmful incidents which may be caused by computer criminals. The time spent should have earned a profit to the organization. One peculiar problem is that, when a hacker enters in an organization and steals confidential information from the company, the people who entrust the company loses their confidence in the company as the company may contains confidential information like credit cards of customers and as the information is stolen, the customer will not trust the company again and will move to someone else who could protect their confidential information (Shehu, 2014).

Slows Production Time and Add to Over-Head Cost

Computer crime reduces the productivity of a company, as a company will take measure to reduce cybercrime, by entering more password or other acts this will take time to do and therefore will affect productivity (Ibikunle & Eweniyi, 2013). This aligns with the idea Das and Nayak, (20113) who averts that want to protect themselves from online thieves have to pull out their wallets to do it. There are costs in identifying risks, building new and safer operating procedures, and buying protective software and hardware. Computer crime will increase the cost of goods and cost of service charges as to stop viruses and malware companies must buy strong security software to reduce the chances of attacks from attacks (Hassan, Lass & Makinde, 2012). The recent tariffs in telecommunications and in banking system in Awka say it all.

Societal Implication of Cyber Crime

- *Financial losses:* In 2021, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) reported losses of over \$6.9 billion. Up Guard estimates that cybercrime will cost \$8 trillion in 2023 and \$10.5 trillion by 2025.
- *Operational disruption:* Cyber attacks can disrupt operations, leading to lost revenue.
- *Reputational damage:* Cyber attacks can significantly tarnish a company's brand equity.
- *Stolen intellectual property:* Cybercrime can steal a company's product designs, technologies, and go-to-market strategies.
- *Increased costs:* Companies must incur costs to protect themselves from online thieves.
- *Strain on law enforcement:* The expanding scope of cyber incidents can strain law enforcement.

- *Strain on technological and human resources:* The expanding scope of cyber incidents can strain technological and human resources.
- *Ruined livelihoods:* Cyber attacks on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can ruin the livelihoods of individual business owners and their employees. As many as 60% of MSMEs go out of business within 6 months of facing a cyber attack.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation can be made:

1. Anambra State domestic laws against cyber crime and other related crimes should be held at high esteems because the laws read as following:

Clause 19: Offences involving the use of religious place for crime

- a. Any person who uses any religious place for the commission or to aid the commission of any crime, commit an offense and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of 6 years with an option of fine of 20 million naira or both.
 - b. Any religious place suspected of being used to commit or aid the commission of any crime may be sealed by the order of the Governor pending the conclusion of investigation.
 - c. If after the conclusion of investigation, there exists a prime facie case of the commission or aiding the commission of any crime in such place, any person found culpable shall be charged to court.
 - d. Where a person is charged to court under this section, the property or place involved shall be sealed, except unsealed by the order of the Governor, remain sealed until the determination of the charge or unless otherwise ordered by the court.
2. There is need for the media (both electronic and print media) and religious bodies to promote honesty, handwork, integrity and good character as qualities that determine the reputation ascribe to a person, so that unnecessary competition for acquisition of wealth will be reduced in Awka cities.
 3. Government should devise instructive materials to promote moral education for the youth in different communities in Awka. Moral education remains an indispensable tool to nation building and development, hence all agents should play key/good role to ensure that all youth participated in the program. There is need for constant public enlightenment through seminars and workshops on cyber crime in order to reduce the number of victimizations in Awka Metropolis.

4. The banking sectors in Awka should not provide personal financial information through phone calls or text messages unless there is a legitimate and assumed reason for that. They should not for instance, throw out old credit cards, drivers license, receipts from ATM among other numerous documents which usually have personal data.
5. There should be adequate technological training of law enforcement agents in forensic department. Nevertheless, in the process of recruiting law enforcement agents, those with computer know-how should be enlisted adequately. It is important and timely to adopt and create new law enforcement agencies that will be saddled to regulate and control certain cyber activities as apprehending cybercriminals becomes difficult due to the complexity in cyber space. They should initiate new ideas to safeguard themselves to avoid future occurrence of untimely death of their officers while discharging their duties.
6. There should be a more proactive approach that will allow law enforcement agencies to track and investigate students involve in cybercrime within and outside the institution in Awka. Besides, most of these students that practice such act can be easily tracked within their hostels in the institutions in Awka communities. School management should be allow to report students detected to be involve in cybercrime as to averts its escalation, because by doing so will reduce the perpetration of cybercrime within the schools in Awka Metropolis. This can only be achieved through effective collaboration between school management and law enforcement agencies in Awka Metropolis.

Conclusion

A lot has been explored about Religious and Socio-economic implication of Cybercrime on Awka Youth. In the light of the study so far, the researcher conclude that cybercrime is a trend and still very rampant among youths or students in Anambra, Nigeria. Considering the facts and figures recorded and has contributed negatively to the society. Though, it cannot be eradicated but can be adequately control if law enforcement agencies and general public were trained on the use of technology as the constraints in confronting them, also the university school authority should join hand in fighting cybercrime by reporting to the authority any student found wanting in this ugly act. Nigeria law enforcement agencies are endowed with certain responsibility in controlling the spread of cybercrime among youths or students in Nigeria, as this will sensitize them to collaborate with other sister agents in controlling cybercrime effectively. They will help in remolding the moral lives of the citizens of the state especially the youths, so as to build an egalitarian Awka Metropolis

where its growth and sustainable development will be highly upheld, and cybercrime will become a history of the past.

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