

Youth's Engagement in Cybercrime (Yahoo-Yahoo) in Owerri Municipal of Imo State Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria has witnessed tremendous and rapid change as a result of the influence of social media, where large proportion of it have led to increased cybercrime and distortion of our value system. In recent time, there is increasing rate of youths' engagement in cybercrime of which the notorious yahoo-yahoo is paramount in the country. This study therefore investigates from the perceptions of youths on the incessant engagement of unscrupulous youths in cybercrime in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria, and the factors that predispose them to engage in this crime. The study posed three research questions, and adopted a mixed method approach, whereby 300 youths selected from Owerri municipal in Imo state were shared questionnaires to fill and submit, and another 10 youths interviewed. About 285 questionnaires were retrieved and used for the analysis. The findings showed that yahoo-yahoo is a type of cybercrime perpetrated with the aid of the internet and social media handles, of which the Facebook app is mostly used. Factors such as youth unemployment/lack of alternative income sources, influence of peer pressure and corrupt friends, and fast-money-making syndrome perpetuate the engagement of youths in cybercrime. The study equally showed that the perpetrators of this cybercrime target their victims through anchor social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Tweeter, of which the Facebook was reportedly mostly used. Possible solution against social media frauds were identified, such as government improving living conditions of youths, employment of youths in gainful jobs, encouragement of privacy encryption of personal information, and more responsiveness of government to improving the cyber security system in Nigeria.

Keywords: cybercrime, yahoo-yahoo, youths, social media, internet, perception

Background of the Study

Nigeria has witnessed tremendous and rapid change through social media where large proportion of this social media feature not only in corrupting the Nigerian value system, but constitutes a big threat to people's financial and privacy security (Ezea, 2017). Online fraud, sexual promiscuity, nudity, pornography, and other obscene materials such as multiple sexual partners which are glorified in social media sites are anti-Nigerian values. The social maladies aggravated by popularity of social media have frustrated the institutionalization of both communal living, sense of decency and proper conduct on one hand, and on the other, creates a disorganized, and grossly fractured family values (Button and Cross, 2017). However, social media cannot be overruled as completely negative. Social media (Internet) has proved useful in reaching a mass audience without spending a lot of time or money, and when used positively, social media has been valued for its ability to enable spread of information that can benefit the society. Despite this benefit, we have to equally understand that in as much as internet and the social media sites can help us reach large numbers of people with minimum effort, this makes it easier for fraudsters to make their messages look real and credible and sometimes hard for ordinary people to tell the difference between fact and fiction (Cornish et al, 2010). For instance, a good investment promotion can easily grab people's interest because fraudsters have carried out a good job researching avenues to attract their attention.

Across the globe, social media has completely changed the way humans interact (Drolet, 2019). Youths, globally and nationally are conceived as the most affected by social media. Studies have found that teenagers and youths benefit from improving communication, social linkages, and technological skills. Social media is really a significant aspect in the world of the youths today. A ground breaking study by Warner (2011) on the effects of social media and internet on youths' health lifestyle in Ghana revealed that most youths have used this method to swindle good sum of money from unsuspecting people.

In general, social media is described like any interactive medium or application which enables people to communicate digitally and could be differentiated from conventional media (e.g., television) by the way that users can both access and produce content. However, people's lives have become increasingly public through social media, the widespread use of the internet has encouraged people to share a variety of personal information online on various social networks. Drolet (2019) opined that 2019 has seen worldwide social media user numbers (especially amongst youths) grow to almost 3.5 billion, with 288 million new users in the past 12 months, pushing the global social media penetration figure to 45% and close to 80% of the U.S. population. The freedom of expression open to the public through the social media have the vicious cycle of moral and cultural decline as characterized by excessive indulgence in pleasure or luxury. The influence of social media phenomenon reflects a strong evident in the grumbling of traditional system and social values amongst youths in the country. The recent use of a slothful slogans amongst youths such as "*education is scam, yahoo-yahoo is the main thing*" can testify this claim.

Before the technological innovation which brought the Internet, the financial fraudsters known as "**419-ners**" that operated in popular cities in Nigeria such as in Lagos and Abuja, were mostly educated or illiterate adult men and women, who specialized in using fax machines to defraud unsuspected foreigners and Nigerians of their hard-earned money (Ezea, 2017). However, in the recent times, the tides have changed. The technological innovations in social media networks have popularized youths in the business of defrauding unsuspected foreigners and Nigerians today. Social media has made most Nigerian youths game players in the waters of financial frauds and cybercrimes in the country today. In Nigerian streets today, many youths are seen driving very expensive cars, building mansions and reveling in luxurious lifestyles which baffle most decent citizens, and which has raised a worrisome thought about the future of the country.

Thus, due to these current facts, this study focusing on youths in Owerri Municipal in Imo state will investigate their perceptions about youths' usage of social media for crime, understand why youths engage in cybercrime (AKA "**yahoo-yahoo**") and to identify other social maladies that can emanate from their use of social media, as well as identify possible solutions to combatting the incessant engagement of youths in cybercrime in the country.

Statement of the Problem

The internet and social media have become a major part of youths' life all over the world. In Nigeria, and particularly Imo State higher institutions, it is very uncommon to find a youth who is not engaged in one form of social media. Nigerians as a people have an identity, a factor that distinguished them from other societies and makes them unique. Before the technological innovation which brought the internet that opened routes for setting up various social media, the way of life associated with Nigerians was remarkably instilled in traditional values and morals that enriched social life and people's life views (Tade and Aliyu, 2011). The virtues of respect for public property, respect for the laws of the land were also common place. Unfortunately, moral values especially amongst the youths in the country have been cornered by the influence of social media (Tade, 2013). These youths unfortunately live in a society where values and ethics are changing very fast. In society such as Nigeria with gross structural inequalities, weak sanctioning system and wide gap between the rich and the poor, there is a tendency for the deprived to reject and embrace illegal means of achieving prescribed goals such as been wealthy in young age. Moreover, the corruption that is looming over the affairs of our so-called leaders, politicians and technocrats in the country has further given the youths more impetus to engage in crime in order to bask in affluence as these corrupt leaders (Ninalowo, 2014).

Social media has also become platform where some scrupulous youths swindle people of their hard-earned money in Nigeria. The globalizing effect of introducing internet to Nigeria did not only advance the state of technology in the country but also birthed social vices such as internet fraud popularly known as **yahoo-yahoo**. Since internet was popularly referred as yahoo at point of introducing the service to Nigeria (Doppelmayr, 2013), youth that engaged in activities relating to the internet were immediately labelled "*yahoo-yahoo-boys*". They are referred to as *boys* because basically male youths engaged in various criminal activities connected to internet usage at this time (Tade and Aliyu, 2011; Tade, 2013;

Ribadu and Olugbodi, 2010). The *yahoo-yahoo-boys* nomenclature is prominent among Nigerian youths and involves defrauding unsuspected foreigners and even rich Nigerians to the tune of millions of dollars and Naira. In most cases, these scrupulous youths are said to dupe unsuspected victims by using fake identities on dating websites claiming they are from United States or working in some other prominent country. They are also said to disguise themselves by claiming to have merchandise to sell or an on-going project to be executed (Okeshola and Adeta, 2013), hence, they request for financial aids from unsuspected Nigerians and foreigners and afterwards defraud them of their hard-earned money. In 2010, the National White Cyber Crime Centre and the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that Nigeria was ranked third in the world with the highest rate of cyber-crime, a phenomenon that is popular known as “yahoo-yahoo” (Tade and Aliyu, 2013).

The most disheartening fact is that the youths that engage in cybercrimes and social media frauds have totally lost interest in searching for white collar jobs or pursuing education, rather they have resorted to this crime as a way of making a living (Olugbodi, 2010). According to Odo and Odo (2015) the large number of people involved in cybercrimes and other social media crime fall within the age bracket of 18 to 30 years of age. This situation has led to the undermining of Nigeria’s reputation in the international spheres (Okeshola and Adeta, 2013). The growing dependence of youths on internet crime has become a thing of concern in the country. It is conceived that the average Nigerian youth want to live a very comfortable life without necessarily engaging in physical work; invariably relying on any short cut to make money, including defrauding others through the internet sources. Another, troubling fact is that various attempts and efforts have been done by Nigerian government in combatting cybercrime, however, the outcomes leave much to be desired.

Hence, this study aims to investigate this dominant and popular crime amongst youths from their own perceptions and views. Social perceptions have always been a good way of constructing reality about a social phenomenon, especially among peers or community of people who have attached meanings to daily living (Creswell, 2013). This is why this study focuses on investigating youths’ engagement in social media crime from the perceptions of youths. This will allow for in-depth evaluation and identification of varied reasons for the rapid spread of social media frauds in Nigeria and thereby detect ways of reducing this social malady. Since youths are conceived as the foundation for the future growth and sustainable development of a nation, as well as the key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation in a nation, it is very important to address the effects of social media on them, as well as how their engagement in crimes related to the use of social media and internet technology can pose challenges to the country’s reputation and economic development at large.

It is from this premise that this study is undertaken to examine youths’ perspectives of engagements and use of social media handles for cybercrime called “yahoo-yahoo” in Owerri, and to identify the solution to cybercrime in the country.

Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To find out from youths’ perceptions about the cybercrime act called “yahoo-yahoo” in Owerri Municipal of Imo state in Nigeria
2. To examine the effects of cybercrime on youths in Owerri Municipal of Imo state in Nigeria
3. To extract from perceptions of the youths on the possible solutions to reducing cybercrime incessancy in Nigeria

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of youths on the cybercrime act called “yahoo-yahoo” in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria?
2. What are the negative effects of social media on youths in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria?
3. What are the possible solutions to reducing incessancy of cybercrime in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria?

Literature Review

Global Perceptions of Cyber Crime

Globalization especially through information technology has led to rapid development all over the world. It has reduced stress and made information sharing easier and better. However, information technology equally has its shares of disadvantages which cannot be overlooked, especially with regards to the ill effects of cybercrime. The internet has in recent times created unlimited access not just for legitimate transactions but for illegitimate ones. One of the greatest disadvantages of globalized information technology is exacerbation of cybercrime. Cybercrime refers to all forms of crime committed through the use of internet services.

This type of crime has become a huge challenge to international community, governments and individual internet users all over the world (Dashora, 2011). Critical thing about cybercrime is that it is not limited to a particular geographical location, rather it has become a global problem affecting both developing and developed societies.

The fact that the functioning of computer and internet is the same across the globe, enables cybercrime to transcend geographical boundaries (Tanebaum, 2011). As computer and internet technology evolve, so is use of the internet for all kinds of crime evolving in the world (Kumar and Kumar, 2020). Another challenge associated with the internet is the difficulties it poses in investigating several types of cybercrimes (Yee, 2010). This is because the same internet enables the perpetrators of cybercrimes to communicate with themselves to keep clear tracks to avoid being caught. To this end, Salifu (2008) asserted that cybercrime is an enigma and a paradox. The same internet enables these fraudsters to elude authorities and crime investigators.

Cybercrime is equally evolving globally with time. For instance, Wall (2007, p. 45) described three generations of cybercrime. The first generation of cybercrime consisted of traditional crimes which is committed using standalone computers, e.g., as can be found in some official crimes. The second generation of cybercrime which occurred from the 1970s consisted of crimes facilitated by local or global computer networks. The third generation of cybercrime which is the recent one, consists of true crimes mediated by technology and constituting syndicates of criminals all over the world that works in networks and carryout organized crimes. Cornish et al. (2010) identified three types of cybercrime as follows:

- a. Individual – this is a type of cyber stalking or distributing of pornographies online
- b. Property – This is the type where by perpetrators use the internet to defraud people of their property, could be cash or physical properties
- c. Government- this is the type were the perpetrator hacks into government sites for political or terrorist purposes etc.

Cornish et al (2010) also asserted that the most common type of cybercrime is the type that the perpetrators defraud people of high sum of money through well devised and organized strategies. According to these authors this type of cyber-crime is mostly seen in Asia and Africa. This type of cybercrime is so popular in these nations that it is given nick-names. For instance, in Nigeria it is called “yahoo-yahoo” and in Ghana it is referred to as “Sakawa” (Button and Cross, 2017). According to Button and Cross (2017), Nigeria and Ghana were spotted as the most popular countries where a type of cybercrime called “Advance fee fraud” is committed. The Advance fee Fraud is a type of cybercrime whereby unsuspected victims are convinced to willingly succumb to their request after several tempting offers to make quick money.

It is appalling that the discussions on cybercrime often show engagement of youth or younger people in this type of crime, especially in African countries such as Nigeria, which is our study location. For instance, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (2016) reported that in 2016 the most reported internet fraud was amongst young adults in Nigeria and Ghana. Tade and Aliyu (2011) and Adeniran (2008) noted that the poor state of economy and the corrupt political system in Nigeria have motivated various crimes committed by youths whose future seemed distorted by the country’s deplorable state. “Yahoo-Yahoo boys” is a Nigerian slang for young people who engage in cybercrime. The reference to “boys” indicates that this type of crime is youthful and may be consistent among young male adults or even adolescent as found in recent times (Button and Cross, 2017).

Perceptions of Cyber Crime (Yahoo-Yahoo) in Nigeria

Literature on cybercrime in Nigeria show some similarities with global literature. Both Nigerian and global scholars describe cybercrime as a global phenomenon that have transcended global borders because it is perpetrated through global technological system (Adeniran, 2008; Tade, 2013; Button and Cross, 2017). These literatures equally agree that cybercrime syndicates all over the world have evolved tremendously with the advancement of internet technology in the recent time, and have devised advanced and sophisticated technologies to elude authorities. However, Nigerian literature have diverged with some key variables that distinguish Nigerian cybercrime from others.

First, Nigerian cybercrime are peculiar amongst young people called “yahoo-yahoo boys” (Adeniran, 2008). Since internet was popularly referred to as yahoo at the point of introducing the internet services to Nigeria (Doppelmayr, 2013), youths that engaged in fraudulent activities relating to the internet were labelled “yahoo-yahoo-boys”. They are referred to as *boys* because basically male youths engaged in various criminal activities connected to internet usage at this time. Doppelmayr (2013) opined that most of these “yahoo boys” are between the age of 18 and 30, and that they are either enrolled in a university or about to be admitted to the university.

Secondly, the cybercrime game may be combined with “voodoo”, *spiritism* or *magical practices* which enables the perpetrator to hypnotize their victims and easily convince them to succumb to their evil wimps (Tade, 2013). This type is usually referred to as “yahoo-yahoo plus” in Nigeria (Tade, 2013).

Thirdly, the cybercrime perpetrators tend to justify the crime as a revenge towards the “white man” for the exploitations of African countries through colonialism (Dopplemayr, 2013). Dopplemayr (2013) in his study argued that most perpetrators of cybercrimes that target rich European victims in West Africa claim that they commit this crime as a ‘payback’ to Europeans who defrauded Africa through colonialism.

Fourthly, cybercrime studies in Nigeria reveal organized cartels of criminals that are closely knitted and who operate in syndicates that are difficult to track down (Button and Cross, 2017). Tade’s (2013) study reveals that the perpetrators of cybercrimes in Nigeria work closely and are very hard to track down because of their very organized, systematic and syndicated operations. They are said to have abroad connections that make transfer of stolen cash easier.

Fifthly, the high level of corruption in the country exacerbates the rate of cybercrime in Nigeria. Ojekodun and Eraye (2012) opined that the state of moral decadence and corruption in the country has heightened the impetus for the perpetration of cybercrimes.

All these issues combine to make cybercrime a very peculiar criminal case in Nigeria. However, this study will investigate this phenomenon through youths’ perceptions of cybercrime (“yahoo yahoo”). Hitherto, studies on cybercrime amongst youths use police reports and general surveys, however, the use of perceptive and explorative study will reveal in-depth findings from the source (i.e., youths themselves) (Creswell, 2013). The questions posed in the study aims to find out why cybercrime is a youth related phenomenon in the country, what perpetuates youths to engage in cybercrime, find out solutions to reduce incessant cybercrime acts in Nigeria.

Various Channels of Cyber Crime

The popularity of cybercrime has led to its openness in most social media and internet social platforms. Some of the known channels of cybercrime include:

a. Free tickets/vouchers scams:

This cybercrime comes as gift cards to popular stores or restaurants up to \$500. They are advertised in emails as ads on websites or shared in some social media handle. Once someone fall victim and click on these freebies’ links, he/she can be scammed and the perpetrators usually harvest secret information related to bank accounts or assets.

b. Crypto currency scams:

According to Button and Cross (2017), in this type of cybercrime, victims will be invited to sign up to crypto currencies in social media or so-called investment sites and once the person falls victim to this scam, their personal information will be retrieved and used for further hacking. In some cases, victims realize only after the website has been deactivated and suspects can no longer be contacted, that they have been defrauded. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Consumer Sentinel, from October 2020 through March 31, 2021, reports of crypto-related scams skyrocketed to nearly 7,000 people reporting losses of more than \$80 million. These figures reflect a 12-fold increase in the number of reports compared to the same period a year ago and a nearly 1,000% rise in reported losses (Federal Trade Commission, 2021)

c. Personal data Fraudsters

Personal data fraudsters usually persuade victims to send their personal data for a promo or other scams. Once retrieved, the perpetrators will clone the identity of the victim and use it for their benefits. This is usually carried out in most social media outlets (Button and Cross, 2017).

d. Free Trial Products:

Social media sites are often used to lure people into signing up for free trials on products. These scams usually involve the participant signing up for a free trial of a product which is often not genuine instructing them to provide their payment card details upfront (Tade, 2013). The victim then becomes tied into a fixed period contract unbeknownst to them and have provided their payment card details to an unknown individual.

e. Investment Scams:

In this type of cybercrime, opportunities are advertised on social media sites for people to invest in products or businesses which are often fake or do not exist. Fraudsters advertise a ‘too good to be true’ investment opportunity, sometimes using news stories and advertisements that appear to be from genuine sources (Tade, 2013). Consumers who are tempted to invest lose some or all of their money.

f. SOS or Help Messages:

This scam involves social media account holders receiving messages from persons in their “friends” or “contacts” list indicating that they are in trouble in a foreign country and need help (Ezea, 2017). This message usually requests that

they transfer money to an account in a foreign country. The content of the messages varies but popular ones tell the story that the person has been arrested and needs money for bailing, once someone falls victim to this scam, a huge sum of money is pulled out of their bank accounts (Ezea, 2017). In one specific variant, the text directs victims to a website and offer them a small gift (like a wristwatch) in exchange for participating in a survey.

g. Fake Friend Requests:

In this kind, social media account holders would receive friend requests from people that they do not know or from people already in their contacts who have had their accounts hacked (Ezea, 2017). Accepting these requests causes the account of the victim and that of their friends to be hacked, and their entire personal data accessed.

Research Design, Methodology, and Data Analysis

This is an exploratory study, whereby the researcher employed the mixed method, which involved the use of questionnaire as main instrument of data collection, and semi-structured interviews conducted with a pocket number of youths (purposively selected) The interview was mostly used to further get in-depth facts about cybercrime amongst Nigerian youths which cannot be disclosed through questionnaire. The rationale is that the mixed method approach would provide an appropriate means for gaining an exploratory insight into cybercrime issues, and perceptions of youths about this crime in Owerri municipal in Imo state Nigeria (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also used secondary sources of data collection, such as, relevant academic published books, journal articles, other internet materials and statistical records to support primary data. These data collection methods furnished the researcher with the basic information that were necessary for the comprehension, insight and analysis of the pertinent issues analyzed in this paper.

In terms of the sampling method applied, the snowballing method was mainly used for selection of participants for this study. Because of the nature of the study which is rather very sensitive and complex in nature, the snow ball sampling method allowed the researcher to reach very hard-to-reach people in the society (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). A total number of 300 questionnaires were shared to youths in Owerri municipals, however, only 285 were retrieved and used for analysis. Another 10 youths were interviewed using semi-structured interview instrument.

In terms of data analysis, the study applied statistical and simple percentage for analyzing derived questionnaire data. Data analysis was iterative and was organized into analytical themes. The next section shows the data presentation and summary of findings of this study.

Data Presentations and Summary of Findings

Table 1 - Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

n=285

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	145	50.78
Female	140	49.22
Total	285	100
Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18- 20	98	34.38
21-23	100	35.08
24-27	59	20.70
28 - 30	30	10.53
Total	285	100
Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
No formal Education	46	16.05
Primary Education	75	26.41
Secondary Education	84	29.56
Tertiary Education	80	27.98
Total	285	100

(Source – researcher’s field work 2022)

Table 2 – Employment level of Youth Participants

Gender	Not employed	Employed
Male	120	25
Female	110	30
Total	230	55

(Source – researcher’s field work 2022)

The above table shows the demographic characteristics and total number of respondents which is 285 participants used for the study. A total of 145 (50.78%) participants were male, while female participants were 140 (49.22%). The age range was between 18-30years old which is considered the age bracket of youths by UN standard (UNICEF, 2020). A total of 98 (34.38%) participants were between 18-20 years, 100 (35.08%) participants were between the age bracket of 21-23years, and about 59 (20.70%) participants were between the age range of 24-27years, whereas 30 (10.5%) participants fall within the age range of 28-30years.

In terms of educational attainment, 46 (16.05 %) participants have no formal education whereas other participants passed through formal education, 75 (26.41%) of participants have their primary education, 84 (29.56%) passed through secondary education, while a total number of 80 (27.98 %) participants have passed through Tertiary Education.

Moreover, from the table above, one can also see that most of the participants (230 out of 285) are not employed, depicting the high incidence of poverty affecting youths in the country.

Presentation of Findings

This section focuses on the presentation of findings. The paper posed three research questions as follow:

1. What are the perceptions of youths on the cybercrime act called “yahoo-yahoo” in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria?
2. What are the negative effects of social media on youths in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria?
3. What are the possible solutions to reducing incessancy of cybercrime in Nigeria?

The questionnaire data were analyzed with the focus on answering the three research questions posed. For the analysis of questionnaire data, the researcher used simple percentages with findings presented in the tables below as follows:

RQ1 - What are the perceptions of youths about the cybercrime called “yahoo-yahoo” in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria?

Table 2 - Assessing participants’ perceptions of why youths engage in Cybercrime (yahoo yahoo).

N= 285

Do you know about the cybercrime called <i>yahoo-yahoo</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	285	100%
No	0	0
I don’t know	0	0
Total	285	100%
Do you think <i>yahoo-yahoo</i> is rampant crime in Nigeria	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	250	87.71%
No	35	12.28%
I don’t know	0	0%
Total	285	100%
Do you believe that there is benefit in engaging in <i>yahoo-yahoo</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	158	55.44%
No	127	44.56%
I don’t know/others	0	0%
Total	285	100%
Youths engage in <i>yahoo-yahoo</i> because of peer pressure and influence of friends	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	235	82.46%
No	50	17.54%
I don’t know	0	0%
Total	285	100%

Youths engage in yahoo-yahoo because they lack any other source of income	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	250	87.71%
No	35	12.28%
I don't know/others	0	0%
Total	285	100%
Youths engage in yahoo-yahoo because they want to make quick money	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	235	82.46%
No	50	17.54%
I don't know/others	0	0%
Total	285	100%
Youths engage in yahoo-yahoo because it is popular way of making money in the country nowadays	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	199	69.83%
No	70	24.56%
I don't know/others	16	5.61%
Total	285	100%
The social media handles mostly used by yahoo-yahoo scammers	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	70	29.79%
WhatsApp	65	27.66%
Instagram	44	20.35%
Twitter	39	18.72%
Others specify (telegram, badoh, Eskimi etc.)	17	7.23 %
Total	285	100%

(Source – researcher's field work 2022)

From table 2 above, we can see that all the participant (235, 100%) agreed that they are aware of the cybercrime called *yahoo-yahoo*, and about 250 (87.71%) agreed that *yahoo-yahoo* is incessant in Nigeria, whilst, only 35 (12.28%) rejected that *yahoo-yahoo* is not rampant crime in Nigeria. The table equally showed that the belief that there is benefit from engaging in *yahoo-yahoo* was accepted by 158(55.44%) of participants, but was rejected by 127 (44.56%) of participants. A whooping number of 235 (82.4%) participants agreed that youths engage in *yahoo-yahoo* because of influence of peer pressure and friends already engaged in this crime, while 50 (17.54%) rejected that peer pressure is the reason why youths engage in *yahoo-yahoo*. Another whooping number of 250 (87.71%) participants believed that youths engage in *yahoo-yahoo* because they lack any other source of income. 35 (12.28%) participants rejected that youths would engage in *yahoo-yahoo* because they lack any other source of income. Almost all participants – a total of 235 (82.46%) respondents accepted that most youths engage in *yahoo-yahoo* because they want to make quick money, which reflected the popularity of this crime amongst youths in the country; while only 50 (17.54%) rejected this notion. About 199 (69.83%) believed that youths engage in *yahoo-yahoo* because it is popular way of making money in the country nowadays, whereas, 70 (24.56%) did not accept this notion, and about 16 (5.61%) recorded said they don't know anything about the issue.

Finally, it was observed that most *yahoo-yahoo* scammers make use of social media handles such as Facebook (70/ 29.79%), WhatsApp (65/ 27.66%), Instagram (44/ 20.35%), Twitter (39/ 18.72%), and other social media handles such as - Telegram, Badoh, Eskimi, etc., recorded (17 /7.23%). This shows that Facebook app is the most used social media platform by *yahoo-yahoo* scammers for cybercrime.

RQ 2- What are the negative effects of social media on youths in Owerri Municipal in Imo state Nigeria?

Table 3 – Assessing the negative effects of social media on youths

n=285

Negative effect social media has towards the youth	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of control of and over personal information	248	87.02%
Cyber bullying	230	80.70%
Lack of Morals	190	66.67%
Spread and ability to amplify Fake News	280	98.25%
Indirect encouragement of high rate of scam on social media	282	98.94%
Poor grades from the academic pursuits	200	70.18%
Long hours on Social Media platforms	189	66.32%
Addiction to social media	230	80.70%
Lack of interest in family meetings/activities/chores/engagements	199	69.82%
Lower Self-esteem	276	96.49%
Death	145	50.88%

(Source – researcher’s field work 2022)

From table 3 above, there were multiple reactions from participants as they were permitted to tick multiple according to their believe thus leading to a figure as follows; Lack of control of and over personal information (87.02%), Lack of Morals (80.70%), Spread and ability to amplify Fake News (98.25%), Indirect encouragement of high rate of scam on social media (98.94%), Poor grades from the academic pursuits (70.18%), Long hours on Social Media platforms (66.32%), Addiction to social media (80.70%), Lack of Interest in Family meetings/activities/engagements (69.82%), Lower Self-esteem (96.49%), Death (50.88%). Observation of the data showed that indirect encouragement of high rate of scam through social media recorded the highest response from participants - a whopping number 282 (98.94%) participants agreed to this notion.

RQ 3 - What are the possible solutions to incessant yahoo-yahoo scams in Nigeria?**Table 4 – Perceptions of youths about the possible solutions to reducing cybercrime in Nigeria**

Do you think that there is possible solution to yahoo-yahoo scams	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	199	69.83%
No	86	30.17%
Total	285	100 %
Will detecting a scam save you from being defraud through yahoo-yahoo	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	70.18%
No	85	29.82%
Total	285	100%

(Source – researcher’s field work 2022)

From the table above, there was possible solution against cybercrime acts in Nigeria as it was recorded by 199 (69.83%) of the participants, while 86 (30.17%) said no to this notion. A whopping number of 200 (70.18%) participants said yes that detecting a scam will save one from being defrauded through yahoo-yahoo, whilst about 85 (29.82%) said no.

Table 5 - Possible ways of reducing cybercrime in Nigeria: multiple choice questions n=285

The possible ways to reduce social medial frauds	Frequency	Percentage
Always follow Lottery and Free Gift Card link	10	3.33%
Avoid the use of card payment if the site is not trusted	189	63.00%
Always make online payment while purchasing goods	20	6.67%
Watch out for phishing scams	200	66.67%
Always make use of strong passwords	195	65.00%
Improve living condition of youths	289	96.33%
Keep personal information personal	284	94.67%

(Source – researcher’s field work 2022)

From table 5 above, possible ways of reducing social media frauds were recorded with multiple choice, where participants were given choice to tick as many as they wished, it was seen that – “**always follow Lottery and Free Gift Card link recorded**” 10 (3.33%) response, **Avoid the use of card payment if the site is not trusted** recorded 189(63.00%) response, **always make online payment while purchasing goods recorded** 20(6.67%) response,

Watch out for phishing scams recorded 200 (66.67%) response, **Always make use of strong passwords** had 195(65.00%) response, whilst **improve living condition of youths** recorded 289(96.33%) response, and **keep personal information personal** - recorded 284(94.67%) response.

Discussion of Findings

Discussion will focus on findings from questionnaire and interviews. It will also employ some interview quotes for further understanding of some phenomenon about the yahoo-yahoo cybercrime. As indicated earlier, a pocket number of youths (10) who have engaged in cybercrime were interviewed for this study.

Also, as mentioned earlier, the exploratory study was conducted on 285 participants, where male participants recorded 145(50.78%) while female participants recorded 140(49.22%) with the age range of 18-40 years of age. All participants passed through formal education, excluding 46 (16.05 %) participants that has no formal education.

The RQ1 focused on finding the perceptions of youths about yahoo-yahoo as a cyber crime in Nigeria. It was found out all participants are aware of yahoo-yahoo crime, and most of the participants believed that the cybercrime called 'yahoo-yahoo' is very rampant in Nigeria. The various reasons for engaging in cyber crime attracted high number of response from participants. One of the most popular responses is that youths engage in *yahoo-yahoo* because of peer pressure. This supports Adeniran (2008) assertion that peer pressure compels young people in most part of the country, especially in the South East and some parts of the South-South region of the country, where making money as a proof of manhood encourage unscrupulous youths to engage in this fraudulent internet crime (Tade, 2013). Another most common reason for youth's engagement in cyber crime is because they lack other means of livelihood or source of income generation. This points to the negligence of the country's government in addressing youth's unemployment. The National Bureau of Statistics (2017) showed that about 79% of Nigerian youths are unemployed as at 2017. The quotations from 8 out of 10 interviewed youths reflected this notion, they believed that unresponsiveness of government about youths' poor economic condition has pushed most youths into cybercrime. One of the respondents' comments is as follows:

"...what do you expect youths to do when they have no other source of income, man must whack and chop, who go give you if you don't do it yourself, therefore we do yahoo yahoo to help ourselves we don't have any choice" (**Respondent 5/ 45min/ 23/7/2022**).

This issue reflects the porosity of cyber security which have exacerbated this crime in the country (Adeniran, 2016; Tade, 2013). This equally showed that addressing poverty affecting youths in the country is very relevant and an urgent call.

Another worrisome situation about cybercrime in Nigeria which indicated high number of responses from interviewees was the fact that youths engage in this crime to make quick money, combining it with voodooism and ritual killings in what is now called "yahoo-plus". For instance, a comment from one of the youths is this:

"...yahoo-plus is the worst of it, some youths are compelled to sleep with their mum, or kill their parents or present a human sacrifice to make the yahoo business to work fast and make money even faster..." (**Respondent 3/ 30min/ 23/7/2022**).

This supports Tade (2013) who noted that the cybercrime game may be combined with "voodoo", *spiritism* or *magical practices* which enables the perpetrator to hypnotize their victims and easily convince them to succumb to their wimps. This downgrades the respect for human dignity, value for life and social morals in the country.

RQ 2 focused on finding out the negative effects of social media on youth population in Nigeria, and the responses showed that Indirect encouragement of high rate of scam on social media was rated highest. The perceptions of the youths also indicated that the most used social media handle for cybercrime is the Facebook. This suggests that most youths would engage in social media for cybercrime and scamming people of their hard-earned money. About 7 respondents in the interview carried out agreed with this suggestion that social media is the most used channel for carrying out yahoo-yahoo frauds. One comment from the respondents goes like this:

"...yahoo-yahoo is a social media thing and facebook is the most used internet source. We also use dating sites for duping unsuspecting women and they fall mugu easily because they are weak and desperate for men" (**Respondent 8/ 35min/ 24/7/2022**).

Another respondent believed that there is no evil about cybercrime, that Nigerians cybercriminals are retrieving back the money Europeans colonial masters stole from Nigeria and Africa. However, this notion has since affected the acceptance of Nigerians in international trades and businesses. Dashora (2011) noted that this particular notion about

yahoo-yahoo crime is the reason why Nigeria is considered one of the most corrupt, criminally minded and dreaded countries in the world today. Cybercrime has posed a huge challenge for Nigerians to easily engage in international activities without undergoing serious security scrutiny (Dashora, 2011).

RQ 3 – focused on identifying from the perceptions of the youths, the possible solutions to incessant cybercrime in Nigeria. The findings showed that improving living condition of youths recorded highest with this figure and percentage - 289(96.33%). This notion was supported by the comments of 8 out of the 10 interviewees. The comment by one of these interviewees is as follows;

“...man, no go die waiting for nothing to survive, this is survival of the fittest, government has abandoned youths to the worst condition which makes them to fish out what to do for themselves... we have chosen to help ourselves in this way because we don't what else to do to change our very bad condition ...” (Respondent 7/ 45min/ 23/7/2022).

In support of this notion, Ninalowo (2014) argued that these youths unfortunately live in a society where values and ethics are changing very fast. In a society such as Nigeria with gross structural inequalities, high rate of indiscipline, weak sanctioning system and wide gap between the rich and the poor, there is a tendency for the deprived to reject and embrace illegal means of achieving prescribed goals such as been wealthy in young age. Moreover, the corruption that is looming over the affairs of our so-called leaders, politicians and technocrats in the country has further given the youths more impetus to engage in crime in order to bask in affluence as these corrupt leaders. Hence, the best solution amidst others identified in this study, is for government to focus on improving the living conditions of the youths in the country. This will go a long way in changing their dispositions to engaging in cybercrime.

Conclusion

Social media has become a platform where some scrupulous youths swindle people of their hard-earned money in Nigeria, by engaging in a syndicate cybercrime called *yahoo-yahoo*. As mentioned earlier, the globalizing effect of introducing internet to Nigeria did not only advance the state of technology in the country but also birthed social vices such as internet fraud and different kinds of cybercrimes. The study has shown that “yahoo-yahoo’ is indeed a cyber or internet fraudulent act that involves defrauding unsuspected foreigners and even rich Nigerians of hard-earned money. In most cases, these scrupulous youths are said to dupe unsuspected victims by using fake identities on dating websites claiming they are from United States or working in some other prominent country.

The study recommends that because of the high rate of incessancy of this crime in the country there is immediate call for remedies. An important solution indicated in this study is for government to address the poor living condition of youths, as well as the high rate of poverty and unemployment facing youths in the country. More cyber security management such as data encryption and careful management of personal information in the internet were also identified as a way of keeping fraudsters from gaining access to personal information of people. Parents should be sensitized about the negative effects of social media on youths to make them more careful and sensitive about the upbringing of their young ones. In addition, the Nigerian government and security agencies should employ high level of cyber security to monitor the activities of these cybercriminals in the country.

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