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Cybercrime Measure and Prevention of Online Fraud in Edo, State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The abstract effectively summarizes the scope by stating the study's focus on the effects of cybercrimes measures and prevention of online fraud in Edo State. it clearly outlines the specific objectives: examining poverty's influence, assessing the effectiveness of the legal frameworks, and evaluating law enforcement effectiveness in combating cybercrime. The use of Routine Activities Theory (RAT), is appropriately introduced, anchoring the study scientifically. Methodology is briefly mentioned (use of secondary data), which suits the study scope. The abstract highlight key findings such as socio-economic and technological factors driving cybercrime, deficiencies in law enforcement and awareness and challenges in prevention measures. It presents practical recommendations, including improving digital literacy, equipping law enforcement and promoting job creation and vocational training.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Cybersecurity, Measure, Prevention, Socio-economic

1. Introduction

Globally, the digital revolution has fostered numerous advantages, such as e-commerce, social networking, and online banking. Yet, these advancements have also led to the rise of cybercriminal activities, which exploit the vulnerabilities of digital infrastructures. According to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), cybercrime is expected to grow exponentially, with global losses from cybercrime expected to reach trillions of dollars in the coming years. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that cybercrime is responsible for more than $600 billion annually, a figure likely to increase as technology continues to evolve. The focus on cybercrime measures has become increasingly critical to ensuring the security and stability of societies worldwide. On the global stage, the fight against cybercrime has been shaped by various international efforts and conventions aimed at standardizing laws, fostering cooperation, and sharing best practices. Organizations such as the United Nations, INTERPOL, and the European Union have worked together to formulate global strategies to

combat cybercrime and promote cybersecurity. One of the most significant international efforts is the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime, known as the Budapest Convention (2001). It provides a comprehensive legal framework for addressing cybercrime across member states and beyond. It facilitates international cooperation, offers guidelines for law enforcement agencies, and provides mechanisms for cross-border data sharing. The convention covers areas like illegal access to computer systems, data interference, and computer-related fraud.

Similarly, the United Nations has introduced several initiatives focused on cybercrime prevention, including the Global Programme on Cybercrime and the UNODC's Cybercrime Strategy. These programs aim to assist countries in building institutional capacity, implementing effective legal frameworks, and strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure. National governments have also increased their focus on combatting cybercrime. Countries like the United States and members of the European Union have established specialized cybercrime units within their law enforcement agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the U.S. and Europol in the EU, to detect, prevent, and prosecute cybercrime activities.

Cybercrime refers to criminal activities that involve the use of computers or the internet to carry out illegal acts. The proliferation of the internet, mobile devices, and other digital technologies has transformed the way we communicate, conduct business, and interact with society. However, this advancement has also opened the door to various forms of cybercrime. These crimes range from identity theft, online fraud, and hacking to more complex activities like cyber-terrorism and data breaches. The rising prevalence of cybercrime poses significant threats to individuals, businesses, and governments, prompting a global call for preventive measures and robust legal frameworks to address the growing menace.

Online fraud, also known as internet fraud or "Yahoo Yahoo", typically involves deceptive practices such as phishing, identity theft, and fraudulent financial transactions. These activities have a detrimental effect on the country's economy, leading to financial losses in millions of dollars. A 2019 report by the EFCC noted that Nigeria loses over $500 million annually to various forms of online fraud, with a large portion of these losses attributed to cybercriminals targeting individuals and businesses within and outside the country.

In Nigeria, cybercrime has become a serious concern, affecting individuals, businesses, and the economy at large. The country is facing an alarming rise in online fraud, identity theft, and data breaches. These activities are often perpetrated by local and international criminal syndicates who exploit the vast network of internet users and the inadequate cybersecurity infrastructure in the country. To combat cybercrime, the Nigerian government has enacted several measures, including the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, which seeks to provide a legal framework for the prosecution of cybercriminals. The Act criminalizes a range of cybercrimes, including identity theft, online fraud, cyberstalking, and hacking. It also empowers law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute offenders involved in cybercriminal activities. Furthermore, Nigeria established the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), which works to promote information technology development while providing cybersecurity solutions to mitigate cybercrime threats.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has also been at the forefront of fighting cybercrime in Nigeria. The EFCC has dedicated cybercrime units that focus on investigating online fraud, financial crimes, and internet-related offenses. Similarly, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has launched initiatives aimed at improving the cybersecurity landscape in Nigeria, including public awareness campaigns and the enforcement of cybersecurity standards.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in the fight against cybercrime in Nigeria, particularly due to issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited expertise, and a lack of public awareness. This situation is further exacerbated by weak enforcement of cybercrime laws and the challenges posed by transnational cybercrime syndicates.

Edo State, located in the southern part of Nigeria, has witnessed an alarming increase in cybercrime, with a significant portion of criminal activities involving online fraud. Known for its rich cultural heritage and growing urbanization, Edo State is also home to a rising number of cybercriminals who engage in various fraudulent activities, such as Yahoo Yahoo (internet fraud), romance scams, and phishing. The activities of these cybercriminals are largely facilitated by the increasing internet penetration in the state, particularly among the youth population. Many young individuals in Edo State have resorted to cybercrime due to the lack of employment opportunities and the lure of quick financial gains. According to the Edo State Police Command, there have been numerous reports of young people being arrested for internet fraud, with some even being extradited for international cybercrimes.

The state government and law enforcement agencies have taken steps to address the growing threat of cybercrime. The Edo State Police Command has set up dedicated units to tackle cybercrime, and they frequently collaborate with the EFCC and other federal agencies to investigate and apprehend cybercriminals. Additionally, the Edo State Cybersecurity Task Force has been established to provide training and awareness programs aimed at educating citizens, especially the youth, about the dangers of cybercrime and online fraud. However, there are still significant gaps in the state's efforts to prevent cybercrime. The lack of adequate infrastructure for cybersecurity, limited law enforcement resources, and insufficient public awareness programs are some of the barriers that hinder the effective prevention and prosecution of cybercriminal activities in Edo State. Furthermore, many of the cybercriminals involved in online fraud use sophisticated tactics that make it difficult for local authorities to track and apprehend them.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The rapid growth of digital technologies, particularly the internet, has revolutionized various sectors, such as commerce, education, communication, and banking. While these advancements have brought about immense benefits, they have also provided a fertile ground for the proliferation of cybercrime, which includes a wide range of illegal activities such as online fraud, identity theft, hacking, and cyberstalking. These activities have serious implications for individuals, businesses, governments, and society at large. Cybercrime has become a major challenge worldwide, and Nigeria, particularly its southern region including Edo State, has been significantly affected by this global threat.

Many young individuals engage in online fraud through social media platforms, dating apps, and online marketplaces. These fraudulent activities are often masked by sophisticated techniques, such as using fake identities and bank accounts to deceive victims into making financial transactions. The high rates of cybercrime among the youth in Edo State have led to significant reputational damage for the state, as well as negative perceptions about the security of online activities within the region.

Several factors contribute to the high rates of cybercrime and online fraud in Edo State. These factors can be broadly categorized into socio-economic, technological, and institutional issues. Socio-economic Factors: High levels of unemployment, poverty, and economic instability have created an environment in which many youths in Edo State turn to cybercrime as a quick means of financial gain. The allure of wealth and a better standard of living, combined with a lack of viable job opportunities, has made online fraud an attractive option for many young individuals. The widespread use of smartphones, internet connectivity, and social media platforms has provided cybercriminals with the tools and anonymity they need to carry out fraudulent activities. Despite efforts by the Nigerian government to regulate the internet, the lack of robust cybersecurity infrastructure at the local level has made it easier for cybercriminals in Edo State to operate with relative impunity. The inadequacy of law enforcement agencies in Edo State to effectively combat cybercrime is another significant barrier.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of cybercrime measure and prevention of online fraud in Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows;

i. To examine the effect of poverty in influencing the rise of online fraud and cybercrime in Edo State, Nigeria.
ii. To assess the causes of cybercrime and measures in combating cybercrime in Edo State.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In the global context, cybercrime refers to illegal activities that are committed using computer systems, the internet, or other digital devices. These crimes involve the exploitation of computer technology to gain unauthorized access to networks, steal sensitive information, and engage in fraudulent or harmful activities. Worldwide, the scope of cybercrime is broad, ranging from individual acts such as identity theft and online fraud to large-scale attacks on national infrastructure. Cybercrime is often classified into two main categories: computer-based crimes and computer-facilitated crimes (Wall, 2007). Computer-based crimes involve direct criminal activities that specifically target computer systems or networks, such as hacking, malware distribution, and denial-of-service (DoS) attacks. Computer-facilitated crimes, on the other hand, involve the use of digital technologies to commit traditional crimes such as fraud, drug trafficking, and child exploitation. These crimes are often carried out through online platforms like email, social media, and the dark web, which facilitate the anonymity of the offenders. The rise of the internet and the increasing reliance on digital platforms have made cybercrimes a global phenomenon. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), cybercrime encompasses a range of offenses including, but not limited to, identity theft, financial fraud, cyberbullying, online harassment, and data breaches (FBI, 2020).

The Nigerian context is no different. With the country's expanding internet usage, cybercrime has become a pressing issue, particularly as it affects both individuals and businesses. Online fraud, hacking, and data breaches are among the most prevalent forms of cybercrime in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the legal framework to combat cybercrime includes the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act 2015, which provides measures for the prevention and prosecution of cybercrimes, including identity theft, online fraud, and the dissemination of malware. However, despite the existence of these legal frameworks, challenges such as inadequate enforcement, low public awareness, and limited technical capabilities continue to undermine efforts to combat cybercrime effectively. The nature of cybercrimes in Nigeria has evolved with the growth of technology. Criminals now exploit new digital tools and platforms to deceive, exploit, and defraud individuals. Phishing attacks, social engineering, and advance-fee fraud (commonly known as 419 scams) are particularly prevalent in the Nigerian context. These types of fraud are often carried out through emails, fake websites, and fake job offers that lure unsuspecting victims into sharing sensitive personal information or making financial payments under false pretenses.

The consequences of cybercrime are severe, both for individuals and for the economy at large. For individuals, cybercrime can result in financial loss, emotional distress, and damage to reputation. For businesses, cybercrime can lead to financial loss, theft of intellectual property, loss of customer trust, and even bankruptcy. Nigeria’s economy, which is heavily dependent on oil, also suffers as cybercrime attacks target financial institutions, government entities, and energy companies, disrupting business operations and damaging the country's reputation in the global market. A 2020 report by Statista revealed that cybercrime costs Nigeria billions of dollars annually in lost revenue and damages to businesses.

The factors responsible for cybercrime in Nigeria can be broadly categorized into socio-economic factors, technological factors, political factors, and cultural factors. The socio-economic landscape in Nigeria plays a significant role in driving individuals toward cybercrime. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and income inequality make it easier for criminals to recruit vulnerable individuals to engage in illegal activities. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, with over 40% of the population living below the poverty line (NBS, 2020). The high unemployment rate, particularly among youth, drives many individuals to look for alternative means of income. Some turn to cybercrime as a fast and seemingly easy way to make money, even though the long-term consequences are severe. Income inequality is another socio-economic factor contributing to the rise of cybercrime. In a society with wide disparities between the rich and poor, some individuals resort to cybercrime as a way of

bridging the gap. 419 scams, for example, offer the promise of quick financial gain to those who may be unable to find legitimate employment. Education plays a critical role in preventing cybercrime.

The rapid advancement of technology and the widespread use of the internet have created a fertile ground for cybercrimes to thrive. Technological factors such as the ease of access to digital devices, anonymous communication channels, and the dark web contribute significantly to the growth of cybercrime in Nigeria. The increasing penetration of the internet in Nigeria, particularly through mobile devices, has made it easier for criminals to commit cybercrimes. The growing use of social media platforms, online marketplaces, and mobile payment systems provides numerous opportunities for cybercriminals to exploit weaknesses in digital security. The internet offers a high degree of anonymity, which makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to trace and apprehend cybercriminals. Criminals can hide behind fake identities and use encrypted communication platforms to carry out illegal activities without fear of detection. Although Nigeria has made some strides in improving its cybersecurity infrastructure, many businesses and individuals continue to neglect basic security measures. Weak passwords, outdated software, and a lack of encryption make it easier for cybercriminals to exploit vulnerabilities in digital systems.

Yahoo internet fraud has become a lingering problem not just in the Nigerian society but around the world. However, Edo state seems to be one of the places competing to be its major depot or should we say Capital? Young men and women who should think of bettering their lives now enter into internet fraud either peer influence or personal bad habits of greed, lack of contentment and poor family training and good orientation to life. Yahoo internet fraud is the use of the internet to swindle unsuspecting victims of their hard-earned money, properties or any other thing of value to them which leads to loss or conversion to the perpetrator. However, given that people are becoming wiser and detective of the antics and activities of these Yahoo boys, they have resorted to upscaling and changing their modus operandi. They have now gone to involve diabolic means of defrauding their victims. This include charms and other hypnotic spiritual means of getting their victims do their biddings. This is now called Yahoo-plus. However, the causes of Yahoo internet crime are not far-fetched.

Plato advocated for a just society in which justice means everyone knowing their role and functioning properly in order to be holistically developed. The prevalence of cybercrimes in Nigeria, and particularly in Edo State, cannot be understood in isolation from the broader socio-economic context. The socio-economic conditions of a region such as poverty play a critical role in determining the likelihood of individuals resorting to cybercrime as a means of livelihood. Poverty which is a product of unemployment are often cited as primary drivers of criminal behavior. According to Merton's strain theory, individuals who are unable to achieve societal goals through legitimate means may resort to deviant behavior, including cybercrime (Merton, 1938). In Nigeria, high levels of poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth, make the country fertile ground for cybercrime. Many individuals turn to cybercrime, including online fraud and identity theft, as a means to make money quickly in a society where formal employment opportunities are scarce (Chukwuma, 2019).

In Edo State, where there is a relatively high unemployment rate, young people, especially graduates without job opportunities, may find online fraud an attractive alternative. Furthermore, youth unemployment in Nigeria is a major concern, with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reporting that more than 40% of young people in the country are unemployed (NBS, 2020). The economic pressures faced by these individuals often lead them to embrace illegal activities, including cybercrime, which promises rapid financial rewards without the constraints of traditional employment. Income inequality in Nigeria has also been a contributing factor to the rise in cybercrimes. This inequality often leads to social unrest and can push individuals towards illegal activities in an attempt to attain wealth.

2.1 Existing Legal Frameworks in Curbing Online in Edo State

The legal framework for tackling cybercrime in Nigeria has evolved over time to address the emerging threat posed by cybercriminals. However, the question remains whether these laws are effectively enforced and whether law enforcement agencies in Edo State are adequately equipped to handle the complexities of cybercrime. Nigeria has made significant strides in the development of legal frameworks to address cybercrime. The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015 is the primary legislation governing cybercrime in Nigeria. This law criminalizes a range of activities, including hacking, identity theft, phishing, and online fraud. It also provides for the prosecution of offenders, the protection of personal data, and the establishment of specialized cybercrime units in law enforcement agencies (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015).

One of the key provisions of the Cybercrimes Act is the creation of cybercrime courts that focus on cases related to cybercrime offenses. This legal framework has been lauded for its forward-thinking approach, recognizing the importance of cybercrime as a distinct and specialized area of law. However, the question remains as to whether the implementation of this law has had a significant impact on reducing cybercrime in Edo State. Despite the existence of robust legal frameworks, the enforcement of these laws has been problematic. According to Okorie (2019), one of the major challenges in combating cybercrime in Nigeria is the lack of adequate resources for law enforcement agencies.

The Edo State Police Command, for example, often faces significant resource constraints that hinder its ability to investigate and prosecute cybercrime cases effectively. Furthermore, cybercrime investigators require specialized skills and knowledge to handle complex cases, yet there is a shortage of trained personnel in Edo State (Adeoye, 2020).

Another challenge is the lack of public awareness about the legal consequences of cybercrime. Many Nigerians, especially those in rural areas, are not fully aware of the legal frameworks in place to combat cybercrime or the penalties for engaging in such activities. This lack of awareness contributes to the persistence of cybercrime, as individuals continue to engage in online fraud with little fear of prosecution. The effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in Edo State is also hindered by the lack of coordination between different government bodies. Although the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) play significant roles in cybercrime prevention, there is often poor communication and cooperation between state and national agencies, which limits the effectiveness of anti-cybercrime efforts (Igbinovia, 2021).

2.2 Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Agencies in Combating Cybercrimes

The collaborative efforts between government agencies, the private sector, and international partners in combating cybercrimes in Edo State have had some successes but also face significant challenges. The lack of resources, coordination issues, and limited engagement from the private sector hinder the effectiveness of these collaborations.

The fight against cybercrime requires a multi-faceted approach that involves cooperation between various stakeholders, including government agencies, the private sector, and international organizations. At the national level, Nigeria has established several agencies responsible for addressing cybercrime, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), and the National Cybersecurity Agency (NCSA). These agencies are tasked with investigating cybercrimes, providing regulatory oversight, and implementing national cybersecurity policies. However, the collaboration between these agencies and state-level law enforcement, including those in Edo State, often faces significant challenges.

In Edo State, there has been some collaboration between state police forces and federal agencies, particularly in cases of large-scale fraud and cyber-related offenses. For instance, the EFCC has partnered with state police forces to carry out joint investigations and raids targeting cybercrime syndicates. However,

the effectiveness of these collaborations is often hindered by jurisdictional challenges, resource constraints, and a lack of specialized expertise in handling cybercrime cases (Igbinovia, 2021).

The private sector, especially financial institutions, plays a critical role in the fight against cybercrime, as they are often the primary targets of online fraud and hacking. In Edo State, private companies, particularly banks, have taken proactive steps to protect themselves and their customers by investing in cybersecurity technologies, such as firewalls, encryption, and multi-factor authentication. However, the engagement of the private sector in collaborative efforts with government agencies has been limited. According to Adeoye (2020), private companies are often reluctant to share information about cybercrime incidents due to concerns about reputational damage. This lack of transparency hinders the ability of government agencies to gather comprehensive data on the scope of cybercrime and the tactics used by criminals. Cybercrime is a global issue, and international collaboration is essential for tackling cross-border cybercrime. Nigeria has engaged in several international agreements and partnerships aimed at enhancing cybersecurity, including collaborations with organizations such as Interpol, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the African Union (AU). These partnerships have facilitated the exchange of information, the provision of technical expertise, and the establishment of best practices for cybersecurity.

At the state level, however, the impact of international collaborations is less visible. While some training programs and workshops have been organized for local law enforcement officers, the lack of resources and infrastructure often limits the ability of Edo State agencies to fully benefit from international cooperation. According to Igbinovia (2021), international partners often focus on larger cities like Lagos and Abuja, leaving regions like Edo State underrepresented in global cybersecurity initiatives.

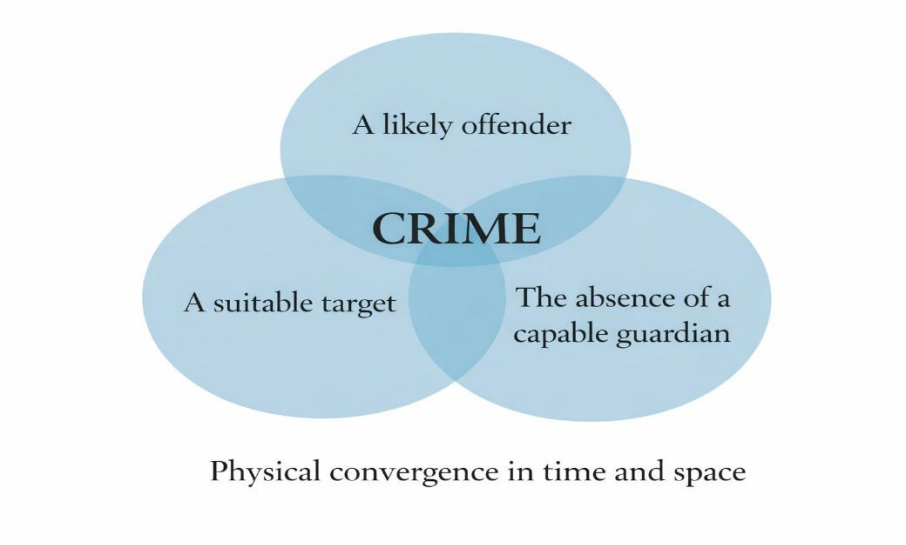
2.3 Empirical Literature Review

Adewale, & Okunade, (2020) examines the impact of cybercrime on the banking sector in Nigeria using primary data collected from surveys of bank managers and cybersecurity professionals. Survey of 150 bank employees, including IT staff and managers. The findings reveal that cybercrime significantly affects financial institutions in terms of both direct financial losses and reputational damage. The study concludes that banks need to adopt more robust cybersecurity measures and train their staff to deal with cyber threats.

Emeka, & Nkiru, (2021) investigates the social impact of cybercrime among Nigerian youth using primary data collected from 300 young people in Lagos and Benin City. The study finds that many young people engage in cybercrime due to unemployment and peer influence, with social media being the primary platform for criminal activities. The research calls for more effective youth empowerment programs.

Chibueze & Adekoya, (2021) evaluates the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns in preventing cybercrime in Edo State. Using primary data from 200 residents through structured interviews, the study finds that while awareness programs exist, they have not been very effective due to poor dissemination and lack of engagement from local authorities. The study suggests the need for more targeted awareness programs.

2.4 Theoretical Framework



The Routine Activities Theory (RAT), developed by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979, is a widely applied criminological theory that explains the occurrence of crimes, including cybercrimes, based on the daily activities and routines of individuals. According to this theory, crimes, particularly opportunistic crimes, are a result of the convergence of three essential elements: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of capable guardianship. The theory focuses less on the socio-economic background of offenders and instead emphasizes the circumstances and routine activities that create opportunities for crime.

RAT was originally formulated to explain conventional crimes such as theft, robbery, and assault. However, it has been adapted and applied to understand the dynamics of cybercrime, which shares the same characteristics of opportunism, target vulnerability, and lack of effective guardianship. In the context of Edo State, Nigeria, RAT offers a compelling lens through which to examine the rise in cybercrime, particularly online fraud, hacking, and identity theft. The first element of RAT involves the presence of a motivated offender. According to Cohen and Felson, this offender may be driven by a variety of factors, such as financial gain, social influence, or personal grievances. In the context of Edo State, cybercriminals may be motivated by the desire for quick wealth, especially in an environment marked by high unemployment rates and limited legitimate economic opportunities.

Youth unemployment in Edo State, particularly in urban centers like Benin City, creates a fertile ground for motivated offenders. Many young people, facing financial hardships, may resort to cybercrime as a means of economic survival. The allure of high earnings without the need for formal education or a stable job leads them to exploit digital platforms for illicit activities. The anonymity provided by the internet further lowers the psychological barriers to committing crimes.

Suitable Target: The second component of RAT is a suitable target. A target can be an individual, a business, or an institution that is vulnerable to criminal exploitation. In the case of cybercrime, suitable targets include individuals with weak online security practices (e.g., weak passwords or unencrypted personal data), financial institutions with inadequate cybersecurity, or e-commerce platforms with poor fraud detection systems. In Edo State, there is a growing reliance on online platforms for financial transactions, shopping, and social interactions. The rapid adoption of mobile phones and internet access has expanded the pool of potential victims for cybercriminals. Many residents, especially those who are less tech-savvy, fall victim to scams such as phishing, lottery fraud, and identity theft because they lack awareness about online security. Furthermore, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State, which

may not invest heavily in cybersecurity, are also highly vulnerable to cybercriminals. The third critical element of RAT is the absence of capable guardianship. Capable guardians are individuals, institutions, or technologies that protect targets from criminal activity. In the context of cybercrime, capable guardianship refers to cybersecurity measures, such as firewalls, antivirus software, encryption, and government regulations aimed at preventing digital fraud and cyberattacks.

In Edo State, as in many parts of Nigeria, there is a significant lack of cybersecurity infrastructure and awareness. The government, law enforcement agencies, and private sector organizations have not sufficiently invested in creating and enforcing cybersecurity policies. While the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Nigerian Cybercrime Act exist, enforcement remains weak. Law enforcement officers often lack the specialized training to deal with sophisticated cybercrimes, and many victims of cybercrime do not report incidents due to fear of stigma or lack of confidence in the justice system. This absence of capable guardianship creates an environment in which cybercriminals can operate with relative impunity.

The application of RAT to cybercrime in Edo State provides a useful framework for understanding the rise in online fraud, hacking, and other forms of cybercrime. As described above, the three key elements—motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of capable guardianship—are prevalent in the region. Edo State has witnessed a rising number of youths involved in cybercrime, often linked to socio-economic pressures. Many young individuals, particularly in urban areas like Benin City, are motivated to engage in cybercrime due to high unemployment rates and limited economic opportunities. With the rise of digital technology and mobile phones, opportunities for online fraud have increased, and offenders are using the anonymity of the internet to target victims without fear of immediate repercussions.

Furthermore, the desire for material success and social status plays a significant role in motivating offenders. Many cybercriminals view their illicit activities as a shortcut to wealth, especially when they observe others in their communities benefiting from the proceeds of cybercrime. This culture of "get-rich-quick" schemes is exacerbated by societal admiration for wealth, regardless of how it is acquired, which normalizes the pursuit of illicit means of gaining wealth. In Edo State, suitable targets are abundant due to the increasing use of digital technologies by individuals and businesses. As internet penetration grows, more people engage in online banking, social media, and e-commerce, all of which present opportunities for cybercriminals. Many individuals in Edo State, particularly those from rural areas, have limited understanding of cybersecurity practices, making them vulnerable to attacks such as phishing scams, online fraud, and identity theft.

Small businesses in Edo State are also prime targets. Many businesses, especially in the informal sector, operate with minimal cybersecurity measures, making them easy targets for hacking and fraud. Cybercriminals exploit these vulnerabilities to steal sensitive data or defraud businesses through fake transactions or digital payments. Lack of Capable Guardianship in Edo State: One of the critical factors enabling cybercrime in Edo State is the lack of capable guardianship. While there have been efforts to curb cybercrime, including the establishment of the Nigeria Computer Emergency Response Team (ngCERT) and the Nigerian Cybercrime Act, these measures have not been fully implemented at the grassroots level. Law enforcement agencies, including the police and the EFCC, often lack the technical capacity to investigate and prosecute cybercrimes effectively.

2.5 Gap in Literature

Despite extensive research on cybercrime and its impact on societies globally, several gaps remain in the literature, particularly when it comes to the context of Nigeria, and more specifically Edo State. Based on the empirical review, these gaps can be categorized into areas relating to theoretical frameworks, regional-specific studies, data collection methods, and practical applications in combating cybercrime. Most empirical studies on cybercrime in Nigeria focus on the general national level, often neglecting regional perspectives. Studies from regions like Lagos or Abuja dominate the literature, with limited attention given

to the dynamics of cybercrime in specific states like Edo. While national-level studies provide a broad overview, they fail to capture the unique socio-economic, cultural, and technological factors influencing cybercrime in Edo State. Edo State has its own socio-economic challenges, such as high youth unemployment, increasing internet penetration, and a cultural acceptance of "get-rich-quick" schemes, all of which can foster cybercrime. This regional specificity remains under-researched. There is a need for more localized studies focusing on Edo State to understand the unique causes, patterns, and prevention strategies for cybercrime in this region.

3. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the survey type of research. A survey research design is one in which a researcher observes the object of study as they are without manipulating them with the aim of collecting firsthand information. Being descriptive in nature, this research has drawn most contemporary documents. Books and journals, even online sources played enormous role in the reality of this work. Furthermore, this research makes use of data, gathered from secondary sources, such as personal experience, and qualitative survey. The population of the study is the reviews of cases of Cybercrime in Edo State. The study was based on a description approach, relying on secondary sources for data collection and analysis. The secondary source data comprise of review of journals, newspapers, and publications relevant to the study.

4. Analysis of Content

This section presents the findings of the study in relation to the objectives. The study aimed to explore the causes, impacts, and measures associated with cybercrime in Edo State, Nigeria, with a specific focus on the preventive strategies, the role of local law enforcement, and socio-economic factors influencing the prevalence of cybercrime in the region. It is pertinent to note that poverty is not a phenomenon that affects only Nigeria. Although, the country has a high percentage ratio, such that it has been christened the poverty capital of the world. In line with this, Hassan (2010) opined that, poverty is a startling reality that has both political and social outcomes. It exists throughout epochs and societies irrespective of cultural affinity and geographical locations. Also, Suleiman (2016) corroborated the above view when he argued that poverty can be labelled as a situation in which a person or community is lacking the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living because the income level from employment is so low that basic human needs cannot be met.

Although, the nature of poverty may vary from community to community, culture to culture and time to time but poverty persists in both rural and urban areas alike. Today the poor standard of living in Nigeria has created rooms for poverty and unemployment to thrive. This has driven the youths in Edo State into different types of crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, murder, yahoo plus activities etc. More worrisome is the fact that graduates do not have job upon completion of their youth services and there is no guarantee of jobs for those who are in school. This indicates clearly and distinctly that the financial pressure is on the parents, and all these invariably, drive these youths in embracing this obnoxious act in order to survive. For them it is like a means of surviving the hard-economic situation in the country indicated by no job, bad economy, no infrastructure, mono economy etc instead of just sitting at home and becoming a burden to their parents. They then decide to look for a way out to make the easiest and quickest money, that is, yahoo plus activities. They engage in it without any iota of guilt.

Corroborating the above view, Suleiman, (2016) noted that our young adults have become scandalous individuals due to the increase of unemployment in Nigeria. Though, the popular sayings that an idle mind is the devil workshop, but the truth is that Nigerian government underestimate the negative mindset of unemployed people. If not, what workable palliatives are on ground to create unemployment and alleviate poverty. There are many graduates that excel in their various studies and still roaming round the streets for many years without any reliable jobs. You see them joining the dropped-out students and Yahoo-boys with

luxurious and valuable property which are acquired through sign-in and logout indoor game of Yahoo-Yahoo. They have no choice than to collaborate with fraudster in order to survive.

High rate of unemployment is another factor that is responsible for the prevalence of yahoo yahoo in Nigeria. Unemployment breeds poverty and promotes thuggery, touting, violence, ritual killing and, ultimately, armed robbery. All these social vies constituted security challenges in Nigeria, Alufo (2013). There is no gainsaying that unemployment pervades the nooks and crannies of the country, especially among the youths. This is noticeable in the participation of youths in the various government schemes (like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, National Poverty Eradication Programme, Sure-P and the most recent N-Power) rolled out over the years to bring to its teeming population. No wonder Alana (2003) opines that there is a large population of unemployed youths. It could be rightly said that the idle minds have become the devil's workshop. This view is supported by a report published by punch newspaper in 2019.

The study made it known that unemployment has translated into insecurity in Nigeria. Ibrahim (2019) in a report published online by the Nigeria Deposit Insurance that people perpetrate a significant proportion of these general crimes in their youthful ages. Similarly, it is no longer news that higher institutions in the country continue to churn out undergraduates with no corresponding means of employment whatsoever. Recent statistics shows that there are over 20 million unemployed persons in the country (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Kazeem, 2020).

According to the former Minister of Labour, Dr. Chris Ngige, the Nigeria unemployment rate is 33.5% in 2020 (The Premium Times, 2 May 2019). Yet, the rate at which jobs are provided is not commensurate to the number of labour force in the country. Hence, an individual whose quest is to make a living at all cost end up in illicit activities when there are no meaningful avenues of make up a living or improving their livelihood, Osuntiyi et al (2021). More so, (57%) of the respondents believed unemployment is also a trend that has contributed to the engagement of youths in yahoo yahoo.

While Nigeria has made significant progress in developing legal frameworks to combat cybercrime, there are still numerous challenges in enforcing these laws at the state level, particularly in Edo State. Key issues such as insufficient resources, inadequate training for law enforcement officers, and poor coordination among agencies hinder the effective implementation of cybercrime laws. Strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies and raising public awareness about cybercrime laws are essential steps toward improving the fight against cybercrime in Edo State. According to Okorie (2019), one of the major challenges in combating cybercrime in Nigeria is the lack of adequate resources for law enforcement agencies. The Edo State Police Command, for example, often faces significant resource constraints that hinder its ability to investigate and prosecute cybercrime cases effectively. Furthermore, cybercrime investigators require specialized skills and knowledge to handle complex cases, yet there is a shortage of trained personnel in Edo State (Adeoye, 2020).

The effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in Edo State is also hindered by the lack of coordination between different government bodies. Although the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) play significant roles in cybercrime prevention, there is often poor communication and cooperation between state and national agencies, which limits the effectiveness of anti-cybercrime efforts (Igbinovia, 2021). The summary of these is that fraud has been perpetuated in colonial Nigeria and only reached zenith point with the Advent of the internet.

According to the FBI's 2017 Internet Crime Report, the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) received about 300,000 complaints. Victims lost over $1.4 billion in online fraud in 2017. According to a study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and McAfee, cybercrime costs the global economy as much as $600 billion, which translates into 0.8% of total global GDP. Online fraud appears in many forms. It ranges from email spam to online scams. Internet fraud can occur even if partly

based on the use of Internet services and is mostly or completely based on the use of the Internet Stephen (2016).

The internet came with increased crime at a digital scale. It became easier to swindle unsuspecting individuals even without meeting them physically. However, since it seems people are becoming wiser, perpetrators resort to diabolism in order to get their victims do their biddings.

This was how Yahoo-plus came to be. Yahoo-plus is the extended form of yahoo internet fraud using charms and other diabolic manipulations to trap and get a victim to act, especially by parting huge sums of money. Definitely, a victim cannot be swindled for paltry sum or if the person has nothing to offer. In the course of their relationship with the victim, the perpetrators access the capabilities, wealth and fortunes of their victims to know the extent of defrauding them. However, crime does not thrive in a vacuum. Crimes are mostly a reflection of a failed society where Justice and equity are not entrenched.

Alamu (2021) observes that as banking sectors began to explore the beauty of the internet around 1999, so also the internet fraud started 'hacking' into the net in Nigeria, these internet hackers or scammers are called yahoo boys. These yahoo boys started bombarding few cybercafés. These dubious internet fraudsters became pronounced inn Benin city, Edo state in 1999 to be precise, they started to scam people, especially foreigners by duping them of thousands of dollars, Euros, Pound sterling and many others. As time went on, 'Nanny Billing' came into the fore. 'Nanny Billing' is a process whereby those who are willing to do babysitting are sought to through the internet. These yahoo guys used this avenue to dupe their victims through online transaction agents (Alamu 2021).

In addition, online dating, match making and online marriage were included in earnest. These fraudsters used this avenue to swindle white ladies and cajoled them into marriage, all in falsehood. In this regard, the majority of these 'yahoo boys' are easily distinguished by their profligacy, flamboyant lives, wasteful and carefree lives, changing of cars and clubbing.

Studies have revealed some of the avenues explored by these internet fraudsters. At the heart of many frauds is the promise of unrealistically high return on investments. A common get-rich-quick scam is the pyramid scheme. Though, there are many variations of this scam, the usual design is for investors to recruit other investors for which the recruiters receive a commission. 'Chain letters' work in the same work in the same way by asking you to send money to people are the top of a list. The fake promise is that, you will receive thousands of dollars when your name reaches the top, Awake (2004).

In response to internet fraudulent practices, the Communication Decency Act was signed into law in 1996, making it a crime for service providers to transmit indecent material over the internet. Computer fraud and Abuse Act by the United States' Department of Justice are all out to check the abuse of internet use Wallace (1999). Consequently, the 'yahoo boys' began to change strategy by booking for the available cybercafé for night use only. This was perhaps done in order to be free from the Nigerian Police. Throughout the night, these fraudsters use different kinds of charms, amulets, 'hypnotized tortoise' among others to subdue and hypnotize their victims, (Osuntuyo, Ireyomi and Aluko, 2021). At times, they impersonate their victims. This rich-quick syndrome by these 'yahoo boys' made them come up with different strategies to freely swindle their victims, thus, they are called 'yahoo maga', (Alamu 2021).

4.1 Findings of the Study

The findings of the study indicate that cybercrime in Edo State is driven by a combination of socio-economic, cultural, and technological factors. Unemployment, poverty, lack of cybersecurity awareness, and the widespread acceptance of cybercrime as a quick route to wealth are significant contributors to the growing prevalence of cybercrime in the region. Furthermore, the effectiveness of current prevention and control measures is hindered by inadequate law enforcement capacity, insufficient public awareness campaigns, and a lack of collaboration between stakeholders. To effectively combat cybercrime in Edo State, it is essential to address the root socio-economic causes, enhance law enforcement capabilities, and

improve digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness among the general population. A significant number of cybercriminals in Edo State are young individuals, primarily between the ages of 18-30. The lack of formal employment opportunities, combined with high levels of poverty, pushes many youths to seek alternative means of income, such as cybercrime.

Many individuals in Edo State, particularly the youth, perceive cybercrime as a legitimate way to achieve wealth quickly. This is reinforced by the glorification of internet fraudsters (commonly known as "Yahoo boys") in popular media and social circles, leading to widespread social acceptance of such practices. While there have been some government-led efforts to raise awareness about cybercrime, these initiatives have been sporadic and lack coordination. Many individuals, especially in rural areas, remain unaware of the risks associated with online activities, making them vulnerable to scams and fraud.

5. Recommendations

i. There should be a concerted effort to improve digital literacy at all levels of society, with a focus on educating individuals about cybersecurity risks, safe online practices, and how to protect themselves from fraud. Schools, community centers, and local governments should partner to run awareness programs that reach both urban and rural areas of Edo State.

ii. The local law enforcement agencies in Edo State must be equipped with the necessary tools, resources, and training to handle cybercrime cases effectively. This includes investing in cybercrime units within police forces, providing officers with advanced technical training, and fostering collaboration with national and international law enforcement agencies for information-sharing and joint operations.

iii. Addressing the root causes of cybercrime requires tackling the socio-economic issues that drive youths toward illegal activities. The government and private sector should prioritize initiatives that create jobs, enhance vocational training, and provide entrepreneurship opportunities for young people in Edo State. Reducing unemployment and poverty will significantly reduce the allure of cybercrime as a means of survival.

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