

**THE IMPACTS OF CYBERCRIME IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF BENIN  
CITY YOUTHS**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND  
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**OCTOBER, 2025**

## **CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this research work was carried out by **JOHN AIFEGHA IDONIJE** in the department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work first and foremost to God Almighty, whose grace, guidance, and unfailing love have seen me through every stage of my life and this academic journey.

I also dedicate it to my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Idonije O. James, whose constant love, prayers, and support have been the foundation of my growth. A special dedication goes to my mother, whose encouragement—spiritually, physically, and financially—has been a pillar of strength and inspiration throughout this journey.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

With the advancement of technology, the development of information and communication technology has revolutionized the world as it is and effectively transformed the way people communicate, do business, and interact.<sup>1</sup> While these advances have been extremely advantageous, it cannot be denied that they have also brought with them emerging threats, most prominently is the introduction of cybercrime.<sup>2</sup> In recent times, Nigeria has seen a surge of cybercrime-related activities.<sup>3</sup> One of the region worst affected is Benin City where the practice has had an increasingly expanding part to play in the way of life, goals, and sustenance of the youth. This study focuses on understanding the impact of cybercrime on Benin City's young population.

Cybercrime refers to any criminal behavior that is carried out through the internet or other forms of online media, including identity theft, phishing, cyber fraud, hacking, cyber bullying, and cyber stalking.<sup>4</sup> An important cybercrime in Nigeria is well referred to by the phrase "Yahoo Yahoo," which accounts for fraud schemes where the perpetrators use cunning and deception to scam unsuspecting victims, who are often foreigners, through romance scams, business proposal scams, and phishing.<sup>5</sup> The glamorization of cybercrime by segments of society, the creation of online criminal networks, and perceived economic advantages of the activities have all contributed to the increasing youth involvement in cybercrime in the city.

The youth in the urban area are the most vulnerable since they are both literate in information and communication technology and also extremely active on social media.<sup>6</sup> Such websites are both instrumental to the perpetration of cybercrimes and websites where spoils are boasted about. This has created an asymmetric value system in which one is rewarded not by hard work or true entrepreneurship, but by one's capacity to lay hands on quick money, legality notwithstanding. The government of Nigeria, the law enforcement authorities, and the international community as well all recognized the growing menace of cybercrime and introduced a range of measures to combat it.<sup>7</sup> For example, the enactment of the Cybercrimes Act of 2015 was a significant legislative achievement toward criminalizing most forms of cybercrimes and providing guidelines on investigation and prosecution. Nonetheless, despite all these attempts, enforcement is poor because of corruption, lack of technological capacity, scarcity of cyber-forensic professionals, and the sheer volume of cybercrime activity.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, attitudes toward cybercrime within society, where culprits are sometimes glorified as being clever or courageous, continue to obstruct real progress in combating the threat. Cybercrime has negatively affected community trust and social cohesion in Benin City. Domestic and international victims bear heavy financial and emotional losses, and the city collectively has gained a negative reputation globally as a hub for cybercriminals.<sup>9</sup> This kind of reputation isolates legitimate business from investment and tourism and foreign partnerships. For those young people who are not cybercrime participants but live in a society in which it is widespread, it is always the obstacle of how to avoid being

stigmatized or misidentified. This creates a compounded dynamic where both perpetrators and non-perpetrators feel the greater consequences of cybercrime.

Emergence of cybercrime as a top issue among young people in Benin City is a critical area of study for scholars, policymakers, educators, and community leaders. There is a pressing need to understand its underlying causes, the distinctive nature of its impact, and the optimal ways of prevention and remediation. This study aims to explore these dimensions in an analysis of the impact of cybercrime on Benin City's young population, the relationship between economic poverty, empowerment by technology, social pressure, and official reaction. The findings of this study will be contributed to the overall discourse in cybersecurity, youth development, and Nigerian national policy.

### **Aim and Objective of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to critically analyze and examine the impact cybercrime has on Benin City Youths in Nigeria. More specifically, the objectives of this research include:

- a) To examine the factors contributing to youth involvement in cybercrime in Benin City.
- b) Assess the impact of cybercrime on the personal, educational, and psychological development of youths in Benin City.
- c) Evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal and institutional frameworks in curbing cybercrime among youths in the region.

- d) Recommend strategies for preventing youth participation in cybercrime and promoting positive digital engagement.
- e) Investigate the role of social media and peer influence in shaping youth attitudes toward cybercrime in Benin City.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study is geographically limited to Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Thematically, it focuses on identifying the causes and analyzing the effects of cybercrime on individuals, families, businesses, and institutions within this urban context Benin City Youths, the capital of Edo State, is particularly significant in the study of cybercrime for various reasons. The scope of this study covers the introduction of cyber-based crimes to Benin City from 2015 to 2025.

### **Methodology**

In order to achieve a comprehensive and interesting study, a quantitative and method is employed. The method that would be used to carry out this research is the historical method which essentially provides opportunity for the utilization of data collected from primary and secondary sources.

## **Primary Sources**

Oral interviews conducted in Benin City will be used to obtain the information about the subject.

## **Secondary Sources**

Books, journal articles, newspaper reports, and credible online materials will be used to obtain information about the subject.

## **Literature Review**

Scholars such as Tade and Aliyu argue that cybercrime in Nigeria evolved alongside global internet access, but took on unique dimensions in local settings where youth unemployment, poverty, and weakened legal enforcement coalesced.<sup>10</sup> According to their study, Nigerian cybercriminals have developed innovative strategies to manipulate global digital systems, and many operate from urban centers like Lagos, Abuja, and increasingly, Benin City.<sup>11</sup> The term “Yahoo Yahoo” itself reflects the fusion of Western internet platforms and localized criminal ingenuity.<sup>12</sup> A significant portion of scholarly focus has been devoted to understanding the motivations and backgrounds of youths who engage in cybercrime. For example, Ojedokun and Eraye conducted an empirical study among undergraduates in southwestern Nigeria and found that economic deprivation, peer pressure, and societal celebration of wealth regardless of its source were leading factors in youth involvement in cybercrime.<sup>13</sup> Their findings are echoed by Olumide and Oyesomi, who argue that cybercrime has become a form of economic

survival for marginalized urban youth, who find in the internet a borderless platform to escape systemic poverty and underemployment.<sup>14</sup> This problem is exacerbated by the digital divide, which paradoxically gives Nigerian youth access to global information networks without necessarily affording them legitimate economic opportunities.

Several studies including that of Longe point out that Benin City has a disproportionate share of youth-led cybercrime activity.<sup>15</sup> Longe argues that Benin City has not only become a hub for cybercriminal activities, but also a site of cultural production where cybercrime is normalized and glamorized through music, fashion, and digital subcultures.<sup>16</sup> He observes that the prevalence of cybercrime among youths in Benin City cannot be fully understood without examining the socio-cultural dynamics at play. This includes the influence of popular culture, particularly Nigerian hip hop and Afrobeat music, which sometimes romanticize internet fraud as a pathway to affluence and fame. Moreover, the role of peer networks and social validation through digital platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok is increasingly cited in academic literature as fueling cybercrime participation. According to Adebayo and Uche, many young Nigerians involved in internet fraud publicly display their ill-gotten wealth on social media, generating a feedback loop that validates cybercriminal behavior and encourages imitation.<sup>17</sup> These online platforms serve both as tools for fraud and arenas for social endorsement. Youths are thus not merely passive victims of digital manipulation; they actively engage in creating new identities, building narratives of success, and recruiting others into the network of cybercrime.

In psychological and developmental terms, cybercrime has multiple negative consequences on youth, even for those not directly involved. Udeh and Okonkwo explore how the moral disengagement that accompanies sustained engagement in cybercrime can lead to long-term psychological distortions, such as lack of empathy, increased risk-taking behavior, and an unstable sense of identity.<sup>18</sup> The stigmatization of entire neighborhoods or communities believed to harbor cybercriminals also affects innocent youths who may be denied job opportunities, visas, and academic recognition due to the reputation of their locale. As Nwoye notes, this reputation damage not only isolates individual youths but entrenches regional marginalization, where states like Edo struggle to attract legitimate investment or business partnerships due to their association with cybercrime.<sup>19</sup>

Other scholars have interrogated the legal and institutional frameworks aimed at combating cybercrime in Nigeria. The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015 represents the primary legal instrument regulating cyber offenses in Nigeria. Akinseye and Okebukola provide a detailed analysis of the Act and observe that while it covers a wide range of offenses, its implementation has been largely ineffective due to weak institutional capacity.<sup>20</sup> Corruption among law enforcement agencies, limited training in cyber-forensics, and infrastructural deficiencies have all hampered the success of the legal response. This is reinforced by findings from Adebajo (2021), who shows that in many cases, cybercrime offenders are either not prosecuted or are able to bribe their way out of investigations.<sup>21</sup> The lack of public trust in law enforcement also means

that many victims do not report cybercrime incidents, further masking the true scale of the problem.

The relationship between cybercrime and education is another critical area addressed in the literature. Some scholars argue that Nigeria's educational system has failed to evolve in tandem with digital transformation. According to Asogwa and Okechukwu, despite the presence of ICT courses in school curricula, many students are not taught digital ethics, data privacy, or responsible internet use.<sup>22</sup> This educational gap leaves youths vulnerable not only to becoming perpetrators but also victims of cybercrime. Furthermore, the inadequacy of career counseling and digital entrepreneurship training means that many educated youths see online fraud as their only path to material success. This phenomenon has led scholars like Balogun to propose digital literacy programs as a critical intervention for youth empowerment, combining ICT skills with ethical awareness and economic alternatives.

At the sociological level, the normalization of cybercrime is a recurring theme in Nigerian literature. Several studies have explored the cultural framing of cybercrime in popular media, street slang, and local folklore. One particularly influential concept is that of "the smart hustler," a trope in Nigerian society where intelligence is measured by one's ability to "game the system," legally or otherwise. According to Nwaneri, this idea is embedded in the socio-cultural psyche, where fraudulent success stories are celebrated rather than condemned. This moral ambiguity reflects deeper crises in governance, identity, and social aspiration. The lack of visible consequences for cybercrime,

combined with endemic poverty, leads many to view online fraud as a lesser evil compared to armed robbery or kidnapping.

## **CHAPTERIZATION**

### **Chapter One: Background to the study**

This chapter comprises of an introduction to the research work, the aim and objectives and the range the research work will cover. Relevant works pertaining to the research work was reviewed.

### **Chapter Two: Origin of Cyber Crimes in Nigeria**

This chapter discusses the emergence of Cybercrime in Nigeria, the changes in Cybercrime patterns and activities, the reception of cybercrime by youths in Nigeria, particularly Benin City, and the overview of cybercrime laws and regulations in Nigeria. This chapter also pays attention to the public perception and awareness of cybercrime in Nigeria over time.

### **Chapter Three: Cybercrime and The Involvement of Youths in Benin City.**

This chapter examines the various effects of cybercrime on youths in Benin City, highlighting the social, psychological, educational, moral, and economic consequences. It explores how cybercrime distorts the value system among young people, promoting a culture that rewards quick wealth over legitimate hard work. The chapter also discusses the psychological toll on both perpetrators and innocent youths, including anxiety, fear, and social stigma. Educational pursuits are often neglected or abandoned as cybercrime

becomes a more attractive alternative, while societal perceptions increasingly associate youth with criminal behavior, regardless of individual innocence.

**Chapter Four: Impact of Cybercrimes on Benin City Youths.**

This chapter elucidates the strategies for Preventing Cybercrime, Role of Law Enforcement Agencies in Combating Cybercrime, Importance of Cyber security Awareness and Education and Assessment of the Effectiveness of Anti- Cybercrime Laws.

**Chapter Five: Conclusion**

This chapter concludes the entire research; it gives a general overview of the entire research work.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ORIGIN OF CYBER CRIME IN NIGERIA**

As the internet began to cut into Nigeria during the late 1990s and early 2000s, it also brought with it both the potential of global integration and new opportunity for criminal activity.<sup>1</sup> The internet was first accessed in Nigeria only within the urban cities of Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt.<sup>2</sup> However, as the cost of internet-enabled devices decreased and cybercafés became prevalent across the country, particularly in densely populated areas, the number of internet users grew.<sup>3</sup> This enormous diffusion rate of technology laid the foundation for the development of cybercrime in Nigeria.

The country, then, was confronted by widespread unemployment, especially among educated youth who were unable to access legitimate means of livelihood despite possessing their academic qualifications. Nigeria's structural adjustment of the 1980s and the prolonged era of economic stagnation that defined the 1990s had left deep wounds on its labour market.<sup>4</sup> In the early 2000s, the internet was no longer only seen by most young Nigerians as a tool for communication but as a path to financial emancipation through illicit means.<sup>5</sup> With fewer solid job opportunities and more awareness of the gap between developing and developed nations' wealth, people turned to online scams as a survival tactic. The lure of instant money, supported by tales of successful scammers, substantiated the spread of the trend.<sup>6</sup>

The initial Nigerian cybercriminals were very highly successful given the novelty of the internet to most of its global users. The infamous "419 scams," named after Section 419 of the Nigerian Criminal Code that criminalizes advance-fee fraud, migrated from traditional letter-based media to email media. Criminals would send thousands of unsolicited messages, promising huge sums of money for a percentage of that in exchange for smaller payments in advance to pay fictitious administrative or legal fees. They exploited the greed and trust of unsuspecting victims, who were based offshore in many cases. Though advance-fee scams existed before the internet, email made it easier, cheaper, and faster to reach potential victims, a turning point in the size and scope of Nigerian cybercrime.

Nigerian cybercriminals attempted their hand at identity theft, credit card fraud, and building fake websites offering merchandise or investment services, besides the 419 e-mail.<sup>7</sup> The rise in the number of cybercafés, especially in cities like Lagos and Benin City, provided the resources and cover required for such activities.<sup>8</sup> Cybercafés usually had liberal monitoring policies, and patrons were allowed to operate under pseudonyms and send untraceable email addresses.<sup>9</sup> Most café owners either turned a blind eye to such activities or benefited obliquely by providing technical assistance or helping obtain hijacked accounts.

In many Nigerian communities, particularly among young people, those who made it big through cybercrime were often hailed as intelligent, resourceful and able to outsmart foreigners usually seen as rich and exploitative.<sup>10</sup> The proceeds of these crimes

were used to finance lavish lifestyles, purchase expensive cars, and host expensive parties, all of which contributed to the aspirational character of cybercrime. The social acceptance of the practice made it even more attractive for youths otherwise alienated by structural disadvantage. The glamorization of "Yahoo Yahoo" in music, film, and street culture further added to its acceptability.<sup>11</sup> By the early 2000s, with cheaper home computers and mobile internet access becoming increasingly available, people no longer relied on cybercafés. With home internet connection and internet-enabled phones becoming accessible, cybercriminals were now able to operate more discreetly, as it was more challenging for law enforcement agencies to monitor their activities. Social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace, and later Instagram provided new platforms for criminal innovation.<sup>12</sup> Fraudsters began creating imaginary accounts to lure the victims into advance-fee fraud in which they would build virtual relationships with an eye to deceiving victims into sending money or revealing personal information. This was a divergence of cybercrime tactics from the traditional advance-fee fraud scheme.

### **Reception of Cybercrime by Nigerian Youths**

As opposed to the majority of countries where cybercrime is quite reasonably considered within moral absolutism, the knowledge of cybercrime among young Nigerians has been shaped by lived experiences in a world where structural poverty, joblessness, and palpable socio-economic disparities meet the appeal of digital connectivity.<sup>13</sup> The initial growth of Nigeria's cybercrime culture aligned with a period of

structural economic crisis.<sup>14</sup> The country was experiencing chronic joblessness, inflation, and political instability by the late 1990s and early 2000s, all conditions which fell disproportionately on young shoulders.<sup>15</sup> Young graduates graduating from universities had no actual job opportunities, and the less educated had even bleaker options. Here, the arrival of affordable internet access, especially with the proliferation of cybercafés, presented a non-traditional and alternative way of financial pursuit. For the vast majority of young people, the internet was initially not a tool for research in the name of education or for entrepreneurship-driven innovation but a space where one could pursue wealth instantaneously without the bureaucratic and often corrupt institutions of the mainstream economy.<sup>16</sup>

The initial generation of Nigerian youth who came into cybercrime—popularly referred to locally as "Yahoo Boys"—had created a subculture that cross-pollinated cyber know-how, street smarts, and social engineering.<sup>17</sup> They were in every major urban city, especially Lagos, Benin City, Port Harcourt, and Ibadan. In all these cities, they were rather conspicuous figures. They were recognized by their flashy attire, designer jewelry, luxury cars, and frequent visits to nightclubs. These and other manifestations of prosperity became social evidence for the confirmation of the idea that cybercrime was a path to living well.<sup>18</sup> Among their contemporaries, these individuals tended to inspire admiration rather than denunciation, their adventures retold as cunning victories against credulous foreigners or rapacious economic systems.<sup>19</sup>

Music and entertainment contributed much to the mediation and amplification of youth reception of cybercrime. Nigerian hip-hop and Afrobeat musicians, especially during the mid-2000s, made references to "Yahoo Yahoo" lifestyles in their songs, sometimes celebrating the wealth and prestige attached to it. The convergence of cybercrime imagery with popular music not only legitimized the activity among vulnerable listeners but also linked it to narratives of hustle, survival, and resilience. Cybercriminals were occasionally depicted in films and street culture as modern versions of the Robin Hood figure, using their profits to subsidize relatives, fund local businesses, or maintain communities that were otherwise marginalized by the state. This idealized structure was susceptible to the corruption of moral resistance amongst some young people, making cybercrime a viable—if unconventional—career path.<sup>20</sup> These diaspora networks have frequently been used, either directly or indirectly, in supporting cybercrime activities. The youth population of the city has also experienced chronic underemployment in spite of comparatively high levels of education, providing rich fields for recruitment into cybercrime. In some neighbourhoods, cybercafés were training grounds on which new entrants could be instructed in the basics of internet-based fraud by more experienced operators. No amount of overstatement can exhaust the impact of peers in Nigerian youths' embracement of cybercrime. In the majority of groups, especially urban ones, stories of successful cybercriminals become frequently accompanied by trappings of wealth and adventure. Young people who see their peers getting suddenly more expensive phones, designer fashion, or high-end cars are likely to

think of cybercrime as an option. This is especially true where mobility choices are lacking.

In addition to peer networks, cybercrime has been heightened in consumer culture by social media visual culture among Nigerian youth. Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok provide platforms upon which "Yahoo Boys" are able to showcase their lifestyles before very large audience bases. Images of foreign holidays, champagne toasts, and expensive purchases are typically accompanied by celebrating 'the hustle'. To young viewers, such post is both aspirational and advertorial. The selective pictures cover the risks and moral toll of cybercrime, focusing instead on its benefits. In others, cybercriminals make a special effort to establish online personas to lure in new members or psych out rivals, further legitimizing their behavior in youth culture.

The Nigerian cybercrime law has evolved as a result of the rising scope, depth, and public visibility of computer crimes in the past thirty years. Nigeria's journey towards enacting cybercrime legislation has been shaped by a combination of internal demands, international pressures, technological development, and Nigeria's unique social and economic environment.<sup>21</sup> While cybercrime did not occur at all before the widespread use of the internet, the arrival of global connectivity during the late 1990s and early 2000s revealed wide gaping loopholes in Nigeria's legal framework. These loopholes left the law enforcement agencies powerless in prosecuting the offenders and protecting individuals, organisations, and government facilities from the rising tide of cybercrime, identity theft, hacking, and other computer-related crimes.

Before the enactment of specialized cybercrime laws, Nigerian law enforcers relied on existing criminal laws, the first of which is the Criminal Code Act operating in Southern Nigeria and the Penal Code operating in the North. These legislations contained provisions that were adaptable to certain forms of cyber-linked crimes, such as fraud, forgery, receiving by false pretenses, and conspiracy. But because they had been drafted during an earlier era before the emergence of the internet, these legislations were unsuitable to cover crimes that involved cross-border data transfers, anonymous communications, and remote computer system network accesses. Prosecutors and judges found it difficult to translate fixed definitions of "documents," "property," and "trespass" into digital properties and actions. Cybercriminals, for the most part, exploited these ambiguities in the law, running sophisticated enterprises with little concrete evidence and out of territorial reach of customary policing.

Nigeria's initial institutional response to the cybercrime challenge was the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) established in 2002 by the EFCC (Establishment) Act, although its mandate was considerably broader in scope, extending to all economic and financial crimes.<sup>22</sup> Practically, the EFCC was pulled into combating internet fraud most prominently the activities of so-called "Yahoo Boys" and well-organized cybercrime syndicates. The powers given to the Commission under its enactment legislation to conduct investigations, to arrest and prosecute those suspected of cyber-enabled fraud were still limited by the lack of a clear statutory basis for offences

such as hacking, phishing, and denial-of-service attacks that did not fit within established legal definitions.

The climax in the legislation was with the enactment of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act 2015. The Act was designed to provide a comprehensive framework for identification, investigation, prosecution, and sanctioning of cyber-related offenses as well as for the creation of preventive and regulatory measures. It was also aligned with Nigeria's global responsibility under international agreements, namely the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention) and the Council of Europe's Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, to which Nigeria has signified its intention to harmonize its domestic laws.<sup>23</sup>

The Cybercrimes Act 2015 addresses offences in a comprehensive manner, beginning with unauthorised access to computer systems. It is an offense under the Act to knowingly access any network or computer system without a legal right, with or without such access involving further criminal purpose. The Act further criminalizes data interference, i.e., unauthorized alteration, erasure, or hiding of computer data. This aspect is particularly relevant to crimes of website defacement, database intrusion, and ransomware attacks. Interestingly, the Act criminalizes not only the actual commission of these crimes but also attempting them, thereby allowing law enforcers to act anticipatorily in preventing cyberattacks.

Arguably the most visible form of cybercrime in Nigeria cyber-facilitated fraud is also specifically addressed by the Act. Forgery, fraud and identity theft using computers,

like phishing, internet impersonation, and the use of stolen identities to procure money or property, are criminalized under Section 14. The penalties specified are severe, with sentences ranging from seven years to life imprisonment, depending on the gravity of the offence and the utilisation of strategic national infrastructure.

The Cybercrimes Act also covers crimes relating to child pornography, cyberstalking, and cybersquatting. Cyberstalking, on the other hand, has been a problematic provision, wherein it includes computer systems use in transmitting obnoxious, threatening, or fictitious messages with the intent to cause harm or annoyance. It has been argued that the provision can be easily misused in order to curtail freedom of expression as well as harass journalists or political opponents. However, it is a legislative attempt to address the misuse of social networking websites for intimidation and harassment.

### **Public Perception and Awareness of Cybercrime**

Public perception and awareness of cybercrime in Nigeria have evolved significantly over the past three decades, shaped by cultural attitudes, generational experiences, socioeconomic facts, and the rapid diffusion of digital technologies. How Nigerians view, interprets, and responds to cybercrime is not detachable from the social environment in which internet access became widespread.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as advance fee fraud and email scams were becoming widely recognized, general knowledge of cybercrime was relatively low

outside of some urban and professional communities.<sup>24</sup> The majority of Nigerians did not have much contact with computers, and even fewer had constant access to the internet. In those early days, cybercrime was not so much perceived as an existential national threat but rather a venture reserved for the small group of individuals with unusual technical skills.<sup>25</sup> This perception began to change with stories of "419 scams" gaining traction in the local and international media, which habitually portrayed Nigeria as a haven for internet scamming globally.<sup>26</sup> Although such reports were bad for the nation's image abroad, at home, opinion was divided. For some, such scammers were criminals tarnishing the nation's image and preying on unsuspecting victims.<sup>27</sup> To others, particularly within certain youth populations, there was bemused entertainment or even muted respect for the resourcefulness and daring of those who could outwit wealthy foreigners.

Nigeria's economic instability, its high unemployment rates, and endemic disparities created an environment in which the search for immediate financial gains could be rationalized as a survival necessity. For some young Nigerians, cybercrime was not framed as a moral failing but as a creative, if illicit, application of available resources. Mainstream popular culture, including music, slang, and fashion trends celebrating sudden wealth, ostentatious lifestyles, and contempt for mainstream authority, further glamorized "Yahoo Boys," as internet scammers came to be known. In a few communities, particularly in parts of Benin City and Lagos, the cybercriminals were not isolated outcasts but visible members of society who invested in local businesses,

sponsored events, and donated cash and gifts to neighbours. This contributed to a view among some residents that such criminals were benefactors, rather than predators, despite the fact that what they were doing was illegal.

The terrain of awareness has also been shaped by government-organized campaigns and education programs. Organizations such as the EFCC, NCC, and NITDA have from time to time launched public awareness campaigns to enlighten citizens on the most common cybercrime tactics and how they can avoid them. These campaigns have been via radio jingles, television advertisements, school seminars, and the internet. While these efforts have been helpful to a certain degree, they are often compromised by their small scale, sporadic funding, and urban bias, which result in rural populations being poorly served. In most parts of Nigeria, particularly rural regions, exposure to authoritative information about cybercrime is minimal, and awareness only occurs after personal or localized experiences of victimization.

Nigerian audiences are also more aware over time of the international dimensions of cybercrime. Extraditions of high-profile Nigerian cybercriminals to face trial abroad have been given heavy media coverage and have served to generate a view that cybercrime is not only harmful to individuals but also damages the international reputation of the country. Greater numbers of Nigerians today understand that online fraud serves to underwrite negative perceptions of Nigeria, complicate global travel for Nigerian citizens, and may deter foreign investment. This general understanding has, in certain quarters, fostered a stronger moral outrage against cybercrime, based not only on

its direct wickedness but also on its indirect economic and reputational expense to Nigeria as a whole.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CYBERCRIME AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTHS IN BENIN CITY**

Benin City has over the past two decades emerged as a frontline source for the conduct of cybercrime activities, particularly among the youth.<sup>1</sup> This cannot be adequately understood without taking account of the socio-economic change, technological change, and cultural change that took place in the region over the same time frame. The proliferation of internet connectivity, mobile technology, and online communication devices has enabled unprecedented access to economic participation and knowledge sharing.<sup>2</sup> With these genuine opportunities, however, have come concurrent rises in the abuse of cyberspace for illicit use.

The socio-economic profile of the perpetrators cuts across the different socio-economic groups. Whereas unemployment and underemployment are still strong predictors, most perpetrators belong to families that are not poor.<sup>3</sup> Some have finished tertiary studies but are unable to find stable, decent-paying employment consistent with their qualifications. There are also dropouts and students who, lured by the promise of quick wealth, abandon formal education altogether. Young people in Benin City are drawn to cybercrime because it promises not to be subject to the structural barriers to advancement available in Nigeria's failing economy.

The popularity of Benin City as a hotbed of cybercrime has also been fueled by the publicly obvious prosperity of a few who have enormously profited from it. Extravagant displays of wealth—through luxurious cars, costly mansions, designer

clothing, and wild parties—are, in most cases, both a tool of recruitment and a symbol of status.<sup>4</sup> That has increasingly stripped fraud of the stigma that once used to be associated with it. Instead of being shunned, the offenders in certain instances are celebrated in their community; further encouraging the notion that cybercrime is a good way to achieve prosperity. Such a reality renders the city a unique case study on the interrelationship of digital technology, crime, and young people's culture in Nigeria.

### **Youth Involvement in Cybercrime**

The youth population in Benin City is disproportionately affected by structural economic challenges such as unemployment, underemployment, and the declining capacity of both public and private institutions to absorb graduates into stable professions. Many young people, after years of formal education, find themselves excluded from dignified employment opportunities.<sup>5</sup> The disillusionment that results from this gap between educational attainment and actual socio-economic advancement fuels a search for alternative sources of livelihood. Cybercrime emerges as an attractive option, particularly because it appears to bypass the bureaucratic and structural hurdles that define Nigeria's formal economy.<sup>6</sup> It offers the promise of wealth without requiring access to scarce opportunities, patronage networks, or scarce capital investment. This perception has made it especially enticing to those who feel excluded from the conventional routes to success.

At the same time, the digital revolution in Nigeria has equipped youths with the tools that make cybercrime possible. Benin City has witnessed a rapid penetration of

internet connectivity, widespread availability of smartphones, and increasing digital literacy among young people. These technological advancements, which were initially celebrated as gateways to knowledge sharing, innovation, and global participation, have paradoxically also expanded the opportunities for illicit digital practices.<sup>7</sup> Social media platforms, messaging applications, and online marketplaces have been repurposed as instruments of deception, fraud, and identity theft. For many youths, cybercrime requires little more than a computer, an internet connection, and the ability to manipulate trust—tools that are readily available and easy to conceal from public scrutiny.

However, the involvement of youths in cybercrime in Benin City cannot be explained purely by economic desperation or technological accessibility. A crucial cultural dimension underpins this trend, as cybercrime has been normalized. The display of wealth by successful cybercriminals, popularly referred to as “Yahoo Boys,” plays a central role in shaping the aspirations of young people.<sup>8</sup> Luxurious cars, lavish lifestyles, and flamboyant spending habits are visible markers of success in the city. These individuals often parade their wealth openly, organizing parties, sponsoring social events, and presenting themselves as benefactors within their communities. Such acts create a powerful narrative that associates cybercrime with prosperity, influence, and respect. In a society where material success often overshadows the legitimacy of the means employed to attain it, young people are easily persuaded that cybercrime is not only acceptable but also a rational path to upward mobility.

## **Social Impacts of Cybercrime on Youths**

At a basic level, involvement in cybercrime has the immediate social status. Teenagers who are successful with such ventures are accepted into high-end social circles, possess higher class status amongst their peers, and command respect within some subsections of society. The ability to support a flashy lifestyle is seen as achievement in a materialist culture where such commodities are viewed as the most outward expression of success. Expensive automobiles, designer apparel, high-end gadgets, and extravagant charity in public fashion—such as funding events or assisting buddies with cash—raises the social status of cybercrime actors.

However, the increase in social status does not come cheaply at the expense of community values and harmony. The glamorization of ill-gotten wealth instills a materialistic society, where value is measured in terms of success economically rather than integrity, hard work, or contribution to society.<sup>9</sup> This shift in value orientation demoralizes conventional moral structures and instills a transactional approach in relationships. Friendships may be established less on respect and common values and more on the ability to provide material rewards. In this sense, those young people who are not actively involved in cybercrime feel marginalized, taunted, or identified with failure.

The ripple effect also transcends peer groups to the general opinion of Benin City youth. The city has come to enjoy a national—and, more so, international—notoriety as a center of internet frauds.<sup>10</sup> This reputation spills over to include individuals who have no

stake whatsoever in such illegal activities. Innocent youths may be suspected when applying for jobs, on the internet when conducting transactions, or when traveling abroad just because of their place of origin. Such mass stereotyping erodes trust between the city youth and an external actor so that they end up being isolated and fueling the very same segregation on which cybercrime thrives.<sup>11</sup>

Socially, cybercrime also changes community expectations. Previous generations will reluctantly embrace the practice as a survival strategy, particularly when criminals invest their earnings to take care of kin, fund community initiatives, or make overt contributions to religious institutions.<sup>12</sup> This quiet acceptance muddles the definition of good and evil and makes it even harder for community leaders to discourage young people from engaging in scams.

### **Psychological Impacts of Participating in Cybercrime**

Participation in cybercrime has serious psychological impacts on Benin City youths, whether the individuals themselves are directly involved or indirectly impacted by the stigmatization that accompanies it.<sup>13</sup> For the direct perpetrators, one of the most glaring mental burdens may be the constant fear of being caught and arrested. Cybercrime is risky in nature, and knowing that law enforcement agencies both within and outside the country are continually developing new ways of tracking offenders creates a perpetual feeling of tension.<sup>14</sup> The tension manifests as hypersensitivity, inability to relax, and even paranoia in others.

Over time, having to bear the weight of possible arrest can lead to chronic stress, which comes in the form of insomnia, irritability, or psychosomatic diseases like headaches and stomachaches. The necessity of maintaining secrecy in concealing the source of one's income also leads to emotional isolation. Abusers struggle to have intimate personal relationships because they are afraid of being discovered, thus feeling alone despite seemingly active social lives.<sup>15</sup>

There are also innocent youths who grapple with their own psychological demons. To be stereotyped as probable criminals on account of the person's age and place of residence is demoralizing.<sup>16</sup> Police harassment, job suspicions from potential employers, and strained inter-peer interactions fuel the sense of injustice and resentment. This environment can compromise self-esteem, decrease motivation, and push certain individuals to the same behaviors for which they are falsely stereotyped. The continuous bargaining of identity within a context of overall suspicion may lead to prolonged emotional damage.

### **Implications of Cybercrime on Education**

The relationship between education and cybercrime among young people in Benin City is strained and broken.<sup>17</sup> For the majority of criminals, temptation for quick money via cybercrime is far more appealing than the long-term reward of education. Academic studies are normally sacrificed, with attendance declining and performance deteriorating as more and more time is devoted to planning, executing, and monitoring fraudulent activities.<sup>18</sup> The increasing normalization of cybercrime within some segments also

diminishes the perceived value of academic studies. A number of the youth attend tertiary education not with a goal to complete a degree, but as a cover for their illicit businesses, providing a socially acceptable façade while they engage in online fraud.<sup>19</sup> In others, students will leave altogether once they begin experiencing financial affluence from cybercrime, realizing that degrees are not necessary for their desired lifestyle. The effects of such abandonments are disastrous. The city is deprived of the potential human resources that are capable of contributing positively to its social and economic development. The underdevelopment trap is sustained as the workforce remains under the grip of individuals who are not skilled and disciplined enough for sustainable development.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the loss of academic commitment is a negative example to younger learners, which can cause them to believe that it's easier to achieve success through crime than through vocational or academic achievement.

### **Economic Impacts of Cybercrime on Youths and the Community**

For individuals who participate in these activities, cybercrime tends to bring significant short-term monetary gain. The sudden infusion of funds can transform living standards overnight. Criminals are now able to purchase indulgences that, previously, were merely out of reach, including high-performance vehicles, expensive real estate, foreign travel, and specialty consumer goods.<sup>21</sup> This newfound purchasing power drives some segments of the domestic economy, particularly real estate, tourism, and luxury retail. But this apparent economic benefit is a chimera. The wealth generated through cybercrime does not take the form of long-lasting, productive enterprise. It is transient

and precarious, founded on the perpetual acts of deception and elusion from law authorities. Unlike revenue earned through lawful business or labor, the money made from cybercrime rarely goes into long-term investment that fosters community development. Instead, it is likely to create wasteful expenditure and conspicuous consumption that fuels a cycle of materialism without contributing to the overall economic wealth of the city. To the rest of society, cybercrime poses serious economic risks. When the city becomes associated with crime, honest companies and citizens will struggle to earn the trust of business partners, investors, and consumers outside of the city.<sup>22</sup> This erosion of trust can deter business growth, deter foreign investment, and complicate international trade. Banks can impose additional scrutiny on transactions in the region, resulting in delays, increased charges, or refusal.

### **Social Stigma and Criminalization of Youth Identity**

Perhaps the most pervasive effect of cybercrime in Benin City is the social stigma it has cast upon the youth of the city. The years have witnessed the image of the city among "Yahoo boys" and other cybercrime syndicates as an overbearing stereotype erasing the achievements of good youths. Regardless of their movement in Nigeria or abroad, Benin youths have a higher tendency to be accused merely because they are from the city. Suspicions manifest in numerous ways—excessive questioning at airports, taking a longer time to process visa applications, or suspicion in online and offline business. The stigma is particularly damaging in work and academic settings. Employers, anxious to avoid reputational impairment, may avoid employing individuals from Benin

City.<sup>23</sup> Students wishing to work alongside colleagues from other locations may be met with resistance, as peers are afraid of identification with cybercrime. Even in social life, young people from the city may be subject to teasing, insinuations, or even accusations connecting them to cybercrime.<sup>24</sup> Over time, these repeated encounters with prejudice can lead to frustration, resentment, and in some instances, internalized shame. This atmosphere of suspicion has the ironic consequence. While discouraging some from cybercrime, it encourages others to follow this route. Young people who feel that they are already criminalized may think that they have little to lose by committing crimes in fact, especially when such crimes potentially bring in money. This vicious circle fuels the negative image of the city and additionally maintains the association of youth with cybercrime.

The social stigma also extends to familial and communal relations. Parents are compelled to protect children from unsubstantiated accusations, even as they themselves live in dread of their own potential implication in crime.<sup>25</sup> Communities mobilize to protect their collective reputation, but the efforts are typically undermined by publicized arrest or prosecution that confirms outsiders' stereotyping. The result is a climate of strained defensiveness in which internal and external trust are repeatedly strained.

### **Cultural Impact on Value System**

In addition to material social, psychological, and economic effects, youth engagement in cybercrime in Benin City has also resulted in a broader cultural value change and aspiration. Traditional success standards such as academic prowess,

professional attainment, and public service are increasingly eroded by easy wealth accumulation, regardless of how it is acquired. The cultural narrative has shifted toward celebrating individuals who can "make it" by whatever means are at their disposal, cultivating a utilitarian ethic that cares less about the process than the result. Popular culture supports this shift in values. Nigerian pop music, fashion, and entertainment have, in certain instances, idealized the existence of a cybercriminal as a path to liberty, respect, and fun. Social networking rings with this message through providing a steady stream of thoughtfully curated pictures of the high-end lifestyles of the successful criminals. The synthesis of peer pressure, media framing, and locally visible role models provides an aspirational environment that legitimates fraud as a possible, or even desirable, lifestyle choice.<sup>26</sup>

The erosion of value systems has implications for social cohesion and long-term development. If illegitimate means of accomplishment are accepted and even glorified, young people who choose to adhere to legal and moral norms can feel isolated or unenthusiastic. This kind of culture denies the moral authority of educators, community leaders, and law enforcement officials, making it more difficult to promote lawful behavior and civic responsibility.

Youths' participation in cybercrime in Benin City is an issue that cannot be ascribed to a single cause or impact. It is shaped by the complex interdependence of economic hardship, opportunity fostered by technology, peer pressure, and cultural

transformation. The short-term gains of cybercrime—monetary benefits, social prestige, and sense of empowerment—are matched by deep and long-term consequences: eroding ethical values, damage to the city's image, loss of educational opportunities, and perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Youths involved in cybercrime experience the thrill of quick riches and agony of long-term nervousness, isolation, and vulnerability to police action. They affect not just themselves but also unsuspecting families, friends, and society at large. At the national level, the normalization of scams undermines trust, stifles organic economic growth, and redefines cultural aspirations in ways that negatively impact sustainable development. The syndrome demands intervention of a multi-dimensional nature addressing its causative root factors unemployment, underemployment, diluted access to quality education, and pervasive corruption and cultural discourses driving the glorification of illicit success. Without such interventions, the pattern of cybercrime and its ruination of Benin City's youth will persist, threatening the social cohesiveness and economic future of the society.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **IMPACT OF CYBERCRIME ON BENIN CITY YOUTHS**

Cybercrime has emerged as one of the most pressing security challenges in the 21st century, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> As the digital economy grows and online platforms become integral to daily life, criminal exploitation of cyberspace has become increasingly prevalent.<sup>2</sup> In Benin City, the capital of Edo State, the rise of cybercrime poses significant threats to economic development, public trust, youth engagement, and national security. The city has garnered national attention for being a hotspot for internet fraud, often associated with the so-called “Yahoo Yahoo” subculture, which glamorizes online scams and fast wealth acquisition. This chapter critically examines the multifaceted impact of cybercrime in Benin City by exploring institutional and societal responses to this growing menace. This chapter begins by highlighting various strategies that have been implemented to prevent cybercrime, including both government-led initiatives and community-based interventions. It further assesses the role of law enforcement agencies in tracking, investigating, and prosecuting cyber-related offences. These agencies face a range of operational, technical, and jurisdictional challenges that affect the overall effectiveness of their efforts. Furthermore, the chapter underscores the critical importance of cyber security awareness and education in building digital resilience, especially among the youth who are most vulnerable to both perpetration and victimization. Public enlightenment campaigns, school programs, and

digital literacy initiatives are examined in this context. Lastly, an assessment of the legal framework, particularly the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, is undertaken to evaluate its effectiveness in deterring cybercrime and protecting citizens. The chapter concludes by synthesizing key findings and laying the groundwork for subsequent policy recommendations.

## **Strategies for Preventing Cybercrime in Benin City**

### **Technological Interventions**

One of the most effective ways to combat cybercrime is through the deployment of robust technological defenses.<sup>3</sup> Organizations, businesses, and public institutions in Benin City must invest in cyber security infrastructure, such as firewalls, intrusion detection systems, anti-malware software, and end-to-end encryption tools. These technologies serve as the first line of defense against unauthorized access, data breaches, and malware attacks.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of Benin City's economy, often lack the financial and technical capacity to secure their digital infrastructure. Therefore, state-sponsored subsidies or incentives for cyber security adoption can play a pivotal role in promoting broader protection.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, regular audits and risk assessments should be institutionalized in both private and public sectors to detect vulnerabilities early and implement corrective measures.

Moreover, internet service providers (ISPs) and telecommunications companies have a role to play in filtering malicious websites and preventing phishing attacks

through DNS protection services.<sup>5</sup> Real-time monitoring and reporting of cyber threats can also be improved through public-private collaboration, where the government partners with tech companies and cyber security firms to share intelligence and coordinate threat responses.<sup>6</sup>

### **Legal and Policy Frameworks**

An effective strategy for preventing cybercrime must also include a solid legal foundation. The Nigerian Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015 serves as the primary legal instrument for combating cyber offences in the country.<sup>7</sup> It criminalizes a wide range of cyber-related offences including identity theft, cyberstalking, hacking, and financial fraud. In Benin City, this law provides a crucial framework for prosecuting offenders and deterring future criminal activity.<sup>8</sup> However, prevention goes beyond legislation. It also involves policy implementation and enforcement.<sup>9</sup> The Edo State government can develop complementary policies at the state level to localize and implement the Cybercrimes Act more effectively. For example, a state-level cybercrime prevention task force could coordinate inter-agency efforts, support awareness campaigns, and manage a digital complaints platform for reporting cybercrimes.

Additionally, the law should be periodically reviewed and updated to address emerging threats such as crypto currency-related fraud, deep fake scams, and AI-enabled cybercrimes. Policymakers must ensure that the legislation is inclusive, well-publicized, and enforced without discrimination. Importantly, the legal system must balance the need

for security with respect for fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression and privacy.

### **Cyber security Education and Digital Literacy**

The role of education in cybercrime prevention cannot be overstated.<sup>10</sup> Many youths in Benin City are lured into cybercrime due to a lack of awareness, peer pressure, and the perceived economic benefits. This situation is worsened by high unemployment and limited digital literacy. As such, the integration of cyber security education into the formal school curriculum is essential.

At the secondary and tertiary education levels, students should be taught the ethical use of technology, digital hygiene, and the legal consequences of cybercrime.<sup>11</sup> Institutions like the University of Benin and other polytechnics in the city can incorporate modules on information security, computer ethics, and coding for security as part of ICT and computer science programs.

### **Community-Based and Grassroots Initiatives**

Effective cybercrime prevention must also occur at the grassroots level. Communities play a vital role in early detection and intervention.<sup>12</sup> In Benin City, traditional institutions, local government councils, religious organizations, and neighborhood associations can be mobilized to raise awareness and encourage reporting of suspicious cyber activities.

Local leaders should be empowered with training and resources to engage youth in positive dialogues about internet use. Churches, mosques, and community centers can host seminars and workshops on online safety and moral values. Such forums provide a culturally sensitive space to challenge the glorification of "Yahoo Yahoo" culture and reinforce ethical standards.

Community watch groups, modeled after neighborhood security initiatives, can be extended to monitor online behavior and report cases of suspected cybercriminal activity. These groups can work in collaboration with local law enforcement and cybersecurity agencies to bridge the gap between formal institutions and the grassroots population.

### **Economic Empowerment and Alternative Livelihoods**

Poverty and unemployment are key drivers of cybercrime, particularly among youth in urban areas like Benin City. Many young people, often unemployed graduates, turn to cybercrime as a means of survival or to achieve social status.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, providing sustainable economic opportunities is a critical prevention strategy.

Government empowerment programs such as the *N-Power* scheme, *Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWin)*, and vocational training initiatives must be revitalized and targeted at at-risk populations. Beyond training, these programs should offer startup grants, incubation hubs, and market access for young entrepreneurs. Public-private partnerships can also play a role in this regard. Tech companies and financial institutions can establish innovation hubs, digital skill centers, and mentorship schemes in

Benin City to support youth-led enterprises. Encouraging digital freelancing and remote work opportunities will help channel young people's digital skills toward productive and legal endeavors.

### **Role of Media and Popular Culture**

The media, both traditional and digital, exerts a powerful influence over public attitudes and behavior.<sup>14</sup> In Benin City, music, film, and social media often glamorize cybercriminal lifestyles, portraying internet fraudsters as successful and enviable figures. Reversing this narrative is a critical part of cybercrime prevention. Media producers should be encouraged to depict the negative consequences of cybercrime, including imprisonment, social stigma, and long-term emotional damage to victims. Nollywood filmmakers, bloggers, and influencers in Benin City can be engaged through partnerships and grants to produce content that promotes ethical behavior, entrepreneurship, and lawful success stories. In addition, radio and television stations can run public service announcements and talk shows addressing cybercrime, its impacts, and prevention tips. These programs should involve cyber security experts, law enforcement officials, and reformed offenders who can share real-life experiences.

### **Strengthening Cybercrime Reporting and Intelligence Systems**

One of the major weaknesses in cybercrime prevention in Benin City is the underreporting of incidents. Many victims do not know how or where to report, while others fear retaliation or lack confidence in law enforcement.<sup>15</sup> To address this, a

dedicated and user-friendly cybercrime reporting platform is necessary. Such a platform should allow anonymous reporting, case tracking, and timely feedback. It must be backed by a centralized database where law enforcement agencies can analyze patterns, detect syndicates, and prioritize interventions. Furthermore, intelligence gathering must be enhanced through collaborations with telecommunication companies, fintech platforms, and international cybercrime units. Investing in cyber forensics labs, digital evidence management, and advanced investigative tools will also improve early detection and deterrence.

### **Role of Law Enforcement Agencies in Combating Cybercrime**

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is the primary agency responsible for the enforcement of all criminal laws within the country, including cyber-related crimes.<sup>16</sup> Over the years, the NPF has established specialized units such as the Cybercrime Unit under the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), tasked with handling cases involving internet fraud, identity theft, cyber stalking, and related offences.<sup>17</sup> In Benin City, the activities of this unit have grown in prominence, given the city's reputation as one of Nigeria's cybercrime hotspots. The EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission) also plays a significant role in cybercrime enforcement, particularly concerning financial fraud and money laundering that occurs through online platforms.<sup>18</sup> The commission's operations in Benin City have led to multiple arrests and high-profile prosecutions of cybercriminals, especially those involved in "Yahoo Yahoo" schemes and romance scams. Through sting operations, intelligence-led investigations, and digital

forensics, the EFCC has made notable contributions to the fight against internet-based criminality in the region.

One of the most visible impacts of law enforcement activities in Benin City has been the periodic crackdowns on cybercrime syndicates. These operations often involve coordinated raids on known hotspots such as luxury apartments, hotels, and internet cafés, where suspected fraudsters are apprehended with laptops, mobile devices, and other tools of cybercrime. Such actions send a strong deterrent message to would-be offenders and demonstrate the commitment of the authorities to tackle the menace head-on. However, critics argue that these operations sometimes focus disproportionately on low-level offenders, leaving behind the sophisticated networks and financiers who enable these crimes. This limitation has raised questions about the strategic priorities of law enforcement and the need for more intelligence-driven, long-term investigative approaches.

Capacity building within the police and other law enforcement agencies is a crucial aspect of effective cybercrime control.<sup>19</sup> Cybercriminals frequently leverage cutting-edge technology, encrypted platforms, and anonymization tools, making detection and prosecution a highly technical endeavor.<sup>20</sup> In response, agencies have begun investing in digital forensic labs, training programs, and partnerships with international bodies such as INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and regional cybersecurity task forces. Officers in Benin City and across the country are being trained to handle electronic evidence, conduct cyber investigations, and understand

the legal and technical dimensions of cybercrimes. However, the progress remains uneven, with many police stations and units in the city still lacking basic ICT tools, internet access, or personnel with adequate training in cybercrime procedures. This gap significantly undermines the overall effectiveness of enforcement efforts and highlights the urgent need for resource allocation and institutional reform.

Another major issue facing law enforcement in Benin City is the problem of inter-agency coordination.<sup>21</sup> While multiple agencies have mandates that overlap in the area of cybercrime enforcement, including the NPF, EFCC, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), their efforts are often fragmented and duplicative. The absence of a unified command structure or information-sharing mechanism results in operational inefficiencies, jurisdictional conflicts, and delays in justice delivery.<sup>22</sup> A coordinated framework would greatly enhance synergy and efficiency. In Benin City, such a framework would enable faster response times, improved intelligence sharing, and the integration of local knowledge into broader investigative strategies.

Community engagement is another essential aspect of law enforcement's role in cybercrime prevention and control.<sup>23</sup> Cybercrimes, by their nature, are committed in private and often go unreported due to stigma, lack of awareness, or fear of police reprisal.<sup>24</sup> In Benin City, law enforcement agencies have begun to recognize the importance of public cooperation in combating cybercrime. Public forums, school outreach programs, and radio campaigns have been initiated in some areas to educate

residents on how to identify, prevent, and report cybercrime. Nonetheless, trust between the police and the public remains fragile, with many citizens perceiving law enforcement as corrupt, ineffective, or abusive. These perceptions deter victims and witnesses from coming forward, thus limiting the ability of the police to gather actionable intelligence or build strong cases.

Another important area is the use of technology by law enforcement to track, monitor, and apprehend cybercriminals.<sup>25</sup> In advanced jurisdictions, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and blockchain monitoring are increasingly used to detect fraud patterns and trace illegal transactions.<sup>26</sup> In Benin City, adoption of such tools is still in its infancy. While some high-profile cases have benefitted from the use of digital forensics and surveillance, the majority of investigations are still conducted manually, limiting their reach and effectiveness. Investments in modern investigative tools, along with the training to use them, are essential for keeping pace with the ever-evolving tactics of cybercriminals.

In addition to traditional enforcement mechanisms, law enforcement agencies in Benin City are increasingly encouraged to adopt a preventive policing approach. This includes identifying at-risk individuals—particularly young people in economically disadvantaged areas and engaging them through community programs, mentorship initiatives, and skills development workshops. Some units have collaborated with NGOs and educational institutions to redirect youth from criminal activity by offering alternative livelihood paths. Though still limited in scale, such programs highlight the

potential of law enforcement to act not only as enforcers of the law but also as agents of social development and change.

### **Importance of Cybercrime Awareness and Education**

As cybercrime continues to grow in frequency, sophistication, and impact, particularly in urban centers such as Benin City, there is increasing recognition that enforcement alone cannot curb this phenomenon. While law enforcement agencies and legal frameworks are crucial in addressing cybercrime post-factum, long-term and sustainable prevention hinges significantly on widespread cyber security awareness and education. In Benin City the role of public enlightenment, digital literacy, and values-based education is not only preventive but transformative. This section explores the relevance, strategies, and challenges of cyber security awareness and education in Benin City, and how they contribute to curbing the proliferation of cybercrime.

Cyber security awareness refers to the level of understanding and mindfulness individuals and organizations have regarding cyber threats, their consequences, and appropriate protective behaviors.<sup>27</sup> In a city like Benin where access to digital devices and internet connectivity has rapidly increased, many residents—including youths, business owners, and government workers—interact with the internet daily without possessing the necessary knowledge to protect themselves against online threats. This digital illiteracy has left many people vulnerable to phishing attacks, identity theft, fake job recruitment scams, and social engineering tactics. By the same token, a lack of cyber security awareness also facilitates the recruitment of young individuals into cybercrime

syndicates who capitalize on their ignorance, desperation, or misplaced sense of opportunity.

Education, in this context, plays a dual role: it acts as a shield for potential victims and a moral compass for potential offenders. Many youths involved in cybercrime in Benin City do not fully grasp the legal, ethical, and social implications of their actions. For some, it is seen as a clever hustle or a form of resistance against poverty and economic marginalization. The glorification of cybercrime in popular culture—often accompanied by images of luxury, travel, and social validation—reinforces this perception. Cybersecurity education can disrupt this narrative by equipping individuals with both the technical knowledge to navigate digital environments safely and the ethical foundation to reject illegal online practices.

Formal education systems are pivotal in delivering cyber security content, starting from primary to tertiary levels. In Benin City, schools must begin to incorporate digital literacy into their curricula, including topics such as safe browsing practices, password management, personal data protection, and the legal consequences of cybercrime. Early introduction of such content ensures that children grow up with a foundational understanding of how to interact with technology responsibly. At the secondary and university levels, more advanced concepts—such as cyberbullying, malware, online grooming, and digital footprints—can be explored. Institutions like the University of Benin and Auchu Polytechnic can lead the way by embedding cybersecurity modules into courses for computer science, law, business, and the social sciences.<sup>28</sup>

Beyond curriculum development, educators themselves must be trained and sensitized to digital safety issues. Teachers, school administrators, and lecturers play a key role in shaping student attitudes and behaviors. Without adequate training, they may overlook early warning signs of student involvement in cybercrime or inadvertently promote outdated practices that compromise digital safety. Therefore, teacher capacity-building workshops focusing on cyber ethics, internet safety, and cyber law are vital for a truly impactful cybersecurity education system.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The battle against cybercrime in Benin City reflects a broader struggle within Nigeria and across the globe to secure digital environments amidst rapid technological change. As this chapter has shown, law enforcement agencies play a central role in protecting citizens, businesses, and public institutions from the growing tide of cyber threats.<sup>1</sup> Their efforts encompass investigating criminal activities, apprehending offenders, creating public awareness, and working within a legal framework to ensure justice is served.

In Benin City, the Nigeria Police Force and specialized units such as the Cybercrime Unit have made significant strides in responding to digital crime. The EFCC and other agencies like the DSS have contributed to more complex investigations, particularly those involving financial fraud and internet scams. Their work is supported by the provisions of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, which provides the legal authority to investigate and prosecute cyber offenders.

However, the impact of these efforts has been limited by numerous challenges. Insufficient funding, poor access to digital tools, a shortage of trained personnel, and systemic issues like corruption and public mistrust have hampered effective enforcement. The anonymous and borderless nature of cybercrime also complicates investigative efforts, making local action insufficient without regional and international collaboration.

Despite these challenges, opportunities for progress exist. Law enforcement agencies have increasingly begun to partner with technology companies, banks, and international organizations to bolster their operational capabilities. Training programs, public sensitization initiatives, and the establishment of digital forensic laboratories offer a glimpse of what is possible with greater commitment and investment.

To truly combat cybercrime in Benin City, law enforcement agencies must be empowered and transformed into credible, professional, and technologically proficient institutions. Their operations must be guided by transparency, efficiency, and a deep understanding of digital threats. Moreover, public engagement is essential. Citizens must feel secure in reporting crimes and confident in the system's ability to deliver justice.

Ultimately, cybercrime is not just a technological issue—it is a societal one that touches on youth unemployment, education, poverty, and moral values. As such, law enforcement alone cannot eradicate it.<sup>2</sup> A multi-sectoral approach involving government, civil society, the private sector, and the general public is required. However, the law enforcement sector remains the backbone of any meaningful response.<sup>3</sup>

By and large, law enforcement agencies in Benin City have the mandate and potential to lead the fight against cybercrime. Their success, however, hinges on the political will to support their operations, the institutional reforms needed to enhance their performance, and the societal cooperation required to build a safer, more secure digital environment. With the right strategies and sustained effort, Benin City can become a model for cybercrime prevention and control in Nigeria and beyond.

As a result of the study, To combat cybercrime in Benin City, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. There is an urgent need for capacity building among law enforcement personnel. Officers in cybercrime units should receive continuous training in modern digital investigation techniques, computer forensics, data encryption, and cyber intelligence gathering. Training should be extended to conventional police officers as well, ensuring that all units have basic knowledge of cyber threats and procedures for handling digital evidence. This will improve investigative accuracy and facilitate better coordination across departments.
2. The provision of advanced technological infrastructure is essential. Law enforcement agencies require state-of-the-art digital forensic labs, high-speed internet connectivity, data analysis software, and surveillance tools to track and monitor cybercriminals effectively. The government should invest in equipping these agencies with tools that can detect, trace, and retrieve deleted or encrypted digital information.
3. Enhanced collaboration between law enforcement agencies and relevant stakeholders is another key recommendation. Banks, telecom companies, tech firms, and academic institutions must work closely with police and anti-corruption bodies to share data, offer technical support, and develop joint strategies for cybercrime prevention. Memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and data-sharing protocols should be formalized to enhance inter-agency cooperation and intelligence exchange.

4. Public trust must be restored to improve reporting and cooperation. Law enforcement agencies must adopt transparency and accountability in their operations. Complaints of corruption or misconduct within these agencies should be investigated promptly and punished accordingly. The creation of complaint and feedback channels that allow citizens to report cybercrime safely and without fear of reprisal is essential for improving community-police relations.

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4	Mr. Edwin omoregie	Barber	27years	Benin City	03- 10- 2025
5	Oguche Joseph Onuh	Student	20 years	Benin City	03- 10- 2025
6	Osagie Peace Otabor	Fashion Designer	33 years	Benin City	03/10/2025
7	Mr. Godwin Cephas	Bus driver	40 years	Benin City.	07- 10- 2025
8	Idemudia Henry Godfrey	Laundry Service	34 years	Benin City	07- 10- 2025
9	Mrs. Blessing Attah	Trader.	42 years	Benin City.	07- 10- 2025
10	Mrs. Margaret Enoh	Trader	38 years	Benin City	07- 10- 2025

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