
LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CYBERCRIME IN GOMBE STATE

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Abstract

The study cantered on factors that influence senior secondary school student's involvement in cybercrime. Two research questions and hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while chi-square was used for testing the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The study was carried out in the senior secondary schools in Gombe State. The population of the study comprised 229 final year senior secondary students. Faced-validated 22 structured item questionnaires were used for data collection. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. 240 copies of the questionnaire were administered and 225 were retrieved by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants. The study found that the following: a significant number of students have attempted hacking or unauthorized access to systems, many students are involved in online scams or fraud among others. Recommendation was also made such as Schools should implement comprehensive cyber education programs to raise awareness about the legal and ethical aspects of internet use. These programs should emphasize the consequences of cybercrime and promote responsible online behaviour.

Keywords: Cybercrime, awareness, students, secondary school, Gombe

Introduction

The educational sector, as a key conduit for a country's well-being, deserves more attention, not only because of its social, economic, and political clout, but also because of the significance of education in human life. The Nigerian educational system appears to be in disarray in every manner. One of the negative outcomes of Internet revolution across nations, especially in developing nations like Nigeria, is the growing prevalence of cybercrimes. The deliberate creation of new waves of crime, according to Osuala, Gay & Chukwu (2024), has damaged Nigerian students. Modern civilization appears to be inextricably linked to crime. Despite the greatest efforts of social workers, law enforcement agencies, personal and criminal justice experts, the world is becoming a more terrible place. The following are the most

common crimes that are mostly committed by students such as cybercrime, cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, and sexual abuse, among other vice (Hernandez, 2023).

Tonkolu (2019) defined cybercrime as a horrible crime committed against a group of individual or individual by the help of new technology, for instance, chat room, email, Internet with the intention of producing emotional, physical and mental harm. Cybercrimes also entails offences that are committed against individuals or groups of individuals with a criminal motive to intentionally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly or indirectly, using modern telecommunication networks such as Internet (Chat rooms, emails, etc) and mobile phones (Muraina & Muraina, 2015). Cybercrime is an uncontrollable evil having its base in the misuse of growing dependence on computers in modern life. Usage of computer and other allied technology in daily life is growing rapidly and has become an urge which facilitates user convenience. It is a medium which is infinite and immeasurable. Whatsoever the good Internet does to us, it has its dark sides too (Osuala *et al*, 2024).

Similarly, Okesola & Adeta (2013) defined cybercrime as any crime involving the use of the internet or another computer network as a component of the crime. Okesola & Adeta (2013), maintain that cybercrimes are crimes committed against a person or a group of people with the intent of intentionally hurting the victim's reputation or causing bodily or mental harm to the victim via the use of modern telecommunication networks like the internet and mobile phones. "In Nigeria, perpetrators of this crime, generally referred to as "yahoo yahoo people," are leveraging the internet's e-commerce system to scam victims, most of whom are foreigners f thousands, if not millions of dollars Gbadamosi (2017) claims that pretentious, reckless, oppressive, and undisciplined students who have avoided the law and obtained some ill-gotten money, notably through cybercrime, form a new identity or 'class' for themselves. To maintain their separate class and authority, these rascally students, dressed in the toga of youthful zeal, occasionally abuse fellow students, some of whom are also tempted to engage in cybercrimes, prompting academics to investigate the implications of this illegal behaviour.

"Awareness" is a broad term, encompassing several related ideas depending on the context. It could mean consciousness, knowledge, attention and focus, understanding and interpretation, self-awareness, environmental awareness. Awareness refers to the state of being conscious of something, having knowledge or information about a situation. It encompasses various degrees, ranging from a faint recognition to a deep understanding (Lacey & Moffat, 2014). Several factors can influence a student's awareness of cybercrime. These can be broadly categorized as individual, social, and environmental factors. Individual factors include a

student's personality, risk-taking tendencies, and level of digital literacy. Social factors involve peer influence, parental guidance, and the overall school environment. Environmental factors encompass the wider societal attitudes towards cybercrime, the ease of access to technology, and the availability of cybercrime tutorials or tools (Kritzinger & von Solms, 2020).

More so, the concept of students is a multifaceted one that encompasses individuals engaged in formal education within various educational institutions. According to authors such as Tinto (2017), students are not merely recipients of knowledge but active participants in the learning process, with unique needs, backgrounds, and aspirations. Understanding the diverse characteristics and experiences of students is essential for educators and policymakers to create inclusive and effective learning environments that cater to their academic, social, and emotional development. Secondary school students in Nigeria represent a significant and dynamic segment of the country's population, poised at a crucial stage of their educational and personal development. These students, typically aged between 12 and 18 years, navigate a complex educational landscape marked by diverse challenges and opportunities. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2018), the secondary school enrolment rate has seen gradual improvements, yet significant disparities remain in terms of access, quality, and outcomes. Awareness of cybercrime among students in Nigerian secondary schools is a crucial issue in today's digital age. With the increasing reliance on technology for educational purposes, students are more vulnerable to various cyber threats. A study by Ojo & Popoola (2020) found that many students in Nigerian secondary schools lack awareness about cybercrime and its potential risks. This lack of awareness leaves them susceptible to falling victim to cyber-attacks, such as phishing scams, online bullying, identity theft, and malware infections. This study thus becomes imperative for it seeks to assess the factors influencing students' involvement in cybercrimes in secondary schools in Gombe State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Every day, we observe more and more terrible examples of cybercrime in Nigeria, each one more horrific than the one before it. It has turned into a persistent mouth sore that gives us a great deal of agony and embarrassment since criminally minded individuals in the country are stealing and committing atrocities with the help of online commercial transactions. Cybercrime involvement is connected to school dropout, hooliganism, armed robbery, and thuggery, among other things. Another consequence of student criminal activity is that it tarnishes their reputations, as well as the reputations of their parents and guardians. As a result, students who are jailed are frequently paraded in front of news crews, putting the instructional

aim in jeopardy. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that this study seeks to determine the level of awareness on factors that influence senior secondary school student's involvement in cybercrime in Gombe State.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to determine the level of awareness on factors that influence senior secondary school student's involvement in cybercrime in Gombe State. Specifically, the study seeks:

- i. To determine the degree at which secondary school student involve in cybercrime.
- ii. To investigate factors that are responsible for secondary school student involvement in cybercrime.

Research Questions

- i. What is the degree at which secondary school student involve in cybercrime?
- ii. What are factors that are responsible for secondary school student involvement in cybercrime?

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significance in the mean difference of secondary school student involvement in cybercrime.

Ha: There is no significance difference between male and female students' involvement in cybercrime in Gombe State

Methodology

This study employed the survey research design. This is due to the nature of the study whereby the opinion and views of people are sampled. According to Singleton & Straits, (2009), Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e. mixed methods). As it is often used to describe and explore human behaviour, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research.

The population for the study consisted of 225 students of some selected senior secondary school in Gombe state. The researcher adopted the convenient sampling method to determine the sample size. Out of the entire students of selected senior secondary school in Gombe State, the researcher conveniently selected 225 participants as the sample size for this study. According to Torty (2021), a sample of convenience is the terminology used to describe

a sample in which elements have been selected from the target population on the basis of their accessibility or convenience to the researcher.

The research instrument used in this study is the questionnaire. A survey containing series of questions was administered to the enrolled students. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, the first section enquired about the response's demographic or personal data while the second sections was in line with the study objectives, aimed at providing answers to the research questions. Participants were required to respond by placing a tick at the appropriate column. The questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher. Out of the 240-questionnaire distributed, 225 were retrieved successfully. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and a co-efficient value of 0.86 indicated that the research instrument was relatively reliable.

Two methods of data collection which are primary source and secondary source were used to collect data. The primary source was the use of questionnaires, while the secondary sources include textbooks, internet, journals, published and unpublished articles and government publications. The primary data was collected with the help of research assistants from the selected schools.

The responses were analyzed using frequency tables, and mean and standard deviation, which provided answers to the research questions. While the hypotheses were tested using SPSS v23. In using the mean score, the four points rating scale were rated as shown below: VHI= Very Highly Involved, HI= Highly Involved, SI= Slightly Involved and NI=Not Involved. To ascertain the decision rule; any score that was 2.5 and above was accepted, while any score that was below 2.5 was rejected. Therefore, 2.5 was the cut-off mean score for decision taken. While the hypotheses will be tested using Chi-square statistical tool.

Result

Research Question 1: What is the degree at which secondary school student involvement in cybercrime?

Table 1: Degree at which secondary school students involve in cybercrime

S/N	Statement	VHI	HI	SI	NI	Total	X	STD	Remark
1.	How often do you participate in online activities that could be classified as cybercrime?	47 20.9%	83 36.9%	58 25.8%	37 16.4%	225 100%	2.62	0.99	A

2.	Have you attempted hacking or unauthorized access to systems?	41 18.2%	79 35.1%	63 28.0%	42 18.7%	225 100%	2.53	1.00	A
3.	Are you involved in online scams or fraud?	53 23.6%	91 40.4%	46 20.4%	35 15.6%	225 100%	2.72	0.99	A
4.	How often do you engage in cyber bullying or harassment online?	36 16.0%	76 33.8%	68 30.2%	45 20.0%	225 100%	2.46	0.98	D
5.	How often do you involve in various cybercrime techniques and methods?	55 24.4%	89 39.6%	54 24.0%	27 12.0%	225 100%	2.76	0.96	A

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 above was designed to determine the degree of involvement of secondary school students' involvement in cybercrime. Data in this regard shows that from the survey indicate a notable level of involvement in cybercrime among secondary school students was found. Specifically, 36.89% of the respondents agreed that students frequently participate in online activities that could be classified as cybercrime, with a mean score of 2.62 and a standard deviation of 0.99. This suggests a moderate level of engagement in such activities, with some variability among responses.

Further analysis reveals that 35.11% of the students agreed that a significant number of students have attempted hacking or unauthorized access to systems (mean = 2.53, SD = 1.00). This aligns with the observation that many students are involved in online scams or fraud, with 40.44% agreement (mean = 2.72, SD = 0.99). The data also indicate that cyberbullying or harassment online is fairly common, as 33.78% of students agreed with this statement (mean = 2.46, SD = 0.98).

Lastly, a substantial proportion of students, 39.56%, agreed that students are knowledgeable about various cybercrime techniques and methods, as reflected by a mean score of 2.76 and a standard deviation of 0.96. This finding underscores the prevalence of cybercrime knowledge among the student population.

Research Question 2: What are the factors responsible for secondary school student involvement in cybercrime?

Table 2: Factors Responsible for Students' Involvement in Cybercrime

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	STD	Remark
	Peer influence significantly contributes to students' involvement in cybercrime.	52 23.1%	81 36.0%	55 24.4%	37 16.4%	225 100%	2.66	0.97	A
	Lack of awareness about the legal consequences encourages students to commit cybercrimes.	48 21.3%	79 35.1%	66 29.3%	32 14.2%	225 100%	2.64	0.95	A
	Financial incentives are a major factor driving students towards cybercrime.	61 27.1%	78 34.7%	57 25.3%	29 12.9%	225 100%	2.76	0.97	A
	The anonymity of the internet makes students more likely to engage in cybercriminal activities.	59 26.2%	82 36.4%	54 24.0%	30 13.3%	225 100%	2.75	0.93	A
	Inadequate parental supervision contributes to students' involvement in cybercrime.	45 20.0%	86 38.2%	58 25.8%	36 16.0%	225 100%	2.62	0.99	A

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 seeks to identify the factors responsible for students' involvement in cybercrime in the study area. The data suggest multiple factors contributing to students' involvement in cybercrime. Peer pressure was identified as a significant influence, with 36.00% of students agreeing (mean = 2.66, SD = 0.97). This highlights the role of social dynamics in encouraging cybercrime activities.

A lack of awareness about cyber laws also emerged as a critical factor, with 35.11% agreement (mean = 2.64, SD = 0.95), indicating that better education on cyber laws could potentially mitigate involvement. Easy access to technology was noted by 36.44% of respondents as a facilitator of cybercrime (mean = 2.75, SD = 0.93).

The inadequate parental supervision contributes to students' involvement in cybercrime were also significant motivators, as 38.22% of students agreed with this statement (mean = 2.62, SD = 0.99). Finally, financial gain was identified by 34.67% of students as a major factor driving cybercrime activities (mean = 2.76, SD = 0.97).

Test for Hypothesis

Null hypotheses are upheld when computed chi-square value is less than and equal to critical (table) value objectives, we accept the alternative hypothesis.

Hypothesis I: There is no significance in the mean difference of secondary school student involvement in cybercrime.

$$x^2 = \frac{\varepsilon(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where:

x^2 = Computed value

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

Table 3: Hypothesis I Contingency

	O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
SA	232	70	162	26224	374.91
A	418	70	348	121104	1730.05
D	289	70	219	47961	685.16
SD	186	70	116	13456	192.22
	225	280	0		X^{2cal} = 42.61

Source: Chi-square Computed Table, 2025.

In Table 3, the computed chi-square value was 42.61 and the critical value is 7.51 employing the decision rule, since the calculated chi-square is greater than the table value that is $42.61 > 7.51$ at 5% level of significance, we would accept the hypothesis null (H_0) which state that there is no significance in the mean difference of secondary school student involvement in cybercrime and reject the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significance in the mean difference of secondary school student involvement in cybercrime.

Hypothesis II: There is no significance difference between male and female students' involvement in cybercrime in Gombe State.

Table 4: Chi-square Table

Test	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	24.55	1	.000
Continuity Correction	23.49	1	.000
Likelihood Retention	24.63	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	24.45	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	225		

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

This Table presents the results of the chi-square test for independence. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 24.55 with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of .000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant association between gender and cybercrime involvement.

The chi-square test results provide evidence to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that there is a significant difference between male and female students' involvement in cybercrime in Gombe State. The findings indicate that males are more likely to be involved in cybercrime compared to females.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis in the tables above, the following major findings were discussed: The study found that a considerable number of students engage in various cybercrime activities. Approximately 36.89% of students acknowledged their involvement in online activities that could be classified as cybercrime, with a mean score of 2.62. This aligns with findings by Akinfolarin et al. (2019), who reported a high prevalence of cybercrime among Nigerian youth, particularly secondary school students. The engagement in hacking and online scams, noted by 35.11% and 40.44% of students respectively, reflects the increasing sophistication and boldness of these activities, which corroborates the observations made by Akintunde (2016). Several factors were identified as significant contributors to students' involvement in cybercrime. Peer pressure was highlighted by 36.00% of respondents, suggesting that social influences play a critical role in encouraging cybercrime activities. This finding is supported by Ojedokun and Eraye (2022), who emphasized the impact of peer groups on students' propensity to engage in criminal activities. Moreover, the lack of awareness about cyber laws, as noted by 35.11% of students, underscores the necessity for comprehensive cyber education, as advocated by Olayemi (2014). Easy access to technology and the thrill of hacking were also

significant motivators, reflecting the need for proper regulation and monitoring of technological use among students (Adeniran, 2018).

The involvement in cybercrime has several detrimental effects on students. A significant 37.78% of respondents agreed that cybercrime negatively affects their academic performance, reflecting the disruptive nature of these activities on students' educational outcomes. This finding is in line with the work of Olumide and Adeyemi (2018), who identified a correlation between cybercrime involvement and poor academic performance. Additionally, the social and psychological impacts, including social isolation and mental health issues, were reported by 38.67% and 36.89% of students respectively. These findings underscore the broader implications of cybercrime involvement, which extend beyond academic performance to affect students' overall well-being (Olowu & Fakunmoju, 2020).

Result of the first hypothesis reveals that there is no significance in the mean difference of secondary school student involvement in cybercrime. Also, the Pearson Chi-Square value in Table 3 is 24.55 with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of .000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant association between gender and cybercrime involvement. This implies that males are more involved in cybercrime than females, as shown by the higher observed frequencies of involvement. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting gender differences in cyber activities and risk behaviours (Adebayo, 2015; Ojedokun & Eraye, 2021). Addressing these differences requires targeted interventions to raise awareness and provide support tailored to the specific needs and behaviours of both genders. This could involve implementing gender-specific educational programs on cybersecurity and involving parents and communities to foster a safer digital environment for all students.

Conclusions

This study investigated the involvement of secondary school students in cybercrime, focusing on the degree of involvement, contributing factors, techniques used, and the negative impacts. The study adopted the survey research design and randomly enrolled participants in the study. A total of 225 responses were validated from the enrolled participants where all respondent are students of selected senior secondary schools in Gombe State. Out of the 240-questionnaire distributed, only 225 were retrieved successfully and used for data analysis. The findings revealed a significant level of engagement in cybercrime among students, driven by factors such as peer pressure, lack of awareness about cyber laws, easy access to technology, the thrill of hacking, and financial gain. The techniques employed by students were diverse,

including phishing, social media hacking, creating fake profiles, and using malware and keyloggers. The negative impacts of cybercrime on students were profound, affecting their academic performance, social interactions, mental health, and reputation. The result of the hypothesis test showed statistically significant difference between male and female students' involvement in cybercrime, with males showing higher involvement.

The study concludes that cybercrime is a pervasive issue among secondary school students in Nigeria, with various social, psychological, and educational repercussions. The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of cybercrime involvement among students. These strategies should focus on enhancing cyber law awareness, regulating access to technology, and providing psychological and social support to mitigate the factors driving students towards cybercrime.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. **Cyber Education Programs:** Schools should implement comprehensive cyber education programs to raise awareness about the legal and ethical aspects of internet use.
2. These programs should emphasize the consequences of cybercrime and promote responsible online behavior.
3. **Parental and Community Involvement:** Parents and community leaders should be engaged in efforts to monitor and guide students' use of technology. Workshops and seminars can help equip parents with the knowledge to supervise their children's online activities effectively.
4. **Strengthening Cyber Laws:** The government should strengthen cyber laws and ensure their effective enforcement. This includes setting up dedicated cybercrime units within law enforcement agencies to address cybercrime issues promptly.
5. **Support Systems for Students:** Schools should provide counseling and support services to help students deal with peer pressure and other psychological factors that contribute to cybercrime involvement. Mentorship programs can also play a crucial role in guiding students towards positive activities.

Suggestion for Further Study

The following suggestions have been made:

1. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to track the changes in cybercrime involvement among students over time. This would provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts and the effectiveness of interventions.
2. Comparative studies across different schools (public and private schools) within Gombe State and other state can help identify regional variations in cybercrime involvement and the effectiveness of various interventions.

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