

Chapter 58

Modern Information Technology, Global Risk, and the Challenges of Crime in the Era of Late Modernity

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ABSTRACT

The rapidity and efficient use of most communication technologies remain the driver of accelerated developments across the major societies of the world today. This is quite exciting when compared to what existed in the past. However, current happenings indicate that the contribution of these technologies to sporadic development of nations is fraught with recordable socio-economic risks whose effect is unprecedented and affecting the nature of trust required for social continuity in human environment. Consequently, this paper considers the nature of risks and vulnerabilities affecting e-connectivity from a modernist theoretical perspective and contextualized this in the double edged implication affecting the use of the Internet. The first section of this paper is devoted to review on the nature of affinity between the Internet and crime while the final section engages the empirical analysis of secondary data on the consequences of cyber-crime to the global economy.

INTRODUCTION

Crime in the modern society is identified as a social problem of a major concern. There has always been a number of humans that are bent in their ethics, morals, socio-psychological makeup, or sense of justice, and are ready, willing, and able to commit crimes of all types (Singleton & Singleton, 2010). Apparently, Graham (1993) posits that the world is thickly populated with minds and taking cognizance of the thickness of both “good” and “bad” minds in human environment, significant efforts and resources are generally committed by government and other stakeholders toward crime control or eradication and

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equally devoted to ordering human relationship (NCPI, 2001). Therefore, since the beginning of recorded history, violations of the social and legal code by individuals or groups have been formally proscribed (Hughes, 2004; Garland, 2001; Muncie & McLaughlin, 2001; Sarri, 1995). Despite the formal proscription of criminal acts across national boundaries, the magnitude and the character of old and newly evolving crime remain alarming (Stark, 2004; Packer, 1968). Many factors can conveniently be attributed to this development but the most central which is the focus of this paper is the role of communication technology in the promotion of criminality. In the global arena, rapid advances in technology and consumer demands have created greater access to cyber communications (McShane & Williams III, 2007:147). Modern breakthroughs in the technological world is not completely insulated from the shortcomings that hitherto attended traditional technologies. Discoveries from time immemorial have been fraught with one anomaly or the other both helping to solve human challenges and substituting same for higher if not tougher challenges. The advent of diverse technologies into societies worldwide is laden with both positive and negative impacts entrenched in socio-economic related challenges existing in all known society. Consequently, current reflection is closely linked to the duality of developments attendant to information and business technologies that are jointly enhancing global economy and breeding new crimes. Global experiences have basically show that the ICTs allow legitimate global economies and knowledge networks to exist, they also allow for a darker side that sees the illegitimate use of information networks (Castells, 1998; Williams, 2006:17). Put succinctly, just as the ICT revolution facilitates international and local businesses, it also creates a threat to social/corporate trust and transactional relationships. In line with these known attributes therefore, the focus on ICTs in this analytic discourse is restricted to the examination of the Internet, a technology with a capacity viewed as both enabling, disenabling, fostering human progress and generating vices. Despite the Internet's instrumentality to the spread of globalization, its existence has simultaneously nurtured existing crimes and as well intensify the evolution of yet to be known crimes. Cyber-crimes are growing and by 2017, the global cyber security market is expected to skyrocket to \$120.1billion from \$63.7billion in 2011(cigionline, 2015). Consequently, this paper reflects on the role of the Internet in rising profile of crime and evaluates the resultant risks affecting interpersonal relationship in the global community with the view of arresting the situation.

Brief History and Locus of Use of the Internet

It is important to know that technology in distant past has historically been shaped by governmental, military and commercial interests or requirements, but the development of the internet is increasingly driven by its users (Green, 2010). The Internet is conceived as a rapidly expanding system of networks linking millions of people in new spaces and changing the way we think, the nature of our sexuality, the form of our communities, our very identities'(Turkle, 1995: 9). Five billion devices currently access the Internet and by the end of 2020 it is projected that there will be fifty billion users that will hook to the Internet for the information requirements (New Zealand Management, 2013). In the context of the massive web underpinning Internet use, Turkle posits that the Age of the Internet 'has ushered in the opportunity to build virtual communities in which all will be able to participate with people from all over the world, people with whom we exchange information daily, people with potentials of business partnership with the appearance of whom are capable of generating interactive session devoid of physical contact (Turkle, 1995:10). As at the end of 2001 the number of Internet users in the world has crossed the threshold of 500 million (up from 16 million in 1996) and in North America and Scandinavia over 60 percent of the population has access to the Internet (Nua, 2002). The data on the use of the Internet

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