

Chapter 20

Spirituality in Cybercrime (Yahoo Yahoo) Activities among Youths in South West Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the relevance and adoption of spirituality in cybercrime; the roles of spiritualists; experiences of self-confessed youths that are involved in 'yahoo yahoo' activities and the future intentions of youths to engage in cybercrime. This was with a view to providing a socio-cultural analysis of the influence of spirituality in cybercrime ('yahoo yahoo') activities among Nigerian youths. Vignette based focus group discussions were held with male and female youths (18-35 years), in-depth interviews with 'yahoo yahoo' youths and some spiritualists. Findings showed that spirituality attracts high cultural relevance in life achievements and the conduct of cybercrimes. Perceptions on youths' involvement in cybercrime activities attracted mixed reactions. To the 'Yahoo yahoo' youths, they are playing a game, to other participants; 'yahoo yahoo' was a criminal act. Cybercrime among the youths have received the support of some spiritualists within a political economy that creates an enabling environment for cybercrimes and related activities. A few participants indicated future interests in cybercrime if their economic conditions remain unchanged or worsen. In conclusion, we argued that a holistic approach grounded in the cultural system would be more effective in re-orientating and empowering the youths to positively utilize their internet skills. Thus, curbing cybercrimes would require a process that would not rely exclusively on legal and policing frameworks.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-209-3.ch020

INTRODUCTION

The web of social interactions has widened with the emergence of the Internet (Castells, 2001). Historical origins of the Internet and related technologies are properly documented (Norman, 2005). The relevance of the internet in the social arrangements of global events has become more evident but with inherent challenges. With the increase in social interactions through the cyber-space (Hughes, 1995), both the latent and manifest functions of the internet have evolved and may increase in dimension. A re-occurring latent function associated with social interactions through the cyber space is the phenomenon of cybercrime. Attempts by Criminologists and scholars from other fields at providing theoretical explanations for the nature and the complexity surrounding cybercrime have yielded contentious positions (Jaishankar, 2008; Mcquade, 2009). There are those who believed in the potentiality of traditional criminological theories in exploring the reality of cybercrime; while other scholars support new theoretical positions (Jaishankar, 2008; Mcquade, 2009). Among the latter are the Integrated theory; the theory of Technology-Enabled Crime, Policing, and Security (Mcquade, 2009); and the Space Transition Theory of Cybercrimes (Jaishankar, 2008). Despite the Inherent differences in these theoretical positions, a common stance is that all forms of crimes are explainable.

Cybercrimes are driven by intentions or motivations formed within space and time. Irrespective of the nature of the intentions, each type of cybercrime requires a particular set of skills, knowledge, resources, and access to particular data or information systems (Moore, 2009: 173). With increase in internet access and the likely occurrence of cybercrimes, there is need to understand the patterns and practices common with the various types of cybercrime especially in those targeted against persons. Various skills, knowledge, resources, and the type of data or information systems that facilitate particular

cybercrimes are context driven within space and time. Our theoretical stance is influenced by Berger and Luckmann's (1966) position that knowledge production occurs within context. Thus, cultural beliefs system would affect both knowledge production and obtainable dominant patterns of cybercrime within time and space. This chapter situates Cybercrime targeted against persons within a cultural context by exploring the philosophical and psychosocial basis influencing the usefulness of spirituality- a culturally and psychologically rooted social phenomenon in the conduct of cybercrime activities like email frauds, fake identities, online dating, and online social networking among youths in south western Nigeria. In pursuing these objectives, this chapter did not examine the various processes involved in carrying out such activities. Rather, it focuses on the cultural beliefs and the knowledge systems that support the achievement of desired results in cybercrimes against persons. There is a void in the literature on the relevance of spirituality in the social construction of success by cybercrime perpetrators and the future intentions of other youths in relation to cybercrime in Nigeria.

The chapter starts with an overview of online interactions and the phenomenon of cybercrime; the universality of cybercrime; psychosocial cause-effects of cybercrime; cybercrime activities among Nigerian and Ghanaian youths; and the social nature of spirituality among the Yoruba people. The Yoruba cultural framework was adopted mainly for analytical purposes.

While the chapter's general objective is to explore the social perception of spirituality as a potent ideology and framework for negotiating successful interactions in 'yahoo yahoo' (a social tag for cybercrime) activities among Nigerian Youths. The specific objectives include: exploring the perspectives of youths (18-35 years) and spiritualists on the relevance of spirituality in achieving desired expectations in life and in cybercrimes; investigate the future intentions of youths to engage in cybercrime activities. Ex-

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