



Youths' Negotiation of Livelihoods and Cybercrimes in Nigeria.

Chikwendu, Stephen Chilaka; Oli, Nneka Perpetua;
Ohazulike, Gladys Amaechi

Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 051223047

Type: Research

Full Text: [PDF](#), [HTML](#), [PHP](#), [EPUB](#), [MP3](#)

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.8141209](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8141209)

Accepted: 17/05/2023

Published: 13/07/2023

*Corresponding Author

Chikwendu, Stephen Chilaka

E-mail: sc.chikwendu@unizik.edu.ng; np.oli@unizik.edu.ng; ga.ohazulike@unizik.edu.ng

Keywords: *crime, cybercrimes, livelihoods, youth, youth negotiation.*

ABSTRACT

The paper examines youths' negotiation of livelihoods and cybercrimes in Nigeria. The rising spate of cybercrimes in the country necessitated the need to look at the nexus between negotiation of livelihoods and cyber crimes. The paper looked at how negotiation of livelihoods can drive youths into cyber crimes and ways to improve the livelihood of youths in order to reduce their involvement in cyber crimes. Relevant literature was reviewed in the study. Two theories were reviewed and adopted as the theoretical orientation of the study. The theories are the space transition and the structural strain theories. The study found that youths negotiation of livelihood is responsible for their involvement in cybercrimes as they struggle to meet up with the demands of surviving especially in the urban areas where the standard of living is rising. The major effect of youths involvement in cyber crimes as the study found is that cyber crime is seen as a desirable way of livelihood negotiation. The study recommends that jobs should be provided for the youths through skill acquisition trainings like coding and web designing to enable them negotiate livelihoods through legitimate means. The study also recommends that youths who engage in cyber crimes should be punished by the relevant agencies to serve as deterrence to intending cyber criminals.

INTRODUCTION

Livelihood is a means of making a living (Ellis, 2016). It encompasses people's capabilities, assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life. The concept of livelihood has been adopted in this study to

incorporate the social and physical environment and also people's responses to it. According to Ezeah (2016), livelihood is generally defined as comprising of the capabilities, assets, both material and social resources and activities required for a means of living. Thus, youth negotiation of livelihood considers the

material means for living in a broader context of social and cultural interpretation. According to Gugler (2017), livelihood is a means of supporting one's existence either financially or vocationally. Youth negotiation of livelihoods refers to the prevailing conditions faced by the youths and what they do to overcome these conditions.

Sub-Saharan Africa is said to have the most youthful population in the world. By 2030, youth population will account for 28 percent of the world population, making Sub-Saharan Africa the youngest region in the world (Garcia & Fares, 2018). The implication of this scenario is that the growth of the population of youths is bound to outstrip the coping capacity of poorly resourced governments and economies in developing countries to absorb new residents and provide adequate jobs, shelter and services. In these circumstances, many if not most youths may end up in substandard housing in marginal locations with exposure to health hazards, poor nutrition as well as livelihood challenges.

In Nigeria, higher proportion of the youths is found in cities (Agbu, 2019). Many of these urban youths live in squalid slum dwellings with poor basic infrastructure and social services. Given the situation they are confronted with, the youths are bound to initiate and construct various forms of adaptation as livelihood strategies to enable them survive. Because of the absence of formal employment opportunities, youths take to various forms/nature of commercial negotiations (i.e., informal economic activities) as livelihood coping strategies. Some nature or forms of youth negotiation of livelihoods include: petty trading, hawking, hairdressing, newspaper vending, food processing or sales, fashion and designing, freelance writing, music vending, transport business (including *okada*, *keke*, commercial bus driver etc), petrol attendant, mobile telephone operator, truck pushing, event planner, etc, whereas other youths engage in deviant acts such as kidnapping, armed robbery, pick pocketing, car theft, burglary, prostitution, cyber crimes, etc.

According to Ezeah (2016), the recent attention paid to youth negotiation of livelihoods follows from a wide recognition that significant proportions of urban poor are vulnerable in terms of their sustainable livelihood systems. Ezeah (2016) further reiterated that the negotiation of livelihoods often drives youths into criminal tendencies such as involvement in cyber crimes in a bid to survive and to improve their well-being. Agbu (2019) lamented that it is worrisome to see some young Nigerian youths engage in cyber crimes despite being aware of its adverse effects and consequences ranging from loss of concentration in their academic pursuits, identity theft, deception, fake lifestyles, womanizing, bad role models, lavish spending, public display of wealth, tarnishing the image of one's family and country, money rituals, discouraging entrepreneurial mindset among other youths, promoting the culture of get-rich-quick syndrome, surviving at all

cost, misleading the younger ones, prosecution by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), imprisonment, laziness, greed, unproductive workforce, useful instrument in the hands of desperate politicians, etc.

The internet creates unlimited opportunities for commercial and human activities and also introduces its own peculiar risks, one of which is youth involvement in cyber crimes as they negotiate livelihoods (Odapu, 2018). According to Ameh (2017), cyber crime is one of the fastest growing criminal activities in Nigeria. It is one of the ways that youths negotiate livelihoods and it covers a large range of illegal activities including financial scam, computer hacking, bank fraud, identity theft, extortion, and theft of classified information, cyber attack, etc. The problem of cyber crimes have continued to escalate. For this reason, Ndubueje (2019) believes that the war against cyber crime is far from being over. He posited that failure of the government to adequately provide job opportunities has continued to motivate youths to engage in cyber crimes as they struggle for survival.

Cyber crime affects youth negotiation of livelihoods in diverse ways. Many youths who engage in cyber crimes are popularly known as "yahoo-yahoo or G-boys" in our local parlance and usually characterized with get-rich quick syndrome (Obiekwe & Chukwuma, 2019). Therefore, youth negotiation of livelihoods underscores the problems faced by youths in Nigerian cities, challenges of survival and how these challenges drive them into engaging in cyber crimes in the urban space. It is against the backdrop of the foregoing that this study examines youth negotiation of livelihoods and cyber crimes in Nigeria with the objective of finding out how negotiation of livelihoods can drive youths into cyber crimes, the effects of youths involvement in cyber crime as they negotiate livelihoods and measures to improve the livelihoods of youths in order to reduce their involvement in cyber crimes in Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The Concept of Livelihoods

Livelihoods are capabilities, assets and activities required for people to earn money and secure a means of living (Gugler, 2017). It encompasses people's capabilities, assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for more than two-thirds of the population in developing countries. A livelihood framework may be used as a basis for analyzing, understanding and managing the complexity of lives (Carney, 2018, cited in Rakodi, 2019). In the livelihood framework, poverty is not characterized by lack of assets and inability to accumulate a portfolio of them, but also by the lack of choice with respect to alternative strategies to survive. The livelihood framework suggests that people can choose and choices make a

difference, despite the economic or social constraints they face. By pooling resources, by working in both formal and informal economies, by self-construction of shelter and by the use of social networks, youths avoid entrapment in a self-perpetuating culture of poverty (Njoku, 2013 cited in Hossani, 2017).

The Concept of Cyber Crime

There is no commonly agreed single definition of cyber crime. However, Parker (2016) defines it as illegal internet-mediated activities that often take place in global electronic networks. Cyber crime is international or transnational. There are no cyber borders between countries (Parker, 2016). Cyber crime refers to crimes that use computer networks or devices to advance other ends. This crime includes fraud and identity theft. Similarly, Levi (2017) defines cyber crime as crime that uses a computer and computer network. According to Anderson (2015), cyber crime or computer oriented crime is a crime in which a computer is used for crimes like hacking, spamming, phishing etc. In other words, the computer may have been used in the commission of a crime, or it may be the target. Cyber crime can also be defined as 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, or loss to the victim directly or indirectly, using modern telecommunication networks such as internet networks (including but not limited to chat rooms, emails, notice boards and groups) and mobile phones (Bluetooth/SMS/MMS) (Jaishanker, Pang & Hyde, 2018). Similarly, Halder (2014) defined cyber crime from the perspective of gender. Thus he viewed cyber crime against women as crimes targeted against women with a motive to intentionally harm the victim psychologically and physically, using modern telecommunication networks such as internet and mobile phones.

Theoretical Orientation

The space transition theory by Jaishanker (2007) and structural strain theory by Robert Merton (1957) were adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. The theories provide analytic framework to explain youth negotiation of livelihoods and cyber crimes in the urban space. Space transition theory provides an ideal context within which one can understand the subject of this inquiry. Cyber technology is complex and requires some level of expertise to manipulate; youths need to learn beyond the basics of computer programming to manipulate the cyber space. Hence, cyber crimes take place in the cyber space where the offenders are less likely to be tracked. The space transition theory enables us to understand fully the process involved in learning and reinforcement of the techniques of cyber crime and how these constitute a push factor to cyber crime commission. Despite regulations and security tips available to members of the public, cyber criminals still

hit their targets, amass wealth and receive the approval of their admirers because of their expertise about the workings of the internet.

Furthermore, space transition basically involves the movement of persons from one space to another. Cyber criminals behave differently when they move from the physical space to the cyber space, the relative anonymity the cyber space offers as well as the relative speed with which a target could be hit are strong motivations for cyber crime commission. As a livelihood coping strategy the victim may be lured easily into disclosing some personal information on the internet by an impersonator than when the person comes physically.

On the other hand, the structural strain theory states that the social and cultural structures of society contain two major elements. The first is the culturally defined goals (culture goals) which members of a society are encouraged to recognize and value as worth striving for. Examples of such goals are wealth, material possessions, etc. The second major element of the social and cultural structure of society is the means of modes which society has institutionalized or put in place for the pursuit of culture goals. Robert Merton asserts that in pursuit of culturally accepted goals and the means to achieving these goals, five categories of people emerge in the society. They include: the conformists, ritualists, innovators, retreatists and the rebels. With the strains associated with livelihood negotiation, the youths who engage in cyber crimes are considered as belonging to the 'innovators' category. The innovators are people who believe in the culturally accepted goals of the society but who do not believe in the means of achieving those goals hence, they go on to devise their own means of achieving such goals. Cyber crime is a means of livelihood negotiation adopted by some youths in Nigeria.

The theories above are relevant in explaining the strains that drive youths into cyber crime. It also explains why they find cyber crime attractive. As stated earlier, cyber crime appears to be a crime that makes it difficult to identify those involved in it. This continues to make it more attractive as the space transition theory has helped to explain in this study. Space transition theory and structural strain theory are suitable, appropriate and best explains the problem of cyber crimes among youths in a developing country like Nigeria.

Determinants of Cyber Crimes

(a) Unemployment:

In Nigeria today, unemployment and the desire to make quick money have encouraged people especially the youths to engage in numerous internet assisted crimes being committed daily in various forms such as identity theft, desktop, counterfeiting, internet chat room, cyber harassment, fraudulent electronic mails, automated teller machine spoofing, pornography, piracy, hacking

and spanning. Usually these crimes are committed in forms like sending of fraudulent and bogus financial proposals from cyber criminals to innocent internet users. Thus, Odapu (2018) maintained that these acts of criminality are encouraged because of the continuous rise in the statistics of unemployed and underemployed graduates in Nigeria. In fact, it is not surprising to note that some unemployed graduates and sometimes greedy or ill-informed individuals have taken cyber crime as a lucrative and normal way of life.

(b) Greed and easy way of making money:

According to Ajewole (2019), criminals always opt for an easy way to make money. They target rich people or rich organizations like banks, casinos and financial firms where huge amount of money flows daily and hack sensitive information. Identifying such criminals is difficult. Hence, that increases the number of cyber crimes across the globe. Computers are vulnerable, so laws are required to protect and safeguard them against cyber criminals (Ajewole, 2019). Anyadike (2018) noted easy access as a factor that encourages cyber crimes; the problem behind safeguarding a computer system from unauthorized access is that there are many possibilities of breach due to the complex technology. Hackers can steal access codes, images, advanced voice recorders etc that can fool biometric systems easily and bypass-firewalls can be utilized to get past many security systems (Anyadike, 2018).

(c) Advancement in technology and the capacity to store data in comparatively small space

Furthermore, another factor that encourages people especially the youths to engage in cyber crime is the capacity to store data in comparatively small space (Nayak, 2018). The computer has the unique characteristics of storing data in a very small space. This makes it a lot easier for people and sometimes university students to steal data from any other storage and use it for their own profit (Nayak, 2018). Complexity of the computer system is another factor that influences cyber criminality. The computers run on operating systems and these operating systems are programmed of millions of codes. The human mind is imperfect, so they can make mistakes at any stage. The cyber criminals take advantage of these gaps (Oloko, 2017). Negligence is one of the characteristics in human conduct that also encourages people to engage in cyber crime. Thus, there may be a possibility that while protecting the computer system people neglect some security measures which provide a cyber criminal the access and control over the computer system (Oloko, 2017). In the same line, Ejiro (2018) stated that sometimes; loss of evidence serves as a contributory factor. The data related to the crime can be easily destroyed. Therefore, loss of evidence has become a very common and obvious problem which paralyzes the system behind the investigation of cyber crime, and

serving as a motivating factor for cyber criminals to continue with their illegal trade (Oloko, 2017; Ejiro, 2018).

Consequences of Cyber Crimes on Youths' Negotiation of Livelihoods

Technology has integrated nations and the world has become a global village. The economy of most nations in the world is accessible through the aid of electronic via the internet (Okoye, 2016). Since the electronic market is open to everybody (which includes eavesdroppers and criminals), false pretence provides a fertile ground in this situation. Thus, information technology revolution associated with the internet has brought about two edge functions; that is, on one hand, it has contributed positive values to the world, while on the other hand, it has produced so many maladies that threaten the order of the society and also producing a new wave of crime to the world. According to Okoye (2016), the internet online business services which ordinarily are supposed to be a blessing as it exposes one to a lot of opportunities in various fields of life is fast becoming a source of laziness to the youths thereby affecting their entrepreneurial development. Lately, the internet has also become a source of worry due to the atrocities being perpetrated through it in a desperate move to survive.

Effective and Efficient ways to curb the incidence of Cyber Crimes in Nigeria

According to Nayak (2018), governments and industries have gradually realized the colossal threats of cyber crime on economic/political security and public interests. However, complexity in types of cyber crime calls for international cooperation. Sequel to this, various organizations and governments have already made joint efforts in establishing global standards of legislation and law enforcement both on a regional and on international scale. U.S.-China's cooperation is one of the most striking progress recently because they are the top two source countries of cyber crime (Nayak, 2018). Thus, Agbu (2019) stated that due to the heterogeneity of law enforcement and technical counter measures of different countries, there is need for legislative and regulatory initiatives of international cooperation to control or curb the activities of cyber criminals. Though law enforcement agencies are trying to tackle this problem, it is growing regularly and many people have become victims of identity theft, hacking and malicious software. Therefore, one of the best ways to stop these criminals and protect sensitive information is by making use of inscrutable security that uses a unified system of software and hardware to authenticate any information that is accessed over the internet.

Discussion of Key Issues

Negotiation of livelihoods can drive youths into cyber crime as a result of the challenges associated with survival in a developing country like Nigeria with an ever rising unemployment rate. There are very limited jobs in Nigeria for its teeming youthful population and a rising standard of living occasioned by the rising inflation rate in the country. Cyber crime is seen to be the easiest way to negotiate ones livelihood in Nigeria as far as the youths are concerned. This is because it seems to present minimal risk of being caught and also remaining anonymous. This is explained by the space transition theory adopted as the framework of this study. In this sense, youths engage in cyber crimes easily as they transit from the physical space to the virtual space with the knowledge that they can remain anonymous while engaging in cyber crimes. Negotiation of livelihood involves doing all one can to survive. Survival includes feeding, paying school fees (for those in school) and other bills including sending money home to one's parents.

Nigeria is not the only nation where cyber crimes are perpetrated. The incident can rightly be said to be on the increase in the country due to lack of attention from government on the livelihood needs of youths in the country. In Nigeria, perpetrators of cyber crime who are usually referred to as "yahoo yahoo boys" are taking advantage of e-commerce system available on the internet to defraud victims who are mostly foreigners in thousands and sometimes millions of dollars. They fraudulently represent themselves as having particular goods to sell or that they are involved in a loan scheme project (Okogwu, 2018). They may pose to have financial institutions where money can be loaned out to prospective investors. Consequently, these cyber criminals have watered down the morale of zealous youths in Nigeria and almost every youth out there in the street wants to make quick money to the detriment of entrepreneurial education in the country. According to Okoye (2016), the increasing rate of cyber crime in the society has become a strong threat to Nigeria's e-commerce growth and has led to ill-reputation internationally and consequently denied some innocent Nigerians certain opportunities abroad.

There is need to improve the livelihood of youths if cyber crime must be reduced in Nigeria. The nexus between cyber crime and youths negotiation of livelihood has been established. Therefore, measures should be put in place to ensure that the youths are redirected from cyber crime as a veritable way of negotiating livelihoods. Bankole (2016) argues that in order to tackle cyber crime efficiently and effectively, government should build industries and create jobs for the teeming population of unemployed youths. The creation of jobs may not entirely wipe out cyber crime as an option explored by youths as they negotiate their livelihood concerns. However, it will see to a reduction in the rate. The internet can provide millions of legitimate jobs for youths. The relevant agencies must ensure they key into the opportunities the internet presents to create jobs for the youths so that they can

use the internet for noble course and not for cyber crimes. For instance, the youths can be trained on how to code computer programs, design websites, make use of Excel Spreadsheet among other things. Such skills will make them engage in a better use of the internet instead of cyber crime as a means of livelihood negotiation. There is need for law enforcement agencies to also step up in their efforts at fighting cyber crime. As the cyber criminals are advancing in their skills, law enforcement agencies should also be advancing in their knowledge of these emerging skills and strategies. The family has a key role to play as an agent of socialization. The virtues of hard work should be emphasized over quick money by parents.

CONCLUSION

Cybercrime is increasingly becoming attractive as a means of escaping the challenges experienced by youths as the negotiate livelihood in Nigeria. There are concerns that the rising rate of cyber crime and the decrease in measures that can make youths shun cyber crime will produce a generation of youths who would see cyber crime as the best way to address livelihood negotiation issues. This portends worrying signs for Nigeria. Beside the implications of being tagged a cyber crime enabling nation, the country and its citizens stand to lose both tangible and intangible resources within and outside the country. An enabling environment should be created for the youths to thrive legitimately and pursue their life goals. This will discourage them from seeing cyber crime as a veritable alternative. Clear cut efforts must be made to create jobs, develop a business friendly environment and also harness the internet for legitimate purposes that will benefit the youths in particular and the country in general.

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised and discussed in this paper, the following recommendations are made for possible implementation:

1. The internet can create millions of legitimate jobs for the youths. Government at all levels should create coding camps and centres where the youths can be taught various skills that will get them well remunerated jobs over the cyber space.
2. There should be the political will to punish youths who engage in cyber crimes by strengthening the relevant laws targeted at checkmating cyber crimes in the country.
3. Officials of the various relevant law enforcement agencies should be well trained to be up to date with cyber crime skills. Youths who engage in cyber crime are constantly updating their strategies. The security agencies

should also be updating theirs in order to be ahead of them (the cyber criminals).

4. Beyond the internet, the government should create jobs for its teeming youthful population. This has been shown to be an effective way of reducing cyber crime. This can be done through supporting the private sector to create jobs and also supporting youth entrepreneurs by providing tax reliefs and other subsidies that will encourage them in setting up their businesses seamlessly.
5. The family as an agent of socialization has a significant role to play with respect to inculcating the right values in the youths. The values of hard work and patience should be emphasized by families above get-rich-quick and easy money.

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