

Cybercrime and Ritualism: the Menace of “Yahoo Boys” and the Demonization of Traditional Igbo Religion and Society

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Abstract

In Nigerian context, “Yahoo” means cybercrime committed by obtaining money on false pretense through the internet. Today, the trend is that these swindlers have switched over to the use of rituals in traditional African way in order to make the potency of their evil acts to work effectively, thereby implicating Traditional Religion as satanic. This paper x-rays the subsisting tendency by some of the youths of nowadays, particularly among the Igbo of Nigeria, to manipulate every spiritual force within the Traditional African cosmological field of communication to aid them in making quick money. They exploit the polar powers that reside in *Ekwensu*, a spirit being in Igbo belief system that corresponds to Christendom’s Satan or Devil, while ignoring the positive/punitive role accorded to this being in Traditional Religion. For the Igbo, *Ekwensu* represents evil spiritual elements that function as agents of social control. The deployment of demonic forces by “Yahoo Boys” to rip off people should not be misinterpreted as traditional acts of *Ekwensu*. On the contrary, this paper declares that *Ekwensu*, the satanic *persona* within the Igbo realm of cosmological communication, is fundamentally conceptualized as such based on his social control roles. The paper goes further to support the notion of *Ekwensu* as Satan in terms of his forms, status, and roles in the society, conceptualizing *Ekwensu*, in direct opposition to the Supreme God, as the main malevolent spiritual agent in Igbo cosmology with defined roles. *Ekwensu*, not Traditional Religion, is the sole author of all negative actions of the Yahoo boys.

Keywords: cybercrime, Satan, *Ekwensu*, “Yahoo Boys”, Igbo, Traditional Religion

Introduction

One of the perennial concerns of human beings is the need for peace, prosperity, and harmony in society, where people can truly fulfill their God-given mission in life. In other words, there is a human desire for an

environment, where life can be honestly celebrated in its fullness even while waiting its final consummation. The African traditional believer in his search for the realization of such a noble aim and desire has often identified ritualism/sacrifice as a societal, interpersonal, human and cosmic act.

Ritualism and sacrifice are important to any religion, particularly Igbo traditional religion. In every Igbo community, ritualism and sacrifice are used as means for the individual or society to commune with spiritual beings. In Igbo traditional society, we believe these beings have power to sustain and destroy; a good reciprocal relationship with them is beneficial to man. Rituals and Sacrifice are also used to counteract the powers of destruction and evil spirits.

However, in recent times a new nomenclature of ritualism has been associated with a crop of young ones popularly known as the “Yahoo boys” who have changed the narrative of rituals into a new concept that is linked with all kinds of unholy and criminal paraphernalia. Thus, during one Christmas Holiday in one Igbo community, this researcher witnessed a lot of unholy practices by “Yahoo boys”, such as ritual of bathing in the river, sleeping in the burial ground, among others. One day, the researcher was going to the market and observed a man being dragged by youths to the market square. His name was Obi. It was said that Obi buried his female worker alive. When the spot in the shop was opened, the girl was still alive but body parts like breast, finger nails and heads were found on the spot. Obi was a ritualist or a “Yahoo boy”. By engaging in evil acts of this nature, these “Yahoo boys” have misrepresented the Igbo traditional religion as satanic. These desperate youths are bent on using ritualism, which they now tag “Yahoo Plus”, to get quick cash thereby making the original Igbo traditional religion to look evil and demonic.

The evil side of it is that this “Yahoo Plus” is all about using human beings for rituals; either they cut off some private parts or they make the person run mad, thereby using the Igbo traditional religion to achieve their ungodly ends. The implication of this is that it will lead to the misinterpretation of the true purpose of African traditional religion. For the Igbo, it will cause an ethical degrading of the people of Igbo land in the sense that other neighbouring tribes will view Igbo land as a place where ritual killing, criminality and crooked pursuit of money are rampant.

The Notion of Cybercrime (“Yahoo-Yahoo”)

Cybercrime is not an old sort of crime to the world. It is defined as any criminal activity which takes place on or over the medium of computers or internet or other technology recognized by the Information Technology Act (Okeke, 2010). According to Chukwujekwu (2019), insecurity in today’s digital space is very alarming. Many people, especially the youths, are getting involved day by day. They are participating actively in one form of internet fraud or the other; this is generally known in cyberspace as cybercrime, but referred to, in Nigerian parlance, as “Yahoo Yahoo” (p. 20). Cybercrime is the most prevalent crime playing a devastating role in Igbo traditional society. The cyber criminals are causing enormous losses to the society and the government and are also able to conceal their identity to a great extent.

There are numbers of illegal activities which are committed over the internet by technically skilled criminals. Taking a wider interpretation, it can be said that cybercrime includes any illegal activity where computer or internet is either a tool or target or both (Maduka, 2020). Cyber criminals are made up of mainly young school leavers and undergraduates. They are technology savvy and love smart electronic gadgets. They are pathological internet addicts and particularly obsessed with the social media. They live extravagant lifestyle and hang out in clubs. They are usually fun-seekers and chronic adventurers. They belong to two categories of cyber café users that have been described as deviant routine users and deviant very important (VIP) users (Ndubueze, 2018).

The Idea of Ritualism and “yahoo-plus” in Igbo Land

The notion of “Yahoo-yahoo” has become a critical case in our contemporary Igbo society especially among the youths. In Igbo land, “yahoo-plus” is the use of rituals and other traditional rites to enhance money-making cyber criminal activities. It can be said that “yahoo-plus” is when a “Yahoo-boy” adds anything spiritual to yahoo-yahoo. It is almost impossible to scam anyone without the ritualism or spiritual influence because victims are getting wiser and more familiar with their strategies. According to Onuorah (2019), “yahoo-plus” is when a “Yahoo-boy” adds charm to yahoo-yahoo so that he will be getting many victims and plenty of money. Nowadays, young boys are driving expensive big cars because of “yahoo-plus”. It helps them to have the kind of money that their parent cannot give them; the bad thing is that

they usually die a painful death. For example, one “Yahoo-boy” bought a new sports car, but as he was driving recklessly and drinking at the same time, he had an accident and died.

Corroborating the above, Ugwu (2018) posited that:

Baba the hustle is real, if you no add something, na you go carry last (don't add any spiritual ingredient, you won't get anything). Without any help, you can't collect one dollar from a client. Let's stop deceiving ourselves everybody you see wey dey make am dey add small jazz (that is making progress in his work is adding a little of voodoo). It is only a foolish “Yahoo-boy” that will be wasting his strength trying to scam a client without spiritual help. Only the person that has added ritualism (has added voodoo) will successfully win a client heart without stress. (p. 18)

The use of ritualism is now rampant and hardly can you find a yahoo boy that has not added one spiritual ingredient or the other. This finding correlates with the work of Okolie (2018) which states that “internet fraudsters are drifting into fusing spirituality with cybercrime to become successful”. He explained that it is difficult for yahoo boys to thrive without the addition of spiritual ingredients. Mba (2019) explained that doing ritual is more than going to the native doctor as widely assumed by members of the society:

Anything you add to improve yahoo-yahoo in order to improve your chance of getting a client is “yahoo-plus”. Whether you go to the native doctor or church or mosque or you go to India, or China, so far you have added something spiritual, it is “yahoo-plus”. “yahoo-plus” is not as bad as people paint it and it is not limited to the spiritual influence of a native doctor (Eze, 2017)

In Umukara Uzinomi the people opined that “yahoo-plus” mean the addition of any spiritual ingredient and engagement in spiritual activities for the purpose of boosting the chances of a yahoo boy in getting a client online and successfully defrauding the client. Also, for an individual to practice “yahoo-plus”, he or she must be a “Yahoo-boy” or yahoo girl. Therefore, yahoo plus can be referred to as the advancement of yahoo-yahoo to the spiritual level. In differentiating “yahoo-plus” from yahoo-yahoo, in a personal conversation, a respondent stated that:

You cannot differentiate between yahoo and yahoo plus by checking their body (mere looking for signs). It is not as if yahoo plus guys (yahoo boys) involved in yahoo plus are going around putting on rings and you can't conclude that everyone putting on ring is a doing bubble-plus (involved in yahoo plus), none of them do carry calabash around; some, you can't even find “ju-ju” (anything fetish in their home) and most of them don't have incisions on their body. The only way to differentiate is the level of their money, cars and mouth (wealth accumulation), their influence and the rate at which they are paid by their “maga”.

The difference between yahoo-yahoo and “yahoo-plus” can be determined by the level of wealth accumulation by those practising either of them; majority of the respondents reported that the era of rings and incisions are long gone and people have advanced. In fact, one can hardly, physically, distinguish a Yahoo-boy practising ordinary yahoo-yahoo from those practising yahoo plus except through their financial status and their influence in the society. Timothy (2013) states that the dwindling fortunes of yahoo-boys in getting victims due to the increase in awareness of some of their strategies by the police officers and cyber security operatives have pushed many of them to seeking spiritual help.

Theoretical Framework

This work revolves around Ronald Akers’ theory of Social Structure and Social Learning Model. The model states that people develop motivation to commit crime through the people whom they associate with. It generally assumes that individuals learn criminal behaviour the way they learn other behaviours in the society. Learning, Akers noted, is a part of life that is inevitable in as much as people interact with others in the society. Unlike other social learning theorists, such as Bandura and Edwin Sutherland, Ronald Akers’ Social learning theory combines and considers both psychological and sociological predictors of learning in arriving at the factors predisposing individuals to the learning of criminal behaviour (Lee, Akers & Borg, 2004; Akers, 2009). For instance, Akers borrowed from Burrhus Frederic Skinner’s Behaviourism, Bandura’s Imitation theory, Alfred Schutz’s Social phenomenology, Edwin Sutherland’s Differential Association theory and Economics’ Rational Choice theory, to conclude that the learning of criminal behaviour is a product of operant conditioning, imitation, bonding, and reinforcement (positive and negative) that go on in our everyday world (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce & Radosevich, (1979); Akers, 1990; Holt, Burruss, Bossler & Adam, (2012).

Factors Promulgating Youths’ Involvement in Yahoo-yahoo In Igbo land

There are two factors promulgating youths’ involvement in yahoo-yahoo in Igbo land. The first is the combination of unemployment and poverty; the second factor is peer group influence. Other factors are believed to be entertainment industry; Igbo political, cultural and economic history; the relative acceptance of yahoo-yahoo in Igbo society; the anonymity and

distance from the victims the internet provides; the minor chances of being arrested by the police; easy access to online platforms; the availability of e-mail extractor software; and, lack of knowledge of the grave consequences of internet crime.

Unemployment and Poverty

Between 1960 and 2004, the poverty rate in Nigeria increased from 15% to 54.4% (Tade and Aliyu, 2014). By 2010, it was estimated that 70% of the population lived below the poverty line (Oshewolo, 2010). Unemployment rate stood at 23.9% in 2011 (ibid), but increased to over 50% if youth only are counted (Oshewolo, 2010). The fear of unemployment was mentioned as a crucial factor leading to the growth of yahoo-yahoo (Adeniran, 2018; Adomi and Igun, 2018; Tade and Aliyu, 2019). Due to the prevailing economic hardship bedeviling the country, many youths take solace in yahoo-yahoo as it is regarded as a way of keeping body and soul together just like any other economic endeavor (Balancing Act New Update, 2003). Yahoo-yahoo may not be separated from prevailing kleptomania problem that characterizes the Nigerian system (Ojedokun and Eraye, 2012). As noted by Awe (2010), even though criminal activities cannot be justified for any reason, with the prevailing economic conditions individuals may be forced to find alternatives in yahoo-yahoo.

Peer group influence

The phrases “my friend has this; I want to get it as well”, “My friend is doing this; I want to do it as well”, “My friend has achieved this, I want to do it as well” represent a desire “to want to belong” often expressed among youths; this resonates with Tade and Aliyu (2018) research. Commanding respects from their peers, attracting the opposite sex and extravagant lifestyle seem to be the major goals for many Yahoo boys. Looking at the age bracket, this behavior is perhaps not surprising when other aspects of their lives and the society around them are considered (Doppelmayer, 2019). He further posited that even if a young person is not already in a group of yahoo-yahoo boys, the youths’ culture around him could be of influence.

Entertainment industry

Another worrisome trend is the rate at which entertainment and music industry normalize yahoo-yahoo and “yahoo-plus”. These musical acts, DJs and night club hypemen encourage and energize youths to make them believe that internet fraud is the only way they can get rich, drive big cars and enjoy life.

The social environment breeding Yahoo-yahoo in Igbo land

Decades of corruption, poverty, and unemployment has created the acceptance of the practice of yahoo as a viable source of income amongst some Igbo youths; hence, wealth is glorified and questions of how it was gotten are often not asked (Ozo, 2019). In some cases, yahoo-boys are perceived as legitimate business persons and/or persons who can pay a premium for goods and services (Ikobi, 2018).

Faceless nature of the Internet and its impact on the growth of yahoo-yahoo

The internet is characterized by facelessness (Ikem, 2018). This ensures the total possibility of having unhindered access to information communication without government or internet service provider (ISP) interference. It allows users to cover their own identity and engage in spam and in sending unsolicited messages. The faceless nature of the internet allows free exchange of criminal information and activities without attacks from government or employees (Ikem, 2018). In the view of Okeke (2020), there are three major features of the internet which combine to turbo charge, accelerate and intensify online fraud. These are; access, affordability, and anonymity. They are jointly referred to as the “Triple A Engine”. The internet is reputed as the world’s largest computer network with an estimated 1.1 billion users. Today, virtually anyone can access the internet with a telephone line, a computer, and a modem. As such, internet technology has created a new form of criminality, that is, cybercrime. It is very much easy for individuals to have access to a computer without leaving home, that is telecommuting, and to engage in hacking and related electronic frauds without leaving a trace. Yahoo boys mostly capitalize on the anonymity offered by the internet to carry out their nefarious activities.

Inadequate Law Enforcement

The regulating enactment against cyber offences is not sufficient in itself without proper measures of enactment and implementation; this represents the chronicle of the Igbo society in regulating cyber offences (Okafor, 2018). This situation normally encourages criminals to perpetrate illicit acts (Ojekodun and Eraye, 2012). Studies report that yahoo boys are generally not worried about the police because they can bribe their way out when arrested (Anikwe, 2019). The deficiencies in the implementation of regulating acts continue to serve as a bane to the progress recorded in the fight against cybercrime in Igbo land and Nigeria at large.

Ease of Access to the Internet

The easy access to the internet and technology provided by internet and hypertext afford users with fast links to individuals (Morah, 2018). “The ease and convenience associated with IT and the Internet is now being exploited to serve criminal purposes” (Adomi, 2008). The internet is fast turning into a household thing for Igbo societies and Nigerians at large (Adomi, 2015). This ease of access to the internet is now being utilized to carry out criminal activities.

Ignorance of the gravity of breaking Internet law

Roberts (2017) opined that so many people underplay the severity of cyber offences. They treat it as if it is not as serious as offences committed in the “physical space” even though its impact could be far reaching in most cases. Also, the distance between the perpetrators and the victims means that they often are ignorant of the consequences of their crimes and tend to underestimate its impact.

Societal decadence and its impact on Nigerian youths’ involvement in Yahoo-yahoo

Nigeria as a nation is a well gifted country, considering her human and natural resources among the nations of the world. Unfortunately, the country is ranked among the underdeveloped nations of the world with declining human conditions over the years (Adeniran, 2008). “Unemployment, lack of social support and worsening extent of general deprivation has affected the youths in the country. The political, economic, education and other social institutions, reflect varying degrees of decadence caused by fraudulent acts in Nigeria” (Bammeke, 2005). As opined by Achebe (1984), Nigeria was regarded as one of the most corrupt places in the world due to political recklessness. Years after this, this opinion is still being re-emphasized by the yearly Corruption Perception Index of the Transparency International in which Nigeria has been occupying one of the lowest positions in Africa and in the world. As it is, Nigeria has been noted to be in a state of ‘normlessness’, where anything goes; there is a breakdown of law and order and people no longer feel remorse for evil committed; shameful acts are celebrated and success is given a new definition, as wealth becomes more important than the means of obtaining it (Tade and Olaitan, 2015). Sudden wealth is normally celebrated among Nigerians regardless of its source. In fact, it is mostly associated with cleverness and no punishment is melted out where necessary (Adeniran, 2008).

Indeed, ours is a society that glorifies wealth. This attitude of glorifying

wealth by the Nigerian society is further buttressed by the lifestyles of the so called ‘celebrities’. Popular Nigerian hip-hop songs such as “Maga don Pay” and “Operation” all glorify the Yahoo boys’ lifestyle (Zulu, 2008). Also, music videos produced by artists such as Olu Maintain and Kelly Handsome show them driving exotic cars, drinking champagne, partying with young women and displaying large amounts of money. The general themes in both the lyrics and the music videos are the positive benefits which serve as inducements to become a yahoo boy (Doppelmayr, 2013:19).

In Nigeria, kleptomania acts are not characteristics of only the ruling class but of leadership at all levels; in this kind of situation, values of integrity and honesty are scorned, as there is lack of compliance to laid down procedures (Bammeke, 2005). “For instance, at both household and community levels in Nigeria, respective agents of socialization taught the young ones to value hard work and integrity, but most often it is at variance with what they observe” (Adeniran, 2008:371). Technological advances, especially in information and communication technology, however, have brought major alterations to our cultures, our patterns of socialization, our social institutions, and our day-to-day social interactions. Such technological innovations are, in fact, being accepted with remarkable speed by the Nigerian youths, hitherto grossly unengaged at both social and economic spheres. As noted by Adeniran (2006), the internet has brought an astounding alteration in the behavioral patterns of Nigerian Youths. Indeed, Yahoo boys sub-culture has emerged from the consensual acceptance of the internet technology, especially among youths in the country. Though criminality among youths in Nigeria could be traced to the prevalent corrupt practices in the country, the ‘modernization of criminality’ through the electronic superhighway has been serving as the platform for the emergence and sustenance of Yahoo boys sub-culture in Nigeria (Adeniran, 2008).

Ordinarily, Nigerian youths are noted for being idealistic, adventurous, resourceful, inquisitive and proactive (Adalemo, 1999). In the face of proper motivation, the Nigerian youth is prepared to contribute to the development of the nation (Mabogunje, 1998). According to Adeniyi (1999), since the youths are taken as the foundation for the future growth and sustainable development of a nation, they are the key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. Hence, the failure of leadership at all levels in Nigeria to promote positive values for the youths has often translated into social incongruence. Every society has norms that define acceptable behavior, and agents of socialization socially transmit such norms; but it becomes

an issue when there is a discrepancy between what is taught and what is being observed. How do we expect the Nigerian youths to eschew fraud when all they see around them is fraudulent individuals wielding so much affluence and still command high respect from the society that is supposed to question the source of their wealth? Ninalowo (2004) argues that in society such as Nigeria with gross structural inequalities, weak sanctioning system and wide gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots”, there is a tendency for the deprived to reject and embrace illegal means of achieving culturally prescribed goals. The involvement of Nigerian youths in online fraudulent practices such as yahoo-yahoo, therefore, cannot be divorced from the value that the society places on wealth accumulation (Adeniran, 2008).

Traditional view on Ritualism and Yahoo boys in Igbo Land

In Igbo land, many young lads have opted for cybercrime in their desperation to join the ranks of scores of their compatriots who have been making millions of dollars out of online-scams. Young Nigerian scammers known as ‘yahoo boys’ are resorting to the use of traditional charms and mystical powers to charm potential victims into their scams.

In the traditional African religion, “Yahoo” has never been an approved source of income for young lads, thus the issue of yahoo has caused a great havoc in traditional African religion whereby yahoo boys are now using the ritual rites and sacrifice that should be meant for good in doing evil and the results keep coming. Thus, the use of rituals (voodoo and charms) for spiritual protection and to charm potential victims is very common among Yahoo Boys in Umukara.

There is now another level in the use of charms, which is known as Yahoo Plus -Plus, which “involves the use of human parts and may need kidnapping other human beings for rituals, which is not necessary in “Yahoo Plus.” Yahoo Plus Plus involves the use of things such as “victims finger nails, rings, carrying of corpses, making incision on their body, sleeping in the cemetery, citing of incantation, using of their fingers for rituals, and having sex with ghosts are common” (Nwakwudo, 2011)

Thus, the traditional view of ritualism and its use by yahoo boys in Umukara shows that yahoo has moved beyond just scamming people ordinarily/physically; it now connotes spirituality and using various means like sacrifice, performing of various rites and rituals etc. in order to victimize people and make them fall prey.

The spiritual dimension to yahoo is a paradigmatic shift from the

popular yahoo which relies solely on Internet dexterity to victimize people. However, the blending of the spiritual with cybercrime reveals the innovative capabilities of cybercriminals in this study area. Since materialism seems to be cherished within Nigerian society, young people appear to have imbibed this social value by designing strategies of accomplishing the set task. Repressed in the physical space, yahoo boys migrate to cyberspace to perpetrate criminality. The delayed success rate in “yahoo” practice, the untiring clampdown of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission on cybercriminals, group rivalry and the activities of the media in enlightening the public accounted for the search for a more speedy way of increasing cybercrime victimization. The frustrated yahoo boys innovated and imported the spiritual elements into cybercrime leading to the emergence of yahoo plus. This group relies on the spiritual capital (Nwokolo, 2019) of herbalists, fetish pastors and alfas. Yahoo plus fraudsters approach fetish pastors, alfas, and herbalists for success-promoting charms.

Some Ways Yahoo Boys use People for Rituals in Igbo Land

Via Gifts

In Igbo Land, it is worth noting that most yahoo boys use gifts in using people for ritual. From a personal experience, my sister’s classmate was used for money ritual by her boy friend by giving her lots of gift items. Thus, they usually put whatever evil in it and when they use these gifts, it will spiritually attack you. Now, this is a change of life. For example, they buy their parents a car, using these cars might bring about the early death of their parent. It could even be their siblings. There was the case of a chief in Umukara that his son gave a car and within two days the man had accident with the car and died.

By Using Girls Material

In Umukara Yahoo boys use girls private wears especially their pants. This has been so rampant in recent times. After using these materials belonging to girls they either go mad or bleed to death. Most of the time, what they do is tear a little part of it unknowingly to these girls and whenever they use it, they are affected. This information should make girls wise and make them to avoid such boys. There is the case of my primary school classmate in the village who gave me firsthand information about the death of her sister; she said her sister was used for ritual by her boyfriend who secretly took her underwear and used it for

rituals.

Through Partying

It is said that when a yahoo boy is organizing a party and he is not eating or drinking, just know he is taking people's destiny via the food and drinks. Yahoo boys are fond of throwing parties and letting people eat such food while they reserve 'uncontaminated' drink for themselves. A concrete example is the case of someone in Umukara; he attended a party of a rich young dude suspected to be a yahoo guy and after the party his destiny never remained the same; things became hard for him and out of frustration he committed suicide.

Via Cash

In Umukara Uzinomi, it is popularly known that some of these yahoo-boys have special money given to them and when they mix the money with others and give it to you, using this money will initiate you spiritually.

The intention of ritualism and the people's belief in ritual practices

According to one Mr. Ugo with whom I discussed this issue, "ritual practice permeates all religion and the intention differs from religion to religion and from persons to person. Majorly, the intention for rituals especially the one that involves blood sacrifice in Africa religion ranges from power, wealth, and protection". He further adds that all religion perform ritual practice which includes Igbo traditional religion. You must understand that ritual practices don't limit itself to animal blood sacrifice or human sacrifice. Kola nut breaking in Igbo land, pouring of libation in Igbo land is ritual. There is scarcely documented evidence to show that in Igbo traditional religion. If the hypothesis that Ndi-Igbo emigrated from ancient Israel is anything to go by, then ritual involving human sacrifice couldn't have been original with Igbo traditional religion. Traces of rituals involving human sacrifice for power, wealth, or protection is an importation from neighbouring cultures.

According to Mazi Uwakwe, rituals are part of Igbo tradition but not ones involving human blood. Civilizations have made it possible that animals are sacrificed to the gods and not human beings. The notion of ritualism in Igbo tradition has been misinterpreted wrongly by the evil representative of Igbo tradition (native doctor or dibia). There are good native doctors in our community and killing human beings is not part of our culture.

According to Mazi Maduka, a true native doctor who knows what he is doing cannot ask anybody to come for money ritual. After all, the person that is asking for money ritual, why is it that he didn't do it himself to become rich? Why can't a dibia kill to make money himself? These native doctors aid the yahoo boys to paint our tradition black. The gods frown at injustice and so at the end there's always a repercussion for those actions. Rituals help us to commune with the gods.

Effects of Ritualism and Yahoo boys in Igbo Land

The issue of ritualism and Yahoo boys cannot be over emphasized in Umukara Uzinomi, thus, the resultant effect of the activities of Yahoo boys in Umukara Uzinomi has made Nwakwudo (2020) to buttress that: "Yahoo is a get rich quick scheme where people obtain money online from others by false pretence. Thus, anything that has an advantage surely has a disadvantage"

We always have ourselves to blame when we make mistakes out of ignorance and have ourselves to blame for it. Life is more precious than Gold, it's more precious than silver and certainly more precious than money. Hence, yahoo boys go for rituals. There are times situation pushes us to make irrational decisions, there are times desperation hits the mind with evil options and alternatives. However, these ought to be the time where an individual discern and evaluate his options completely.

Being a ritualist or getting involved into ritual as a man or a woman is indeed seen as an evil act. More so, the original meaning of ritual isn't about blood sharing, it's more like rites, a repeated procedure. However, in the African mindset and mentality it's a total form of blood sacrifices, a rite that involves some sort of blood initiations, connecting the human world to the spirit. All these form of rituals, yahoo boys get involved for money sake. They have consequences; though ritualism in the sense of African traditional religion is not evil rather it's a means of performing rites and sacrifices to the gods by a traditional worshipper. Nevertheless the involvement of yahoo boys in rituals has opted to display that ritualism is an evil act since it's used for evil and not for good.

The following are the consequences of ritualism engaged in by Yahoo boys:

Lack of respect: When one starts doing Yahoo in Umukara Uzinomi and people get to know about it, the person will lose his respect in Umukara

Uzinomi. Generally, people will not value him that much; they will have one or two bad things to say about the person. Although minority of girls today are looking for Yahoo boys to date, but to the people of Umukara Uzinomi you are just another lazy youth living off the earning of other people. Even when you eventually make the money and purchase a nice house or cars, there are some people that won't give you that respect. Eventually if anybody respects you it's because of the money.

Higher risk of going to jail: The effect and consequences of yahoo also focus on the fact that they stand a chance of jail sentence. Today, Yahoo boys are faced with constant attack by tech gurus working with the EFCC and other security agencies. Due to the knowledge of online scamming, and the means they take, companies that produce applications yahoo boys use are now creating new ways to locate these guys, and block them out. The EFCC especially has taken the issue of online scamming very serious as Nigerian citizens and Westerners have lost over \$3 billion dollars to Yahoo boys. Nevertheless, the Nigerian police have developed the habit of searching people's phones and laptops without warrant. With the same velocity, Nigerian security agencies are doing their best to tame yahoo boys. Thus, the yahoo boys stand a chance of being jailed when arrested.

Taking hard drug: Yahoo boys consume large quantities of cocaine, cigarette, marijuana, etc. which are dangerous to health. Those hard drugs they take make them become insane and easily become angry in hurting their fellow human beings. Hence it is a known fact that such events also take place in Umukara and Imo State in general. Furthermore, the yahoo boys are mostly addicted to bad habits such as taking of hard drugs which make them “high”.

Generational Curses: There is an African adage that says “what goes around comes around”; thus, what a yahoo boy might think he is enjoying right now might become a future generational curse to him and his lineage; it is clear that we live in a spiritual world. What goes around comes around. In Umukara, it is a notable fact that when a young lad gets involved in any form of ritual as a yahoo boy, which involves blood sacrifices, there are generational curses tied to it. Thus, the deity or gods of Umukara will always come to punish the young lad or by extension will punish his family.

Life Span Reduction: “Yahoo” (crime) itself is a sin and a crime in almost all religions. It is so in all villages, especially in Umukara, hence it is totally preached against and frowned at as well. Thus, in Christianity the word of God made it clear that, the soul that "Sinneth" shall die.

When you get involved into yahoo, the rituals as a yahoo boy, you automatically reduce your life span. There is no two ways about it. You can cause someone death by your actions and stay long to enjoy it. God is a just God, and nature must run its full course.

Negative Influence: Immediately one starts doing “Yahoo”, he will definitely have new friends who will persuade him into doing things he didn't want to do. If the (friends) didn't turn him to a smoker they will turn him into drinking alcoholic drinks from there, they may turn him into a ritualist all in the name of doubling or tripling your hustle and before he realizes it, he has become a member of a cult group. Good friends don't influence you negatively, they give you the best advice but yahoo boyfriends will talk them into doing evil deeds to make quick money.

Adamant Children: Most yahoo boys think of the now and forget about the resultant effect of their action. Most times when they get married and have kids the effect of their past will start playing in the lives of their children in the sense that their kids will not listen to them, basically because the deity or gods of the land is working against them to frustrate them. The reason for this is because the yahoo boys dined with the devil, they fed him blood via rituals and he must collect his price.

Early Loss of Loved Ones: Getting involved in rituals or becoming ritualists has made most “Yahoo Boys” to lose loved ones. According to an interview granted by Chief Nweze, a chieftain in Umukara village, many yahoo boys have lost their loved ones because of various curses and rituals performed on them by their victims; sometimes, the curses will start with their loved ones in order to destroy their joy and family before hitting on them. Though in most cases the death of their loved ones might not be the intentions of yahoo boys, but it's happening without their permission or consent. In another sense some lose their loved ones because they mistakenly or intentionally sacrifice their loved ones at the altar of native doctors or ritualist and that is what the devil, native doctors and ritualists are known for. Once they give a little, they take in plenty, and you have no right and control over it because you have washed your hands with blood or dined with the devil.

In addition, Yahoo boys don't care to kill their dad, mum, sister, brother or even their girlfriend for ritual in order to get money. If killing their close relative is not necessary, they would make sure they kill another person for ritual. They can take the child who is returning/going to school or errand. There has been a notable case of missing children at Umukara, and accusations have been leveled upon yahoo boys as suspects, and the

brain behind the missing children. According to Chief Nweze, a chieftain and a cabinet member of the king of Umukara, many youths in Umukara have resorted to killing of their parents and siblings for the sake of “yahoo-plus”. He claimed that some succeeded while others did not.

You Might run Mad: Although the sweetness of yahoo is that the result is mostly quick but the after effect is terrible and unbearable. Though they might be enjoying all the money and cars at the moment, and enjoying the yahoo boy names they give themselves, but they might end up running mad. This happens in three ways, according to one Nwachi whom I interviewed: “It’s either you run mad when the herbalist, Juju man or dibia dies or you run mad when your secret is being exposed. You might also run mad when you don't meet up to the task.”

They can be killed: After past fraud they had committed are traced to them, “Yahoo Boys” can be killed or prosecuted. Sometimes, their properties are seized. Most Yahoo boys have died mysteriously because of few years of pleasure, some died because they can no longer fulfill the demands of the ritualist or negative doctor, while others were killed by those the defrauded.

No Peace of Mind: The Christian holy Bible says “no sinner will go on punished” therefore yahoo boys barely have peace of mind, even with themselves. The fact remains since yahoo is an illegal business or act the yahoo boys are always scared of being caught or being in trouble.

In Umukara there is a scenario where one yahoo boy was walking on the road with his mobile phone (wherein all his working tools/Applications are), and out of nowhere, the SARS approached him for questioning then he began to shiver and that was how they caught him.

In a interview with me, Mr. Chris Ilodibe maintained that: “Being a yahoo boy robs you of that satisfaction, because stealing and lying to make riches is a criminal offence and as such any citizen found wanting is an irresponsible citizen even when such a person may not realize it.”

Solutions to the Problem of Ritualism and Yahoo boys in Igbo Land

Job availability: It is no longer news that Nigerian is one of the countries that have the highest rate of unemployment in the world. Currently, lack of Jobs is one of the main reasons why Nigerian youths go into Yahoo business although it is not good reason because there are not the only ones. There are millions of Nigerian youths that create jobs for themselves without waiting for the government to help them with jobs

or any benefits from the government. If the government can help the youth by providing jobs the issue of Yahoo will definitely reduce.

Prosecution by Law Enforcement Agencies: The government should see the Yahoo epidemic as a national emergency, the same way it sees religious extremism and banditry. They should persecute the Yahoo boys or girls that are caught in the act; this will reduce the rate of Yahoo boys and girls in the country because they won't want to end in jail. The government should increase the rate of EFCC arrests so that it will teach other people especially those who are about enjoining the business a good lesson. Narrowing it down to Umukara, the village king and cabinet should set up laws that will prohibit yahoo boys from operating freely probably using their local vigilant groups to monitor the movement of suspected yahoo boys.

Parental Training: In our society today, some negative behaviors children exhibit are the product of what was taught them by their parents. Therefore in this issues of Yahoo boys and ritualism, parents should train their children in the fear of the Lord so that they won't get involved in illegal things, especially reaping where one did not sow which is stealing from someone else's resources. Thus, in Umukara families should help in teaching their children about the ethics of the lands and the fear of God should be inculcated in them; with these, good morals will easily be imbibed in the lives of the youths in Umukara. According to one Mr. Kelechi who spoke to me, "When a child who just graduated and has no job, yet comes back home driving a car... It is the responsibility of the parents to ask questions regarding sudden wealth before accepting him. Your child can not come home with an exotic car and you celebrate with him instead of asking about the source of the wealth. Parents who fail to ask question are collaborating with evil. So, parents should be blamed for failing in their responsibilities."

Organizing of enlightenment programmes: In today's world, many youths are bent on making quick money; governments and NGOs should organize enlightenment programmes that will help to tackle the issue of yahoo and yahoo plus in this dispensation. Specifically, in Umukara the governing council of the village should help to motivate the young lads of the village and keep them busy with something educative and inspirational in order to shift their minds away from the menace of yahoo.

Unfortunately, "Yahoo Plus" is not limited to male alone; ladies also have roles to perform. Ladies serves as catalyst to various charms due to their spiritual and physical nature. Ladies serve as partners to the yahoo-

boys; they help the yahoo boys to pick calls, make video calls and manage their fake social media to make it look real. Importantly, ladies are also involved directly in yahoo-yahoo, especially the online romance scam. Public enlightenment programmes, therefore, should also cover young ladies.

Conclusion

This paper has submitted that the technique of “yahoo-plus” is more than the usage of charms and hypnotizing clients online. Due to the awareness of the activities of yahoo boys and their inability to successfully hypnotize the security operatives, yahoo plus now involves wide participation of highly skilled people and influential people who play important roles to ensure the smooth running of their fraudulent activities. These people include but are not limited to application and software developers, hackers, and pickers, gift card buyers and sellers and so on. It has been noted that the yahoo boys adopted the use of charms in order to exploit their victims perfectly without any trace. This has led to the misinterpretation of African traditional religion as satanic and evil, hence the affairs of yahoo-boys using charms and consulting various medium in order to make quick money has made African tradition religion to be seen as evil, whereas it is just a mere misinterpretation.

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