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FACTORS AFFECTING KNOWLEDGE OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES OF CYBER CRIME AMONG PUBLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated factors affecting knowledge of preventive measures of cybercrime among public university student's in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of the study, two research questions and corresponding hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted ex-post facto research design. The population of the study comprised 185 four hundred level Business Education students of public universities student's in Cross River State. Total sample of one hundred and eighty five (185) respondents were selected for the study using the census sampling technique. The main instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. Collected data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. Moreover, inferential statistics, such as independent t-test was used for hypothesis testing. Findings of this study revealed that peer group significantly influence public university students' knowledge of cybercrime preventive measures. The study further revealed that Parenting does not significantly influence public university students' knowledge of cybercrime preventive measures. The findings of this study hold important implications for cybercrime education and youth well-being. The study underscores the need for tailored educational interventions on cybercrime prevention within public universities,

with a particular focus on addressing knowledge gaps among younger students and those from single or co-parenting backgrounds. It was recommended, among others, that educational institutions and authorities involved in fighting crime threat design targeted educational interventions tailored to the specific peer groups of students. This will address the needs and knowledge levels of students, ensuring that they receive appropriate information that support their comprehensive understanding of cybercrime prevention.

Keywords: Peer group, parenting, cybercrime and knowledge of preventive measures.

Introduction

The world is experiencing a significant socioeconomic and information communication technology crisis due to the increasing number of reported cases of cybercrimes in many underdeveloped and developing countries, including Nigeria and Cross River State in Particular. The rapid growth of the information technology gadgets in the 21st century across Nigeria has had phenomenal extent in virtually every institution within different ethnic groups. These changes can however, be described in both positive and negative dimensions. Although the positive dimension of information technology gadgets revolution are fascinating, the negative dimensions are however intense and many times at short intervals produces unwholesome or desperate conditions that often threaten the social order of the society (Ibikunle and Eweniyi, 2013). One of the negative outcomes of information technology gadgets revolution across nations, especially in developing nations like Nigeria, is the growing prevalence of cybercrimes.

The prevalence of cybercrimes has brought about drastic and far-reaching changes in Nigeria on socio-economic and academic ways of life (Osuji & Amadi, 2020). These changes are in ways of both thinking and behaviour, setting pace to how instruction is being delivered from traditional face-to-face classroom instruction to the use of computer aided instruction and the use of internet search engine tools. Also, it has changed the office automation system from manual system to the use of information and communication technology. According to Lin and Chiang (2017) stated that misuse of the information technology gadgets could take down students'

distinguished academic knowledge. The author further opined that it could possess them to becoming unfortunate persons swindled to cybercriminals because undesirable browsing could cause students to unconsciously use malicious software's designed to break into a system with unauthorised codes. Therefore, cybercrimes threaten a nation's security and financial health.

Cybercrimes are information communication technology concern that students get involved with as influenced by peer fellowship, socioeconomic status and values through the use of a computer as an instrument to further illegal ends, such as hacking, committing fraud, stealing identities and violating privacy. The unfolding development has increased strategies electronic gadgets are used to commit cybercrimes, because the internet offers speedy widespread processing of a collection of data from which factual information and conclusions may be drawn (Velmurugan & Ramesh, 2020). Thus, cyber-crime covers every crime committed in cyberspace with the use of electronic gadgets. According to (Muraina & Muraina, 2015) 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.

According to the 2009 World Internet Crime Report released by the Internet Crime Complaint Centre (ICC) (2010), internet-related criminal activities resulted in the loss of about $559.7 million, showing a significant increase from $264.6 million and $239.1 million reported losses in 2008 and 2007 respectively. Other studies have revealed that other factors such as exposure or access to personal computer/internet facilities, quest for quick wealth, unemployment, lack of implementation of cyber-crime laws, inadequately equipped law enforcement agencies, negative role models, quest for socio-political recognition/fame, frustration, display of wealth by corrupt politicians and laziness greatly influence the involvement of students in cybercrime (Okeshola & Adeta, 2013). Considering the above, it becomes worrisome about the current state of the art in Cross River State as many students are feared involved. This is because, many people,

particularly students have been found to demonstrate poor knowledge of cybercrimes. Thus the present study is anticipated to unravel the knowledge of students about cybercrime among public university students in Cross River State.

Statement of the Problem

Information communication technology gadgets are obligated to leveraging and building the knowledge, skills and importantly technological advancement of students in various institutions. However, reverse has been the case with the Nigerian state of affairs. It has been established by previous studies that cybercrimes among public University students have become very prevalent in many parts of Nigeria and occurs in daily bases. Despite the provision of the Cybercrime Act (2015). Yet, the trend of cybercrime has seen a dramatic influx, posing difficult concern on the general society. Its effects on the reputation of the country and on the physical and mental well-being of victims cannot be overemphasized. The problems noted above may not be unconnected within the context of public university students in Cross River State with a lot of students schooling and hustling day after day to make ends meet. It is also feared that with the alarming popularity of the cyberspace business and its flourishing nature within the Nigerian context, more students would join in the act, which would grow worse and invariably produce decline in sustainable knowledge of preventive measures as well as the usefulness of the students towards socio-economic growth specifically in Cross River State and the country at large. Thus, it is observed that knowledge of preventing measures to this ugly trend is to scientifically examine student's perception about the trend particularly among public University student's in Cross River State. This is considering the fact that the researcher is aware that serious research efforts, have not been focused on this study area of interest. It is therefore, against this backcloth that this study is positioned to investigate the factors affecting knowledge of preventive measures of cybercrimes among public University students in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate factors affecting the knowledge of preventive measures of cybercrime among public university students' in Cross River State. Specifically, the study investigated the extent to which:

1. Peer group influences public university students' knowledge of the preventive measures of cybercrime.

2. Parenting style influences public university students' knowledge of the preventive measures of cybercrime.

Study hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of Peer group on public university students' knowledge of the preventive measures of cybercrime in Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Parenting style does not significantly influence public university students' knowledge of the preventive measures of cybercrime in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Evolution of cybercrime in Nigeria

When the internet was developed, the computer scientists Vinton Cerf and Bob Kahn who happen to be the founding fathers of internet protocols we use today and the system referred to as the Internet hardly had any inclination that internet could be misused for criminal activities. Today, there are many disturbing things happening in the cyberspace (Chiemeke, 2012). The origin of cybercrime in which someone committed a crime across a computer network using gadgets, is impossible to know. What is possible to know is the major attacks on a digital network which can then be used as a reference point of event in the evolution of cyber based crimes. The fraudster's patronage to cyber cafes, browsing the internet all night and day using various methods in getting their victims, including sending scam mails to unsuspecting victims especially females. Pretending to be ready to go into a lasting relationship with these women and subsequently start to exploit

them. While many others lure their victims to procuring travel documents, assist them in getting residential permits, at the stage of succession they bridge communication with the victims and look out for another target (Adesina, 2017). Other than the "yahoo yahoo" crime, another popular cybercrime in Nigeria is called phishing. Phishing is an attack that typically involves sending a deceptive mail to a victim that looks legitimate from a source like the bank. Such mails are sent to victims requesting the verification of some personal details through a link. This is one strategy fraudsters use to access the victim's financial information. According to Richards (2016), the year 2015 recorded high number of phishing in Nigeria.

Knowledge of cybercrime prevalence

Cybercrime prevalence can be traced to the ever-changing threat landscape, in 2024 Nigeria was ranked 5th in the world for countries most affected by cybercrime. Coming behind Russia, which ranked number one, and Ukraine, China, and the United States, which occupied the second, third, and fourth positions respectively with the following statistics level of victimization.

1. Technical products/services (such as malware)   7.93%
2. Attacks and extortion   8.41
3. Data/identity theft (such as hacking or phishing)   23.04
4. Scams (such as business email compromise or online auction fraud)   52.17
5. Cashing out/money laundering (such as credit card fraud)   14.86

The report, which was described as the first-ever World Cybercrime Index, was produced by researchers from the Department of Sociology, University of Oxford, and the University of New South Wales, Canberra, identifies the globe's major cybercrime hotspots by ranking the most significant sources of cybercrime at a national level. Bruce, M., Akintaro, S., and Lusthaus, L., (2024). However, the Nigerian government is continuing to fight against cybercrime. Since the start Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) have convicted 2847 people in connection with cyber-related crimes.

Given the high prevalence and risk associated with cybercrime, one would expect individuals particularly students to have a good understanding of the various types of cybercrime, fraudsters mode of operation, and their consequences to avoid being victimized. For instance, individuals with good knowledge of cybercrime are expected to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the various cybercrime, fraudster's modes of operation, and their potential consequences. It is also expected of them to be adept at using preventive measures such as to Be Aware of Pop-ups and Fraudulent Emails, Protecting Personal Information With Strong Passwords, Set Up Two-Factor Authentication, proper internet gadget use, identity theft and open dialogue with parents and partners about cybercrime unhealthy history and prevalence thereby creating a safer and more aware information communication technology environment among their peers.

Peer group knowledge and cybercrime preventive measures.

Peer group is observed not to only provide a positive context for students to be a part of beneficial relationships but can also provide a large negative influence on the behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes of the individual members of the group. Natalie, Katerina and Elizabeth, (2019) defined peer group as a group of people of approximately the same age who have similar interests, background, or social status. The members of this group are likely to influence an individual's beliefs and behaviours. It is therefore important to consider that while there are often many benefits to being a part of such groups, it is also possible that aspects of these groups present certain risks to students.

Peer group knowledge in the context of cybercrime preventive measures is the psychological result of learning and reasoning about the existence of cybercrime and how these

can be effectively prevented. This is quite obvious when one looks at the major factor impinging on the peer grouping of students of contemporary times in the use of the medium. One of the theories that best situate the current concern is the Situational Crime Prevention Theory (SCPT) and was propounded by Ronald Clarke (1983) which presents a more unified understanding of peer influence and the reduction of the crime perspective beyond the justice system, Anandarajan and Malik (2018). It offers a theoretical perspective for organizing the factor indices used to analyse crime vulnerabilities and risks of peer victimization from Cybercrime in both household and public access internet facilities. However, these theory does not explain the motivation to commit a crime but instead tries to explain the conditions and circumstances that create the opportunity to crime preventive measures (Anandarajan & Malik, 2018). It further explores crime settings so that opportunities can be designed to deflect offenders and raise the perceived risks of being caught (Tunley *et al.*, 2018).

The research work of Hasan, Rashidah, and Omar (2015) on the perception and Awareness of young internet Users towards Cybercrime: Evidence from Malaysia. The findings of the study revealed that: (1) Female students are more aware and have affirmative insights than male students, (2) students in the age group of 18-23 years have lower perception and awareness than those aged 24 years and above and (3) those with higher academic qualifications are more aware of cybercrime and perceived the issue of risk differently. The study provides empirical evidence to the top management of the higher level institutions on the needs to improve their policies and procedures to protect young generation reducing the high risk of becoming a victim.

The research study of Singh, Bansal, Mali and Sodhi (2018) on analyzing the awareness of cybercrime and designing a relevant framework with respect to cyber warfare. The findings of the study uncovered that there is high level of confidence at a surface level, with respondents asserting

to having the knowledge of cybercrime. Additionally, outstanding ignorance among users who viewed themselves to have propelled level of internet knowledge.

Parenting and cybercrime preventive measures

Parents play an influential role in moulding and shaping the behaviour of children. Moitra and Mukherjee (2012) opined that there is a noteworthy role of parents in shaping the youthful behaviour of their children. For example, they point out that home is the place where a normal and healthy development of any child starts and the family constitutes the backbone of an individual. From this perspective, family is considered to be a basic ecology in which the behavior of children is manifested in their childhood by way of negative or positive parental reinforcement. Similarly, Talib, Abdullah, and Mansor (2011) stated that the family of a child is a socio-cultural-economic arrangement that has a significant influence on not only the behavior of the children, but also on the development of their characters. Therefore, ignorance in their parenting can lead them towards unwanted damaging effects that ultimately create behavioral problems in children. It is also accurate to state that indifferent parenting styles negatively affects the children in terms of psychological and behavior context. From this perspective, Coste (2015) recognized the work of Baumrind, a developmental psychologist and clinician for her research work on parenting styles. Baumrind identified three parenting styles based on parental demandingness and responsiveness, which include authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, and permissive parenting style.

Authoritative parenting style

Baumrind first introduced the concept of authoritative parenting style. According to Baumrind (1966), the authoritative parents provide guidance to their children in and oriented and rational manner. Since the level of demandingness is higher in this parenting style, parents usually welcome effective communication as well as effective relationship between them (Piko & Balazs,

2012). These style is most beneficial and an effective style of parenting among most families. In other words, authoritative parenting style fosters positive well-being of children.

Authoritarian parenting style

The authoritarian parents attempt to evaluate, shape and control the attitudes as well as behavior of their children in line with set standards of conduct, known as absolute standard. In the light of this absolute standard, children are supposed to follow very strict rules defined by their parents. In case the children fail to comply with such rules they are punished. Cherry (2015) points out that authoritarian parents usually fail to come up with reasoning behind such rules. According to Hoskins (2014), authoritarian parents exhibit low responsiveness and they are highly demanding. In this style of parenting, parents emphasize on conformity and obedience and thus expect that they are obeyed without explanation in a less warm environment. In other words, it is widely believed that an authoritarian parent is forceful, punitive and believes that a child should adhere to work in accordance to ethics and should be obedient.

Permissive parenting styles

Permissive parents attempt to behave in acceptant, affirmative and non-punitive manner toward their children's impulses, actions and desires. According to Hoskins (2014), permissive parents can be characterized as exhibiting low level of demandingness and high level of responsiveness. From this perspective, it can be stated that permissive parents actually allow their children to actively participate without being concerned for their actions. It would therefore not be wrong to state that there is a significant link between the parental styles and individual's tendency to engage in unwholesome activities or violent behaviour. In other words, lack of parental involvement and interaction results in increased risk of violence, primarily in male children (Brook *et al,* 2014).

Johnson (2016) studied about four types of parenting styles in his research work. The factors which had been identified in permissive and authoritarian parenting styles were poor

parenting practices, inattentive monitoring. The study revealed that the factors were significant in the prediction of cyber criminality. While the authoritative parenting style was found to be the most effective style followed by the authoritarian style. The researcher further recommended that the parental practices and the characteristics of parent-child relationship should receive full attention in order to decrease cybercrime involvement.

The research work of Sarwar (2016) investigated the impact of parents and their parenting styles on their children's moral development. An in-depth interview approach was adopted for the study. The study findings revealed that the authoritative parenting style is more effective for child upbringing compared to authoritarian style. It further revealed that the authoritarian styles leads the children to be rebellious and in turn create a lot of problems. The study further recommended that parents should spend more time with their children in order to reduce their problematic behaviours.

Adan, Arifin and Borhan (2014) conducted a research to identify the issues that hinder the moral development of children in Malaysia. Parents participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, the study revealed significant relationship between parents awareness and child upbringing, also the study findings revealed that parental style practice significantly relate child upbringing. The study recommended that in other to protect and raise children properly parental awareness on the style to adopt should be raised.

Research methodology

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The design is preferred because it is directed towards determining the cause-and-effect relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable. It looks at how a particular characteristics, trait, or past occurrence affects the dependent variable. The population of this study comprised of 185 four hundred level Business Education students of Public Universities in Cross River State. The census sampling technique was adopted for this study in agreement with the statement of Kusugh (2016)

that census sample size is determined when a population of a study is between 200 and below. Thus, the entire population of 185 was used.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A contained questions on peer group and parenting while Section B contained (10) item questions on cybercrime and were developed using the four point rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement for each statement.

Validity of a research instrument according to Iwara (2022) refers to the progressive degree that an instrument for data collection measures successively the items designed to value. In terms of validity, two experts in educational measurement and evaluation unit, Faculty of Educational Foundations studies and one from Business Education unit, Faculty of Vocational and Science Education University of Calabar validated the instrument using Cronbach's Alpha to analyse the internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire. A grand coefficient index of .91 was obtained. Independent t-test analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Table: 1 Descriptive statistics of the variables of the study

Categorical variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Peer Group	Male	103	55.68
	Female	82	44.32
	Total	185	100.0
Parenting	Single parenting	53	28.65
	Co- parenting	132	71.35
	Total	185	100.0
Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Cybercrime	185	22.67	4.14

Research question one

To what extent does peer group influence public university students' knowledge of the preventive measures of cybercrime?

Table 2: Summary of Independent t-test analysis result of peer group and knowledge of preventive measures of cybercrime.

(N=185)

Peer Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Male	103	22.8641	4.19862		
				.712	.884
Female	82	22.4268	4.08258		

Significant at P< .05 level, df = 183.

The result x-rayed in Table 2 revealed Independent t-test statistical result on Peer group knowledge of preventive measures of cybercrime. The result showed p-value at .05 level of significance. Since the t-value of .712 is not higher than the p-value at .05 with 183 degrees of freedom, the null hypotheses was justified. This implies that Peer group knowledge of cybercrime preventive measures was nonsignificant.

Research question two

To what extent does Parenting style influence public university students' knowledge of the preventive measures of cybercrime?

Table 3: Summary of Independent t-test analysis result of parenting and knowledge of preventive measures of cybercrime.

(N=185)

Parenting	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Single parenting	53	70.7732	4.57690		
				.650	.516
Co-parenting	132	71.1439	4.02113		

Significant at P< .05 level, df = 183.

The result in Table 3 revealed that the calculated t-value of .650 is higher than the p-value at .05 level of significance with 183 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis that Parenting does not significantly influence public university students' knowledge of cybercrime preventive measures was rejected. This implies that Parenting significantly influence knowledge of cybercrime preventive measures.

Discussion of findings

The result in hypothesis one highlights the importance of continuing to maintain and promote peer-neutral educational programs and resources that ensure all students, regardless of their gender, have access to critical information on cybercrime prevalence. Moreover, it reflects a positive shift towards peer's gender equality in education and improved access to information, which can contribute to a better overall knowledge outcomes and a reduced incidence of cybercrime in the community to a more informed and equitable approach to cybercrime prevention.

The result of this study is in conformity with the findings of Hasan, Rashidah, and Omar (2015) in a study on the perception and Awareness of young internet Users towards Cybercrime. The findings of the study revealed that Female students are more aware of cybercrime and perceived the issue of risk differently than the male students and have affirmative insights than male students. Similarly, this result is in line with the submission of Singh, Bansal, Mali and Sodhi (2018) who carried out a study on the awareness of cybercrime and designing a relevant framework with respect to cyber warfare. The findings of the study uncovered that there is high level of outstanding ignorance among users who viewed themselves to have propelled level of internet knowledge.

The result in Hypothesis two revealed that Parenting does not significantly influence public university students' knowledge of cybercrime preventive measures. The finding of this study is not surprising as it suggests that parenting among the study population were relatively not uniform across the two groups, leading to inconsistent communication and guidance about cybercrime prevalence and its preventive measures to the students. Furthermore, in some families the role of parents in educating students on cybercrime issues is diminished due to the perception that it is not worth spending time with children. This result is not in line with the submission of Singh, Adan, Arifin and Borhan (2014) who carried out a study on the issues that hinder the moral

development of children in Malaysia. The study revealed significant relationship between parents awareness and child upbringing, also the study findings revealed that parental style practice significantly relate child upbringing.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that students' knowledge of cybercrime prevalence and fraudster's mode of operation are important educational and socio-economic factors needed for national development. This is in line with the notion that internet has emerged as most powerful medium for usage of information communication technology gadgets. The findings of this study hold important implications for practice, research, and theory in the realm of cybercrime prevalence education and students' well-being with a particular focus on addressing knowledge gaps among students peer groups and those from single or co-parenting backgrounds.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were reached:

1. That cybercrime education programmes should adopt peer group gender-neutral strategies. Instead of focusing on gender-specific approaches, schools should aim for inclusive and comprehensive curricula that cater to all students, irrespective of their peer group gender.

2. That as the study found no significant influence. Parenting should support and open communication between parents and their children regarding cybercrime prevalence and risk of involvement.

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