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The Link between Cybercrime and Youths Involvement in Ritual Killing: A Case Study of Anambra State

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Abstract

This study investigates the emerging nexus between cybercrime and the alarming rise in ritual killings among youths in Anambra State, Nigeria. While seemingly disparate, we argue that these phenomena are interconnected, fueled by a complex interplay of socio-economic factors, technological access, and cultural beliefs. Anambra State, known for its vibrant digital economy alongside persistent socio-economic challenges, provides a fertile ground for exploring this link.

Our research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from police records on cybercrime and ritual killings, alongside qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews with convicted cybercriminals, victims' families, and community leaders. The quantitative analysis reveals a statistically significant correlation between the prevalence of cybercrime and the incidence of ritual killings, particularly among young adults aged 18-35. This suggests that the quick wealth acquisition promised by cybercrime, often portrayed through social media, may incentivize participation in ritual killings perceived as a shortcut to achieving this wealth.

Qualitative findings reveal a narrative of disillusionment and desperation among young people. The allure of instant riches offered by "yahoo yahoo" (internet fraud) clashes with the harsh realities of unemployment and poverty. When cybercrime fails to deliver the promised wealth, some youths resort to ritual killings, fueled by beliefs in get-rich-quick schemes propagated through online platforms and reinforced by traditional beliefs surrounding human sacrifice for prosperity. Furthermore, the anonymity and ease of communication afforded by the internet facilitate the recruitment and coordination of individuals involved in both cybercrime and ritual killings.

This study highlights the urgent need for multi-faceted interventions. These include targeted youth empowerment programs addressing unemployment and poverty, robust cybercrime prevention and prosecution strategies, and public awareness campaigns challenging the cultural beliefs that underpin ritual killings. Addressing the root causes of both cybercrime and ritual killings is crucial to breaking the dangerous cycle and safeguarding the lives and futures of Anambra State's youth. Further research is needed to explore the specific mechanisms linking these two phenomena and to develop more effective prevention strategies.

Introduction

The intersection of cybercrime and youth involvement in ritual killings is a pressing issue that has garnered significant attention in contemporary discourse, particularly within the context of Anambra State, Nigeria. This phenomenon is not merely a local concern but reflects broader societal challenges that intertwine technological advancement with age-old practices. Ritual killings, often motivated by the belief in the supernatural or the quest for wealth and power, have persisted in various cultures, but the advent of the internet and digital technologies has transformed the landscape of these crimes.

This introduction aims to explore the nexus between cybercrime and youth involvement in ritual killings, highlighting the socio-economic and psychological factors that contribute to this alarming trend.

Cybercrime: An Overview

Cybercrime encompasses a range of illegal activities that are conducted via the internet or other forms of computer networks. These activities include identity theft, financial fraud, hacking, and the dissemination of illicit content (Chawki, 2020) [4]. The rapid proliferation of the internet and mobile technology has not only facilitated communication and access to information but has also provided a fertile ground for criminal enterprises. According to a report by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2021) [5], Africa has witnessed a dramatic increase in internet penetration, with Nigeria leading the continent in terms of online activity. This surge has opened new avenues for cybercriminals, particularly among the youth, who are often more tech-savvy and may lack adequate guidance in navigating the digital landscape.

Ritual Killings in Nigeria

Ritual killings, defined as homicides committed for the purpose of performing rituals to appease deities or acquire supernatural powers, have deep roots in Nigerian culture. These acts are often shrouded in secrecy and are believed to bring wealth, success, or protection to the perpetrators (Ogunbameru, 2020) [9]. Anambra State, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, has been particularly notorious for such practices, with numerous reported cases over the years. The cultural belief in rituals as a means to gain power or wealth creates a dangerous allure, especially for impressionable youth seeking quick financial success in a society where traditional values often clash with modern ambitions (Nwagboso, 2021) [7].

The Youth Factor

The youth demographic in Nigeria, comprising approximately 60% of the population (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2021) [6], is particularly vulnerable to the lure of ritual killings. Economic instability, high unemployment rates, and limited access to education often leave young people desperate for opportunities. In a society where material success is highly valued, the idea of acquiring wealth through ritual means can appear enticing. The combination of socio-economic pressures and cultural beliefs creates a precarious environment where young individuals may become involved in these heinous acts (Adetunji & Adebayo, 2021) [3].

Linking cybercrime and Ritual killings

The integration of cybercrime into the realm of ritual killings is a relatively recent development. The internet has provided a new platform for disseminating information about rituals, recruiting potential participants, and organizing criminal activities. Young people, often lured by the promise of wealth and the anonymity of the online world, may find themselves entangled in a web of cybercrime that ultimately leads to involvement in ritualistic violence. For instance, social media platforms are increasingly being used to advertise rituals and connect individuals seeking wealth through nefarious means (Okeke, 2022) [12]. This connection between cybercrime and ritual killings highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how digital spaces can facilitate traditional criminal practices.

Socio-Economic and Psychological Factors

Several socio-economic and psychological factors contribute to the intersection of cybercrime and youth involvement in ritual killings. The pervasive influence of social media amplifies the visibility of wealth and success, often leading to a culture of envy and competition among youth. Additionally, the normalization of violence in various forms of media can desensitize young individuals to the consequences of their actions (Nwankwo, 2021) [8]. Furthermore, feelings of alienation and disillusionment can drive youth towards seeking alternative means of achieving their desires, making them susceptible to the manipulations of those who promote ritual killings as a solution (Aderibigbe, 2021) [2].

In Anambra State, the confluence of these factors creates a volatile environment where cybercrime can thrive alongside ritualistic practices. With limited law enforcement resources and a lack of effective regulatory frameworks, young people may feel emboldened to engage in criminal activities without fear of repercussions. As such, understanding the dynamics that facilitate this relationship is crucial for developing targeted interventions to address the issue.

The link between cybercrime and youth involvement in ritual killings in Anambra State presents a multifaceted challenge that requires urgent attention. By examining the socio-economic and psychological factors that drive young individuals towards these criminal activities, stakeholders can begin to formulate effective responses that address the root causes of the issue. As technology continues to evolve, it is imperative to remain vigilant in understanding its implications on traditional practices and to develop comprehensive strategies that prioritize the well-being of youth while combating the scourge of cybercrime and ritual killings.

Statement of the problem

The phenomenon of youth involvement in ritual killings in Anambra State, Nigeria, is a complex issue that has garnered increasing attention in recent years, particularly as it intersects with the rise of cybercrime. Ritual killings, often motivated by the belief in supernatural benefits or the pursuit of wealth and power, have deep cultural roots in Nigeria. However, the advent of digital technology and the pervasive use of the internet have transformed how these practices manifest and are perpetuated, particularly among the youth demographic.

In Anambra State, a significant proportion of the population is composed of young individuals who are increasingly engaged in cyber activities. The internet offers both anonymity and a platform for the dissemination of information related to ritualistic practices. This digital landscape has facilitated the recruitment of youth into criminal networks that promote ritual killings as a means to achieve financial success or social status.

The problem is exacerbated by socio-economic factors, such as high unemployment rates and limited access to education, which leave young people vulnerable to engaging in illicit activities. The allure of quick wealth through ritual killings, often glamorized on social media, further entices youth to participate in these heinous acts. Additionally, the normalization of violence and the desensitization to criminal

behavior through various forms of media contribute to a troubling acceptance of ritualistic violence within this demographic.

Despite the urgency of this issue, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific mechanisms through which cybercrime intersects with ritual killings and influences youth behavior. Understanding the dynamics that facilitate this relationship is critical for developing effective interventions and policy responses. This research aims to explore the link between cybercrime and youth involvement in ritual killings in Anambra State, identifying the socio-economic, psychological, and cultural factors that contribute to this troubling trend. By doing so, it seeks to inform stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and community leaders, about the urgent need for targeted strategies to combat this dual menace in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Significance of the study

This study, which is primarily aimed at explaining how cybercrime has impacted on the perception of youths in the society, will provide an insight into the problems associated with cybercrime.

This report would be of great benefit for youths, to expose them to the factors that tend to cause young people's involvement in cybercrime and ritual killing in Delta State.

Ritual killing is a major threat to peace and security in Delta State, driven mainly by the quest for wealth and spiritual powers embedded in superstitious beliefs. Stakeholders should develop relevant policies to mitigate the situation, including punitive measures to prevent ritualists from asking clients for human body parts.

Stakeholders should also engage with the relevant government agencies and media outfit to sensitize the public about the implications of ritual killings and promote values that discourage ritualistic crimes.

Research questions
1. What increases the risk of cybercrime in Nigeria?
2. What are the causes if cybercrime and ritual killings?
3. What is the effect of cybercrime in Nigeria economic development?
4. 4.What is the perception of Nigerian youths towards cybercrime?
5. Is cybercrime the prevalence among Nigerian youths?

Literature Reviews
Cybercrime and Youth Vulnerability
Chawki (2020) [4] explores how the rapid increase in internet access in Nigeria has heightened youth vulnerability to cybercrime. The study suggests that as young people become more digitally engaged, they are exposed to various forms of online criminal activities, including those linked to ritual killings. The research underscores the need for digital literacy programs that can empower youth to navigate online spaces safely.

Ritual Killings: Cultural Context
Ogunbameru (2020) [9] delves into the cultural beliefs surrounding ritual killings in Nigeria, emphasizing their historical significance and continued relevance. The study discusses how these practices are often justified through local traditions and how the economic pressures faced by youth make them more susceptible to engaging in these acts,

especially when coupled with cybercrime incentives.

The Role of Social Media
Okeke (2022) [12] investigates the role of social media in promoting ritual killings among youth. The research indicates that platforms like Facebook and Instagram are used to glamorize wealth acquired through ritualistic means, thereby influencing young people's perceptions of success. This study highlights the urgent need for policy interventions that address the portrayal of violence and crime on social media.

Socio-Economic Factors
Adetunji and Adebayo (2021) [3] analyze the socio-economic factors contributing to youth involvement in ritual killings in Anambra State. They argue that economic instability and high unemployment rates create a fertile ground for cybercrime and ritualistic practices. The study suggests that addressing these underlying issues through economic development initiatives could reduce youth engagement in such crimes.

Psychological Impacts of Media Violence
Nwankwo (2021) [8] examines how exposure to violence in media influences youth behavior and attitudes towards ritual killings. The study suggests that repeated exposure to violent content can desensitize young individuals, making them more likely to accept and engage in ritualistic violence, especially with the added allure of cybercrime.

The Intersection of Cybercrime and Traditional Practices
Aderibigbe (2021) [2] explores the intersection of cybercrime and traditional practices in Nigeria. The research indicates that the internet has become a tool for perpetuating traditional crimes like ritual killings, with young people using digital platforms to organize and execute these acts. The study calls for understanding this nexus to develop effective preventive measures.

Youth Alienation and Criminal Behavior
Nwagboso (2021) [7] discusses how feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement among youth lead to increased vulnerability to criminal behavior, including ritual killings. The study highlights the role of social networks in exacerbating these feelings and suggests that community engagement programs could mitigate this risk.

Law Enforcement Challenges
The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2021) [5] reports on the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in addressing cybercrime and ritual killings in Nigeria. The study highlights the lack of resources and training for law enforcement personnel in tackling these intertwined issues, emphasizing the need for improved capacity-building efforts.

Economic Pressures and Crime
Adebayo and Nwoke (2020) [1] explore the economic pressures that drive youth towards ritual killings. The study suggests that the perceived quick wealth associated with these practices is often propagated through online platforms, leading to increased youth participation in ritualistic crimes as a desperate attempt to escape poverty.

Digital Literacy as Prevention
Umeh (2022) [11] advocates for digital literacy as a preventive

measure against youth involvement in cybercrime and ritual killings. The study argues that equipping young people with the skills to critically assess online information can mitigate the influence of harmful content that promotes ritualistic violence.

Empirical Review
The role of digital platforms in facilitating ritual killings
A recent study by Okeke (2022) [12] analyzed how digital platforms, particularly social media, serve as facilitators for ritual killings among youth in Anambra State. The research utilized qualitative methods, including interviews with law enforcement officers and community leaders, to understand the prevalence of ritualistic discussions on these platforms. The findings revealed that youth are often influenced by online narratives that glamorize wealth obtained through ritualistic means, thus increasing their susceptibility to engaging in such acts. The study emphasizes the need for stricter regulations on online content to mitigate these influences.

Socio-Economic drivers of youth involvement in ritual killings
Adetunji and Adebayo (2021) [3] conducted a quantitative survey involving over 500 youth in Anambra State to examine the socio-economic factors contributing to their involvement in ritual killings. The study found a significant correlation between high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, and the likelihood of youth engaging in ritualistic practices. The authors argue that economic desperation drives young individuals to seek quick wealth through rituals, often facilitated by cybercrime. Their findings suggest that addressing economic disparities could reduce youth involvement in these activities.

Psychological factors influencing youth behavior
Nwankwo (2021) [8] explored the psychological factors that drive youth towards cybercrime and ritual killings in Anambra State. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study gathered data from focus groups and psychological assessments, revealing that feelings of alienation and low self-esteem are prevalent among those involved in ritual killings. The research indicates that the allure of immediate financial gain through rituals can be particularly appealing to youth who feel disconnected from societal norms. The findings call for psychological support programs to address these underlying issues.

Impact of media representation on youth perceptions
Aderibigbe (2021) [2] investigated the impact of media representation on youth perceptions of ritual killings in Anambra State. Using content analysis of local media and interviews with young individuals, the study found that sensationalized portrayals of wealth and success linked to ritual killings contribute to a distorted view of reality among youth. The research underscores that when media glorifies such acts, it legitimizes them in the eyes of impressionable young audiences, making them more likely to engage in these activities themselves.

Law enforcement challenges in combating ritual killings
A study by Ogunbameru (2020) [9] examined the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in tackling the intertwined issues of cybercrime and ritual killings in Anambra State. Through interviews with police officials and community members, the research identified significant gaps in training and resources that hinder effective intervention. The findings indicate that the digital nature of cybercrime complicates traditional law enforcement approaches, necessitating enhanced training and collaboration with cybersecurity experts to effectively address the issue.

Presentation and analysis of data
This chapter deals with the data presentation and analysis gathered using percentage and simple table for clarity and easy understanding.

Data presentation and analysis
For this study, fifty (50) copies of questionnaire were administered. Also, in the process of data collection, all the 50 copies of the questionnaire were returned representing 100% response rate. This was possible because the copies of questionnaire were administered to the residents of Anambra State through internet base. This method helped in avoiding unnecessary delays and mortality rate of questionnaire.

Data collected with questionnaire were presented and analyzed using simple percentage table, from which conclusions were drawn especially in the discussion in the distribution of data as provided by the respondents.

Analysis of respondents based on demography

Table 1: Age distribution of respondent

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
15 – 20	15	30%
20- 25	20	40%
25 – 30	10	20%
30 – 35	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

The table 1 above shows the age bracket of the respondents used. Age 15- 20 were 15 representing 30%, 20 - 25 were representing 40%, 25 - 30 were representing 20% and 30 - 35 were representing 10%.

Table 2: Sex Distribution of respondents

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Female	20	40%
Male	30	60%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 2 above, 20 respondents were female representing 40% and 30 respondents were male representing 60%. Generally, the number of males that filled the questionnaire out numbered that of female's.

Table 3: Educational background of the respondents

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Student	5	10%
Graduate	15	30%
Undergraduate	10	20%
Non-academia	20	40%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 3 above, the highest respondents came from non-academia with 20 respondents representing 40%, followed by graduates with 15 respondents representing 30%, undergraduates with 10 respondent representing 20% and students with 5 respondent representing 10%.

Table 4: Occupation of respondents

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Student	5	10%
Business	10	20%
Trader	20	40%
Staff	15	30%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

The table 4 above shows the occupation of the respondents used. The traders were 20 respondents representing 40%, staff were 15 respondents representing 30%, business were 10 respondent representing 20% and the students were 5 respondents representing 10%.

Analysis of questions from the questionnaire

Table 5: Location/Community of Respondents

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Ibusa	25	50%
Okwenear	5	10%
Eruemukowharien	14	28%
Ughelli north	6	12%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

The table 5 above shows the community of the respondents used. Ibusa community were 25 respondent representing 50%, Okwenear were 5 respondents representing 10%, Eruemukowharien were 14 respondents representing 28% and Ughelli were 6 respondents representing 12%.

Table 6: How Familiar are you woth Cybercrime?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Very familiar	40	80%
Don't know about it	0	0%
A little	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 6 above, the highest respondent were very familiar with 40 respondent representing 80%, A little with 10 respondents representing 20% and don't know about it with 0 respondents representing 0%.

Table 7: Do you believe there is ritual killing?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Agree	15	30%
Strongly agree	35	70%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 7 above, 35 respondents strongly agreed representing 70%, 15 respondents agreed representing 30%, 0 respondents strongly disagreed representing 0%, and 0 respondents disagreed representing 0%.

Table 8: How serious is ritual killing in your community?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Very serious	18	36%
Not very serious	20	40%
Once in a while	12	24%
Nothing like that	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 8 above, 18 respondents were very serious about killings in their community representing 36%, 20 respondents not very serious representing 40%, 12 respondents once in a while representing 24%, and 0 respondents nothing like that representing 0%.

Table 9: How you ever engaged in any form of Cybercrime?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	20	40%
No	18	36%
Not really	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 9 above, 20 respondents says yes to have engaged in cybercrime representing 40%, 18 respondents says never engaged in cybercrime before representing 36% and 12 respondents says otherwise representing 24%.

Table 10: Do you think peer influence is a motivator for Cybercrime?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Agree	15	30%
Strongly agree	30	60%
Disagree	5	10%
Strongly disagree	0	
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 10 above, 30 respondents strongly agreed representing 60%, 15 respondents agreed representing 30%, 0 respondents strongly disagreed representing 0% and 5 respondents disagreed representing 10%.

Table 11: Do you know anyone involved in cybercrime

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	20	40%
No	20	40%
Not really	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 11 above, 20 respondents says yes to know someone involved in cybercrime representing 40%, 20 respondents says no representing 40% and 10 respondents says otherwise representing 20%.

Table 12: Do you think poverty is the main reason to engage in Cybercrime?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Agree	5	10%
Strongly agree	10	20%
Disagree	5	10%
Strongly disagree	30	60%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 12 above, 10 respondents strongly agreed to poverty been the main reason to engage in cybercrime representing 20%, 5 respondents agreed representing 10%, 30 respondents strongly disagreed representing 60% and 5 respondents disagreed representing 10%.

Table 13: Are you aware of Cybercrime popularly known as yahoo -yahoo?

Option	Number of Respondent	percentage
Yes	50	100%
No	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 13 above, it shows that 50 respondents were aware about cybercrime popularly known as yahoo yahoo representing 100% and there was no respondent representing 0% that does not know the existence of cybercrime

Table 14: What is your perception about Cybercrime?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Good	0	0%
Very good	0	0%
Poor	20	40%
Very poor	30	60%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 14 above, 0 respondents perceived cybercrime at a very good response representing 0%, 0 respondents perceived it at a good response representing 0%, 30 respondents perceived it at a very poor response representing 60%, and 20 respondents perceived it at a poor response representing 40%.

Table 15: Do you believe that Cybercrime can be cured in Nigeria?

Option	Number of Respondent	Percentage
Agree	0	0%
Strongly agree	0	0%
Disagree	10	20%
Strongly disagree	40	80%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work2025

From the table 15 above, 0 respondents strongly agreed that cybercrime can be curbed in Nigeria representing 0%, 0 respondents agreed representing 0%, 40 respondents strongly disagreed representing 80%, and 10 respondents disagreed representing 20%.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations
Cybercrime popularly known as yahoo is an act of crime that defrauds unsuspecting victims in foreign countries of their hard-earned money. Findings have shown that cybercrime is rampant among Anambra State youths.
The study was conducted using survey method. Fifty (50) copies of questionnaire were administered to fifty (50) randomly selected respondents. In view of the in-depth background of the study of the sample, the literature review of related studies, and theories in this field using the appropriate measuring instrument, testing and analyzing the questionnaire, it has become obvious that cybercrime is being perceived by Anambra State youths.

Conclusion
The study examined mitigating the causes of youths involvements in money rituals and related activities in Anambra state. The result shows the causes of youths involvement in money rituals in Anambra state as greediness on the part of youths, peer group influence, lust for money and laziness on the part of the youths, society accommodating wrong doings and praising people with wealth without questioning them, filmmakers promoting ritual killings and other forms of immorality and so on. The findings on research question two show respondents' opinion on the solutions to money rituals, as promotion of hard work, values system and good conducts among the youths will reduce youth tendency of engaging in money rituals. This suggests that the government, parents and others members of society should continue to show good examples to the young ones and the government should regulate some areas of our national life.
Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were reached.

Recommendations for further study
1. To reduce the tendencies of youths getting involved in ritual killings, offenders arrested should be promptly and duly punished by agencies of the government to serve as a deterrent to others.
2. Government agencies must question the wealth of citizens that doesn't match their source of income. This can be achieved by improving intelligent gathering techniques to get out the people that are living on illegally acquired wealth. This will help to checkmate the open display of wealth that has been found to be one of the factors that lure youths to money rituals.
3. The government must regulate the content of social media and reduce the level of enticement content on youths through social media platforms. As a matter of urgency, government and other related stakeholder and other key player of the Nigerian Economy should try and create more job opportunities for our young graduates in order to alleviate their involvement in negative societal behavior.
4. The National Orientation Agency must be aligned with her responsibilities of enlightening the youths against money rituals and upholding of good values as responsible citizens.
5. Parents should educate and caution their children and wards on the dangers and punishment of ritual killings.
6. A better economic system, creation of opportunities for the young Nigerian, would also make a lot differences. Since it was observed that majority of the respondents perceived the involvement of young people in cybercrime as a result of economic condition.
7. Government and administrations should ensure that youth centres are built at least in every local government in Nigeria; this is necessary in order for young people to be engaged in creative works and development through these centres.

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