

**CYBERCRIME-RITUALISM AND VICTIMIZATION IN
CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF KWARA STATE,
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: The general aim of the study is to assess cybercrime, ritualism, and criminal victimisation in the Kwara Central Senatorial District of Kwara State, Nigeria. Two specific objectives are considered, which include the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism and the effect of invocation on criminal victimization. The development of information and communication technology (ICT) has revealed an ever-expanding knowledge field that seeks to bring global activities to everyone doorstep. Apart from facilitating the emergence of a global village, the increased access to the internet has opened a window for both legitimate and illegitimate transactions. A thematic review of the literature is carried out. The study used Rational Choice Theory for its theoretical framework. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design in Kwara Central Senatorial District, using 611 respondents to whom structured questionnaires were administered. All the youths and women leaders from selected wards were engaged in an in-depth interview. The result indicated that 26.5% agreed that many people have fallen victim to cybercrime-ritualists in Kwara central senatorial district. The study concluded that addressing criminal victimization associated with cybercrime-ritualism required a comprehensive approach, with the recommendation that the Kwara state government should organise an anti-ritual program side by side with an anti-cybercrime program.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Cybercrime-Ritualism, Criminal Victimization, Rational Choice Theory

INTRODUCTION

The internet has become an integral part of modern life worldwide, but with its growth, online criminal activities have also increased. Today, cybercrime manifests in two forms; cyber-enabled crimes, which mirror offences seen in the physical world like cyberbullying and online harassment, and cyber-dependent crimes, which involve threats to computer systems themselves, such as malware infections, ransomware, and theft or misuse of personal data (Bergmann, Dreißigacker, on-Skarczinski, & Wollinger, 2018). In Africa, the recent trend in cybercrime involves the snatching of female underwear and men's manhood, sometimes at gunpoint, allegedly for ritual purposes. According to Elusoji (2019), women's underwear (pants) and manhood have become high ingredients for rituals and are being used by online fraudsters, popularly called Yahoo Boys. This ugly development has instilled fear into the hearts of women, parents, husbands, and relatives. It is already a serious social problem, as many women no longer hang their pants outside after washing for drying, and many are said to be moving about without pants, and some men do not respond to the greeting or handshake from strangers to avoid their manhood being disappeared for money-making rituals. It was revealed by Adeniran (2018) that women between the ages of 14 and 35 are allegedly considered "hotcakes" by ritualists. Their used pants are sold for as much as three hundred and

fifty thousand naira (₦350.000); the price can be higher if they are confirmed to have body fluids.

In Ghana, it has been reported that the existence of a klepto-theological paradigm was created to abet the perpetration of internet crime. They called this "Sakawa." According to them, Sakawa serves two main functions: it protects cybercriminals and ensures their financial success (Chale & Moyo, 2016). In the same context, Melvin and Ayotunde (2017) analyzed the ritual yahoo boy's connection from purely philosophical and psychological perspectives.

In Nigeria, the majority of cybercriminals are young people and are found in tertiary institutions (Ahmadu, 2016; British Broadcasting Corporation News, 2016). Their recent practice of the act of criminality seeks to combine spiritual elements, ritualism, and internet surfing (Isakova, 2016). The blending of spiritualism and ritualism with machines to undo others (cybercrime-ritualism) is becoming a social problem in Nigeria. The Kwara central senatorial district, which is the study area for this research, has in recent times, experienced a high invasion of cybercriminals. The study seeks to investigate how information on the use of virtual space by Yahoo boys to lure women and men and later use spiritual means to manipulate them and/or use material like pants, menstruation pads, and manhood for money-making rituals has generated criminal victimisation among people in Kwara Central Senatorial District of Kwara State, Nigeria. This consequence and/or criminal victimisation-related ritualism, as well as its effect, are the major focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The rise of cybercrime-ritualism in recent years is not an outcome of surprise. In their study, Tade and Aliyu (2011) observed that cybercrime-ritualism involves the use of supernatural power to cast spells on victims, who in turn give up resistance to following the perpetrator to any place he wants to take her, including ritualists. However, the study has not explained how the act is carried out, especially in Kwara Central Senatorial District, or the experiences of the victims. The aim of this study is to establish synergy between cybercrime, ritualism, and criminal victimization. Technology has integrated countries, and the world has become a global village. The economies of most nations in the world are accessible electronically via the internet (Akanle, Olayinka, Adeshina, & Akarah, 2016). Since the electronic market is open to everybody, which includes eavesdroppers and criminals, false pretence finds fertile ground in this situation (Danguah & Longe, 2011). It is assumed that many of the victims of cybercrime are lured through false pretences.

Many young girls have surfed the internet for different purposes, including looking for boyfriends or girlfriends. Others have patronised the internet for business interaction. Unknown to many, the internet is full of identity thieves whose photographs are fake, as well as the personalities they claim to have. Many internet users, including women, have become easy prey to these fraudsters. It is acknowledged by Ahmed (2010) that the emergence of cybercrime-ritualism caused fear of criminal victimisation, especially among women. However, the consequences of fear have not been investigated in his study. Also, the types of fears caused by cybercrime and ritualism have not been explained. People have had to live with the fear of cybercriminals since their activities are hard to curb by the security forces. Fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm (Jackson, 2011). Fear is the greatest force that prompts one to act in self-preservation. The fear of cybercrime-ritual, therefore, refers to the fear of being a victim of cybercrime-ritualist criminals. It is assumed that the fear of cybercrime-ritualist criminals will include cognitive fear of falling victim, which

may elicit worry, anxiety, and fear of meeting strangers, making friends on the internet, and trusting stranger friends (Lee, 2001). Other scholars have suggested behavioural fears, which involve taking preventive measures like refusing to hang pants on the line in the compound, disposing of menstrual pads in the dustbin, hiding pants in the closet, and walking without wearing pants (Ellis, 2016; Danguah & Longe, 2011).

Many other scholars have suggested the association of an effective aspect of fear with cybercrime ritualists. While people may feel angry about the proliferation of cyber criminals and their blood ritual practice (Dashora, 2016), many scholars have suggested that fear of victimisation among public members may range from everyday moments of worry that occur when one feels personally threatened to some more diffuse or ambient anxiety about the risk of going outside alone or meeting strangers (Ehimen & Bola, 2010). Yet the relationship between fear of victimization and cybercrime ritualists is not clear, at least in terms of significant ordering and with respect to women as victims. Fear of crime victimization can also be viewed from a constructionist perspective, which suggests that fear of being vulnerable to cybercrime may be connected to a broader socio-political context.

As Erinosh, Obasi, and Maduekwe (2017) suggested, victimization is the fear of suffering aggression against oneself and/or one's property, whereas fear of victimization is a feeling of alarm caused by the perceived risk of being a victim (Suleiman, 2016). To explicate the relationship between victimization and fear of being victimized, Julien and Antoine (2019) found that being victimized can generate a fear of future victimization by crime. Here, victimization becomes a dependent variable, while criminality is used as the explanatory variable. The extent to which women's fear of falling victim to cybercrime-ritualists is dependent on cases of previous criminal victimization by cybercrime-ritualists in Kwara Central Senatorial District has not been assessed. Equally not assessed is the type of criminal victimization. This study seeks to fill this research gap.

Research Objectives

In order to assess cybercrime-ritualism and criminal victimisation in the Central Senatorial District of Kwara State, this study was guided by the following specific objectives, which sought:

- i. To examine the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualist activities in Kwara Central Senatorial District.
- ii. To determine how invocation led to criminal victimisation in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Research Questions

- i. How prevalent are the activities of cybercrime-ritualist in Kwara Central Senatorial District?
- ii. What are the effects of invocation on criminal victimization in Kwara Central Senatorial District?

Research Hypotheses

In addition, the following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between prevalence of cybercrime-ritualist and criminal victimisation in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between invocation and criminal victimisation in Kwara central senatorial district.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is a global phenomenon; the term cybercrime represents offences capable of producing psychological and geopolitical concerns perpetuated by the usage of computers and the internet (Chinedu, Oli & Ohazulike, 2023; Suleiman, 2016). Cybercrime is not limited to a country, nor is it restricted by geographical boundaries. It has become a worldwide problem that affects both developed and developing nations. According to Egole and Okamgba (2023) opined that the function of a computer is the same around the globe; the only difference is the brand and model. Computer technologies have existed for a very long time. In their study, Chucks (2023) and Odumesi (2018) reported that, dating back to the 1960s until the present day, cybercrime is gradually updating as technology develops. In 1960, cybercrime focused on the physical destruction of computer system parts and stored data. In the mid-1960s, United States criminal abuse focused on databases and the related risks to privacy. In the 1970s, traditional ways of committing crimes, such as manual stealing, were in place. The computer came into place and modernised criminal activities. In the 1980s, the number of computer systems increased, thereby creating more potential targets for cybercriminals. However, Yee (2000) suggests that internet access enables cybercriminals to perpetrate crimes through the computer without being present at the crime scene.

In the same context, Lazarus and Okolorie (2019) asserted that Cybercrime can be defined as crimes committed on the internet using the computer as either a tool or a target victim. It encompasses all illegal activities perpetrated by one or more people, referred to as scammers, hackers, internet fraudsters, cyber citizens, or 419ners, using the internet through the medium of networked computers, telephones, and other information and communications technology (ICT) equipment. However, cybercrime targets laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and entire networks. It has been argued that mobile merchants are reported to be incurring the greatest fraud losses as a percentage of revenue among all merchant segments. According to Wall (2017), with the transformation of crime in the information age, the first generation of cybercrimes consists of traditional crimes facilitated by local or global computer networks; these are still largely traditional crimes, but they give birth to new globalised opportunities and jurisdictional problems. The third generation are true crimes wholly brought by technology, constituting a step-change in the transformation of cybercrime.

A survey conducted by Adeniran (2018) showed that the term cybercrime is described differently if examined from the perspective of the model penal code. In Africa, cybercrime has been almost widely accepted. In Nigeria, cybercrime is known as Yahoo-yahoo, and the advanced version is Yahoo Plus. Those involved in Yahoo are called Yahoo boys. In their study, Aransiola and Asindemade (2018), and Oumarou (2018) asserted that in Ghana, cybercrime is called Sakawa, and the perpetrators are called Sakawa Boys. It has been argued that in Africa, internet use is very high in South Africa, but cybercriminals are higher in Nigeria (Chawki, 2009).

Prevalence of Cybercrime and Ritualism

Cybercrime-ritualism, however, has been the most popular in public discourse (Abdullah & Jahan, 2020). Due to the common prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism, the increasing threats of cybercrime victimization are serious. Cybercrime-ritualism has become a crucial research subfield in recent years (Stephanies, 2017). In the light of the literature review, numerous specific aspects of cybercrime-ritualism were investigated by a questionnaire survey or interview survey, such as the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism (Chantler & Broadhurst, 2018). Additionally, causes and predictors of cybercrime exist (Abdullah & Jahan, 2020; Illevski, 2016; Kirwan, Fullwood, and Rooney, 2018; Fisher, Bossler, and Holt, 2019; Saad, Huda, and Murah, 2018). One of the negative outcomes of the internet revolution across nations, especially in developing nations like Nigeria, is the growing prevalence of cybercrime and terrorism. In his study, Olajubu (2018) the rise in technology and online communication has not only produced a dramatic increase in the incidence of cybercrime and terrorism but has also resulted in the emergence of what appears to be a new variety of criminal activities.

Cybercrime-ritualism is not entirely new, with its widespread or peculiar nature in developing nations like Nigeria. Hence, before the combination of ritualism and surfing the internet for criminal activities, in the United States of America in 1988, when a 23-year-old student, Robert Morris, launched a virus (the Morris worm) on the internet, over 6,000 computers in the estimated 60,000 systems linked to the internet at that time were infected, and it cost about 100 million dollars to repair infected systems. Computer applications are supposed to be leveraged to build the technical knowledge and skills of youths in various industries, including art, commerce, and, most importantly, technological advancement. However, the reverse has been the case with the Nigerian situation. Previous studies have established that cybercrime-ritualism among youths has become very prevalent in many parts of Nigeria (Oluwadare, Oluwasanni, & Igbekoyi, 2018). It occurs daily. The problem has often attracted the attention of the government, religious leaders, and other concerned security agencies to devise measures and policies that could ameliorate this trend. According to Isakova (2017), the trend of cybercrime-ritualism has been a dramatic influx of many vibrant youths into more dynamic forms of cybercrime-ritualism, and this poses a huge burden on the general society. Its effects on the reputation of the country and the physical and mental well-being of the victims cannot be overemphasised.

Cybercrime-ritualist invocation and criminal victimisation

Spirituality has been identified as crucial for ensuring positive outcomes for individuals seeking wealth through all means in later life (Ellis, 2016; Rich, 2018). Nwolise (2019), Chantler, and Broadhurst (2018) argued that through ritual invocation, fundamental issues such as wealth, material accumulation, deficits of inner faith, and personal worth restoration can be achieved. However, they noted that the next generation of these individuals may remain poor due to their parents' actions. Like religion, ritual invocation plays a vital role in individuals' lives, especially as ageing fosters self-reflexivity and self-acceptance. Researchers have reported that opening the mind, body, and spirit towards materialistic life elevates spirituality (Broadhurst & Grabosky, 2016; Kangwa, 2016; Adomi & Igun, 2018). Spirituality has been recognised as vital for cybercrime-ritualists (Baarda, 2016), particularly for enhancing wealth-seeking behaviours (Isakova, 2017). Aransiola and Asindemade (2017) suggested that people in later life engage in existential reflections on meaning and purpose, often linked to poverty and loss. For cybercrime victims, spirituality may evolve from lifelong ritual practices for income, often encouraged by peer or media influences (Olaide & Adewole, 2017).

The economic challenges and unemployment rates among youth's fuel ritual invocation for wealth (Aghatise, 2006; Schuchter & Levi, 2016; Danbazau, 2018). Ahmad (2015) observed that spirituality in Islam and Christianity is rooted in religious texts, emphasising belief in a higher purpose. Longitudinal studies have reported that ritual invocation does not require adherence to any specific religion or tradition (Nwolise, 2019). Rituals are accessible to all individuals, offering personal transformation when practiced consistently (Chuks, 2023; Adewole, 2017). Adesina (2017) noted that rituals provide spiritual upliftment, particularly when connected to spiritualism. Among Yahoo boys, invocation involves calling upon spirits for assistance in criminal activities (Information Nigeria, 2017). Invocations, which may be conducted individually or collaboratively, can lead to altered states of behaviour and communication (Lazarus & Okolories, 2019), often associated with demonic entities to manipulate cybercrime victims (Chukwendi, Oli, & Ohazulike, 2023). Chuks (2023) suggested that invocation draws upon the invoked entity's qualities, such as attractiveness or control. The primary goal of cybercrime ritualists is to make victims obey their will (Businessday, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

Rational choice theory is a framework for understanding and modelling social and economic behaviour within economics, political science, and sociology. At its core, the theory posits that individuals make decisions through rational calculation to maximise their utility. This theoretical approach assumes that individuals have preferences among the available choice alternatives that allow them to state which options they prefer. These preferences are assumed to be complete and transitive. This means that individuals can compare any two options and determine which they prefer, and if they prefer option A to option B and option B to option C, then they must also prefer option A to option C (Beaudry-Cyr, 2015).

The intellectual roots of RCT can be traced back to the works of early economists such as Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham. Smith's notion of the "invisible hand" in "The Wealth of Nations" (1776) emphasised individual decision-making in free markets, which led to the efficient allocation of resources. Bentham's utilitarianism further laid the groundwork by introducing the concept of utility as a measure of satisfaction or pleasure that individuals seek to maximise. However, the formal development of RCT began in the 20th century with significant contributions from John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in "Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour" (1944), which introduced game theory as a rigorous mathematical tool for analysing strategic interactions among rational agents (Beaudry-Cyr, 2015).

The assumptions underpinning RCT are pivotal to its application and relevance. Firstly, the theory assumes that individuals are rational actors who have clear preferences and are capable of making consistent choices that maximize their utility. Secondly, these preferences are stable over time, meaning that the underlying value system guiding choices does not change arbitrarily. Thirdly, individuals have perfect information, or at least enough information to make an informed decision. Lastly, the theory assumes that individuals act independently and are not influenced by the decisions of others unless they affect their utility directly (Elster, 2022).

In the context of cybercrime, RCT posits that offenders assess the potential gains from their actions, such as financial profit, against the perceived risks involved. The relative anonymity provided by the internet often leads individuals to view cybercrime as a low-risk endeavour.

For instance, research indicates that the ease of creating anonymous online accounts facilitates criminal activities, making it simpler for individuals to engage in scams without immediate consequences (Wada, Longe, & Danquah, 2012). This perception of low risk, combined with the potential for significant financial rewards, makes cybercrime an attractive option for many individuals.

The concept of ritualism, particularly as it pertains to cybercrime in Nigeria, adds another layer to the application of RCT. In the case of Nigerian "Yahoo Boys," who engage in online fraud, there is often a belief that performing rituals or seeking spiritual assistance can enhance their chances of success? This blending of spirituality with cybercrime reflects cultural beliefs that influence rational decision-making. Many Yahoo Boys come from backgrounds where legitimate employment opportunities are scarce, leading them to rationalize their engagement in cybercrime as a means to achieve financial success (Abbas, 2019). The integration of ritualistic practices into cybercrime highlights how cultural factors can shape the rational calculations of offenders. Engaging in rituals may provide psychological comfort and a sense of control over the uncertain outcomes of their criminal activities. This belief in the efficacy of rituals can further reinforce their rational choice to commit cybercrime, as they perceive it as a way to increase their chances of success (Makridis & Smeets, 2019).

The phenomenon of the Yahoo Boys exemplifies the application of RCT to cybercrime and ritualism. These individuals often engage in elaborate scams targeting unsuspecting victims through various online platforms. Economic pressures, peer influence and spiritual beliefs influence their decision to engage in such activities. The potential for quick financial gain, combined with the normalization of cybercrime within their social networks, leads many to view their actions as rational (Wada et al., 2012).

Despite its wide appeal, rational choice theory has garnered notable criticism. O'Grady, for instance, has argued that the theory falsely assumes that all people are capable of making rational choices (O'Grady, 2011). He has pointed out that the theory fails to explain why young offenders, unlike their adult counterparts, would have the burden of responsibility excused from them. O'Grady further reasons that the theory seems to disregard persons considered NCRMD (not criminally responsible on account of mental disorders). Due to these gaps, the researcher decided to bring in a second theory to cover up the lapse observed with the rational choice theory

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This design was chosen because the area to be covered by this study was large; therefore, this method enabled the researcher to use sample to draw inferences about the various elements of the population. Also, a cross-sectional design provided information on the characteristics of the study population at a specified period.

The study area for this research was the Central Senatorial District of Kwara State, which is located at latitudes 8024N and 830N and longitudes 4010E and 403E East. It has a forest area of about 1000 km² and is situated in the transition zone between the forest woodland of the south and the savanna of the north in the southwestern part of Nigeria. There are six tertiary institutions in Kwara Central Senatorial District. These include the University of Ilorin, Al-Hikmah University, Kwara State Polytechnic, Kwara State College of Education, Kinsley College of Education, and Muhyideen College of Education. These institutions, which house youths and students from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, may contribute

to the high rate of cybercrime ritualists in the Kwara Central Senatorial District. Politically, Kwara Central Senatorial District is divided into four (4) local government areas (V12: Ilorin West, Ilorin South, Ilorin East, and Asa LGA). Each of the local government areas was further divided into political wards.

Multistage sampling techniques were employed to select respondents for the study. It began with the clustering of the senatorial district into local government areas, political wards, villages, and households. Four (4) local government areas were purposefully selected from the Kwara central senatorial district for study. This is based on the existence of tertiary institutions in the area. Such institutions as the University of Ilorin fall under the Ilorin South Local Government, Kwara State Polytechnic falls under the Ilorin East Local Government, Al-Hikmah University is located in the Ilorin West Local Government, and Kwara State University is located in the Asa Local Government. All these institutions and local government areas fall under the Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Kwara central senatorial district has fifty-two (52) political wards. Using this criteria, Alanamu ward, Adewole Ward, and Ogidi Ward (Ilorin West LGA), Oke-ogun Ward, Okaka Ward, and Balogun Fulani Ward (Ilorin South LGA), Are Ward, Sango Ward, and Gambari Ward (Ilorin East LGA), and Ogbondoko Ward, Aboto Ward, and Ote Ward (Asa LGA). were purposefully selected for the study based on the researcher's personal observation and police periodic patrol and arrest of cybercrime in these wards; more so, these wards seem to host many students, which may likely be the reason for the increase in cybercrime ritualism in Kwara central senatorial district. Since the projected population of the local government and wards is given, proportional sampling techniques were used to determine the sample size for the selected wards. A simple random sampling technique (using the fish bowl with replacement technique) was used, and three political wards from each LGA were selected for the study. At the ward's level, systematic random sampling techniques were employed to select sample respondents based on the number of samples allocated to each ward from the LGA sample universe. The universe from which the sample size of 600 was drawn represents 33.25% of the total population of the Kwara Central Senatorial District. For qualitative data, forty (40) structured interviews will be conducted.

Participants in the interviews were randomly selected, including community leaders, village heads, youth leaders, and women leaders across the selected wards. The rationale behind this is that the researcher believes that selected people will have adequate knowledge about cybercrime and its rate of occurrence within their community because of their community roles as youth leaders, women leaders, and heads of district in all selected wards. In all, six hundred (600) respondents were selected for the quantitative study, and forty (40) respondents were randomly selected for the qualitative study. Multistage sampling techniques were employed to select respondents for the study. It began with the clustering of the senatorial district into local government areas, political wards, villages, and households.

Both questionnaires and in-depth interview methods were used for data collection. The choice of an in-depth interview was to complement the quantitative data. The questionnaire was administered in selected political wards in Kwara Central Senatorial District, while an in-depth interview was used to elicit information from selected members of the political wards. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentages, tables, and frequencies. At the 0.5 level of significance, multiple linear regression was used to test hypotheses, respectively. The choice of inferential statistics was to determine the extent of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Thematic analysis was used to analyse

qualitative data collected via in-depth interviews. Lastly, participation in the study not forced onto anybody. The ethical issues of honesty, objectivity, openness and confidentiality were respected and upheld throughout.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 4.1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	385	67.4
	Female	186	32.6
Level of Education	Certificate	113	19.8
	Diploma	345	60.4
	Bachelor Degree	57	10.0
	Doctor of Philosophy	34	6.0
	Others	20	3.5
Age	20-25	105	18.4
	26-30	181	31.7
	31-35	45	7.9
	36-40	23	4.0
	41-45	5	0.9
	46-50	86	15.1
	51-55	73	12.8
	55 and above	53	9.3
Marital Status	Single	228	39.9
	Married	180	31.5
	Divorced	73	12.8
	Widowed	49	8.6
	Others,	41	7.2
Occupation	Student	281	49.2
	Civil Servant	179	31.3
	Trader	26	4.6
	Farmer	63	11.0
	Others,	22	3.9
Religion	Islam	270	47.3
	Christian	146	25.6
	Traditional Religion	27	4.7
	Others,	128	22.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Respondents of diverse socio-demographic backgrounds participated in the study. Table 4.1 revealed that the majority (67.4%, n = 385) of the participants in the study were males. The age of the respondents showed that more (62.2%, n = 354) of the respondents were between the ages of 20-40. This implies that the participants are still young and believed to have adequate information about cybercrime and other related issues. The respondents between ages 41- 55 accounted for 28.8% (n = 164).

The educational level of the respondents showed that more than half (60.4%, n = 345) had diplomas as their highest level of qualification; those with certificates accounted for 19.8%, n = 133. Similarly, 10.0% (n = 57) and 6.0% (n = 34) had bachelor's and doctor of philosophy degrees, respectively. This implied that the majority of the respondents had a formal education; thus, they may be capable of providing adequate information about cybercrime-ritualism and its prevalence in their community. On the marital status of the respondents, the majority (39.9%, n = 228) of the respondents were single, and the married ones accounted for (31.5%, n = 180); divorcees and widows accounted for 12.8%, n = 73, and 8.6%, n = 49, respectively. This implied that the majority of the respondents were married. On the occupation of respondents, it was demonstrated statistically that the majority (49.2%, n = 281) of the respondents were students. However, civil servants accounted for 31.3% (n = 179), while farmers were 11.0% (n = 63). The table showed that there were more Muslims (47.3%, n = 270) than Christians (25.6%, n = 146) in the study.

Prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism

Table 4.2: Rating of the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism.

S/N	Prevalence of cybercrime-ritualist activities	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev.
1	I am aware cybercrime-ritualism	83 (14.5)	134 (23.5)	216 (37.8)	88 (15.4)	50 (8.8)	2.8039	1.13325
2	Cybercrime-ritualism in Kwara Central is prevalent	231 (40.5)	60 (10.5)	136 (23.5)	90 (15.5)	54 (9.5)	3.3100	1.18175
3	Cybercrime-ritualism in Kwara Central is not prevalent	65 (11.4)	68 (11.9)	141 (24.7)	219 (38.4)	78 (13.7)	2.5326	1.3906
4	I know some victim of cyber-ritualist	77 (13.5)	151 (26.5)	101 (17.7)	184 (32.2)	58 (10.2)	2.9912	1.23896
5	Cybercrime-ritualist target both men and women	87 (15.2)	89 (15.6)	117 (20.5)	184 (32.2)	94 (16.5)	3.1909	1.30867
6	The number of people engaged in cybercrime ritualism is high	134 (23.5)	83 (14.5)	216 (37.8)	50 (8.8)	58 (15.4)	2.6412	1.17821
7	The number of people being victimised by cybercrime ritualist is high	114 (20.0)	76 (13.3)	85 (14.9)	58 (10.2)	238 (41.7)	2.5121	1.1624

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4.2 shows respondents responses to the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism in the study area. Respondents were asked whether they were aware of the existence and prevalence of cybercrime ritual activities in their area. Based on the obtained mean of 2.8039 and a standard deviation of 1.13325, respondents showed they were aware of cybercrime ritualism activities

in Kwara Central. They were further asked about its prevalence. The statistics showed that cybercrime ritualism was prevalent ($x = 3.3100$, $SD = 1.18175$). At a mean rate of 2.9912 and $SD=1.23896$, respondents said they knew some victims of cyber-ritualism in the study area. The standard deviation for both awareness and prevalence were within 1. This indicated agreement in the opinion of respondents on the existence and prevalence of cybercrime ritualism activities in the study area.

Respondents were further asked to indicate the target of cybercrime ritualism based on gender. From Table 4.2, it was statistically revealed that both men and women were vulnerable to cybercrime ritualism in the study area ($x = 3.1909$, $SD = 1.30867$). Also, it was shown that there was a high rate of people who engaged in cybercrime ritual activities in the study area based on the obtained mean ($x = 2.6412$, $SD = 1.17821$). Beyond the increase in people's involvement in cybercrime ritualism activities, there was an increase in victims of cybercrime ritual activities in the study location ($x = 2.5121$, $SD = 1.1624$).

Invocation and Criminal Victimization

Table 4.3: Rating of Invocation and Criminal Victimization.

S/N	Invocation	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev.
1	I am familiar with the concept of "invocation" for internet crime	64	60	169	228	50	3.2452	1.11587
		11.2	10.5	29.6	39.9	8.8		
2	I have witnessed someone using invocation for cybercrime	75	87	203	132	74	3.0753	1.19337
		13.1	15.2	35.6	23.1	13.0		
3	The use of invocation for cybercrime can bring about criminal victimisation	85	124	129	179	54	2.9877	1.22755
		14.9	21.7	22.6	31.3	9.4		
4	I feel safe in my daily life in Kwara Central Senatorial District	119	211	121	72	48	2.5079	1.19407
		20.8	37.0	21.2	12.6	8.4		
5	The use of invocation in internet is effective for criminality	56	84	135	166	130	3.4028	1.25751
		9.8	14.7	23.6	29.1	22.8		
6.	The invocations are mostly targeted at both females and males	73 (17.8)	89 (15.6)	106 (18.6)	199 (34.9)	104 (18.2)	2.5271	1.2918
7.	The use of invocation makes target victims to be easily manipulated	152 (26.6)	125 (21.9)	101 (17.7)	113 (19.8)	80 (14.0)	3.2189	1.1732

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Findings in Table 4.3 statistically showed that invocation has a significant effect on criminal victimisation in the study area, considering the obtained Mean = 3.2452, $SD = 1.11587$.

Exploring the individual variables, the statistical mean for familiarity with the concept of “invocation” for internet crime was (Mean = 3.2452, SD = 1.11587), witnessed someone using invocation for cybercrime (Mean = 3.0753, SD = 1.19337) and the use of invocation for cybercrime can bring about criminal victimisation (Mean = 2.9877, SD = 1.22755) were highly rated. Others are: feel safe in my daily life in Kwara Central Senatorial district (Mean = 2.5079, SD = 1.332), and festivity, which is central among ethnic groups in central Nigeria, were affected (Mean = 3.66, SD = 1.19407), and the use of invocation in internet is effective for criminality (Mean = 3.4028, SD = 1.25751). From the table, it could also be seen that the invocation is mostly targeted at both females and males, the use of invocation makes target victims to be easily manipulated, at mean = 2.5271, SD = 1.2918 and mean = 3.2189, SD = 1.1732, respectively. From the findings, the standard deviations ranged from 1.11587 to 1.2918 in all the variables. This implies that the variation in opinion was small and closely clustered around the means, which indicated a high consensus among respondents in the study area on the negative influence of invocation and criminal victimization activities in the study area.

Criminal Victimization

Table 4.4: Rating of Criminal Victimization

S/N	Criminal Victimization	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev.
1	Most victims of Cybercrime-Ritualism are male	85	124	129	179	54	2.9877	1.22755
2	The number of victims in Kwara State is low.	119	211	121	72	48	2.5079	1.19407
3	Most victim of Cybercrime-Ritualism are female	58	84	135	166	130	3.4028	1.16636
4	Most of the Cybercrime-Ritualist are from Kwara Central	49	49	71	274	128	3.6708	1.16636
5	I have encountered many victims of the Cybercrime-Ritualism in my area	65	157	111	100	140	3.1699	1.35887
6	The victims usually become mad	11.0	27.5	19.4	17.5	24.5		
		151	126	99	91	104	2.7632	1.2176

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 4.4 indicates the incidence of cybercriminal victimisation in the study area. This was based on the statistical mean obtained, thus: Mean = 2.98771 and SD = 1.22755. However, the mean score of individual variables showed that: The number of victims in Kwara State is lower compared to other state (Mean = 2.5079, SD = 1.19407), The major victims of Cybercrime-Ritualism were female (Mean = 3.4028, SD = 1.16636), Majority of the Cybercrime-Ritualism in Kwara State was said to be from Kwara Central (Mean = 3.6708, SD = 1.16636); many of the respondents said to have encountered many victims of the Cybercrime-Ritualism in their area (Mean = 3.1699, SD = 1.35887) the victims usually lose their mental state (Mean = 2.7632, SD = 1.2176). Based on the findings in Table 4.4, cybercriminal victimization activities, which

constitute both social and economic activities, were statistically significantly affected victims in the study area.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: H1: There is no significant relationship between prevalence of cybercrime-ritualist and criminal victimisation in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Table 4.5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.451a	0.203	0.202	0.66249	0.897

a. Predictors: (Constant), CRY
 b. Dependent Variable: CRV

The correlation coefficient (R) equal 0.451, indicates a positive relationship between the variables. The R-Squared statistic indicates that the model as fitted explains 45.1% of the variability in CRV. This established that CRY have effect on the CRV in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Table 4.6: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.712	1	63.712	145.163	.000b
	Residual	249.733	569	0.439		
	Total	313.445	570			

a. Dependent Variable: CRV
 b. Predictors: (Constant), CRY

Also, the p-value of (0.000) which is less than the level of significant at 0.05, indicates that the result is statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It can be concluded that there is a significant effect of CRP on CRV in Kwara central Senatorial District.

Table 4.7: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.575	0.133		11.797	0		
	CRY	0.534	0.044	0.451	12.048	0	1	1

a. Dependent Variable: CRV

The regression coefficient of the above equation for the model implies that unit change in CRY will exert a positive effect on CRV.

Quantitative data presented above was bolstered by data from interview. One of the interviewees stated that:

Cybercrime-ritualism victimization in Kwara Central Senatorial District was a prevalent with the increasing use of technology. It's important to address the prevalence and impact on individuals and communities (Interview, Male, 31, 2024)

Another respondent has this to say:

It is difficult to determine exactly how prevalence cybercrime-ritualism victimization is in Kwara central senatorial district. This is due to the fact that many cases go unreported and there was a lack of reliable data on the issue. However, it was estimated that over thousands of people were affected by cybercrime-ritualism each year in Kwara central senatorial district (Interview, Male, 29, 2024).

Some respondent said:

Haha.... In recent years, there have been reports of increasing cybercrime-ritualism victimization in Kwara central senatorial district. This is due to a combination of factors, including the increasing access to technology in everyday life (Interview, male, 33, 2024)

Based on the interview conducted, cybercrime-ritualist could refer to cybercriminals who exploit cultural or religious beliefs in the digital realm. For example, criminals might use traditional rituals, symbols, or practices to deceive individuals' online identities, leading to what could be termed cybercrime-ritualism. Such activities could involve scams, fraud, or other forms of online victimization that incorporate cultural or ritualistic elements to manipulate or exploit individuals. Criminal victimization in the context of cybercrime-ritualism manifests in various ways. Individuals may fall prey to online scams where cybercriminals exploit their cultural or religious beliefs, promising supernatural benefits or protection through digital means. Victims might unknowingly engage in activities that lead to financial losses, identity theft, or other forms of harm, all within the context of deceptive practices that draw upon traditional rituals.

Hypothesis Two: H2: There is no significant relationship between invocation and criminal victimisation in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Table 4.8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
	1.717a	0.514	0.513	0.5176	1.113

a. Predictors: (Constant), INV
b. Dependent Variable: CRV

The correlation coefficient (R) equal 0.717, which indicates a positive relationship between the variables. The R-Squared statistic indicates that the model as fitted explains 71.7% of the variability in criminal victimisation. This establishes that invocation has an effect on criminal victimisation in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Table 4.9: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	161.004	1	161.004	600.967	.000b
	Residual	152.44	569	0.268		
	Total	313.445	570			

a. Dependent Variable: CRV

b. Predictors: (Constant), INV

Also, the p-value of (0.000) which is less than the level of significant at the 0.05 indicates that the result is statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect of criminal victimisation on invocation in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Table 4.10: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	0.507	0.11		4.61	0		
	INV	0.868	0.035	0.717	24.515	0	1	1

a. Dependent Variable: CRV

The regression coefficient of the above equation for the model implies that unit change in invocation will exert a positive effect on criminal victimisation.

Quantitative data presented above was buttressed by data from interview. One of the interviewees stated that:

Hmm... the effects of invocation on criminal victimization in Kwara Central Senatorial District can be devastating. Victims may experience physical and emotional trauma and they may also be ostracised by their communities (Interview, Male, 33, 2024).

Some respondent has this say:

For we ooo..... Invocation can also lead to economic hardship, as victims may lose their jobs or have difficulty finding new ones. Furthermore, victims may be force to leave their homes and communities, which can have a devastating impact on their lives (Interview, Females, 27, 2024)

Another respondent said:

Oga, the effects of invocation on criminal victimisation in Kwara Central Senatorial District can be both short-term and long-term. In the short-term, victims may experience fear (Interview, Female, 29, 2024).

Based on the interview conducted, the act of invocation, typically associated with calling upon a deity, spirit, or supernatural force, is a spiritual or religious practice that, in and of itself, does not have direct effects on criminal victimization. However, the intersection of religious or spiritual beliefs with criminal activities lead to indirect consequences, affecting individuals in various ways. One potential avenue is the susceptibility of individuals to scams and fraud that exploit their spiritual or religious convictions. Criminals prey on individuals by promising supernatural benefits, protection, or blessings through deceptive schemes. Such fraudulent activities result in financial losses and emotional distress for those who fall victim to these scams, as their trust and faith become exploited for criminal gain.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Prevalence of cybercrime-ritualist activities in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

The study assessed the problem of cybercrime ritualists, the criminal victimisation associated with it, and the consequences of the victimisation of their socio-economic lives, as well as information on what could be done to curb the victimisation of cybercrime ritualists. The study found that cybercrime is prevalent in Kwara, a Central Senatorial District located in north-central Nigeria. Cybercrime is one of the dominant forms of crime that is widely being perpetrated by youths in Nigeria. Indeed, the recognition of this growing acceptance of cybercrime, otherwise known as yahoo-yahoo in Nigeria, as a way of life among the youths has compelled the federal government to formulate measures to contain the trend at different points in time. The problem has, however, remained pervasive, despite past efforts put in place to curtail it.

The study found that the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism in Kwara Central Senatorial District is very high, and it comes in various forms. This finding is in line with the postulation of Aghatise (2016) who stated that the antics of the cybercriminals has raised a new generation of lazy youths, who spend hours on the internet perfecting their game and literally killing their prey; Aghatise further noted that cybercrime is becoming one of the fastest growing-internet (fraudulent) businesses in Nigeria as numerous crimes are committed on daily basis on the internet with Nigerians at the forefront of sending fraudulent and bogus financial proposals all over the world and in situations where the activities become difficult, they may resort to other means to make it easier which may include tapping into sacred and profane means such as rituals. Aghatise (2016) observed that technological advances have brought striking changes to Nigerian cultures, patterns of socialisation, social institutions, and social interactions. According to him, youths, especially undergraduates and the unemployed, have embraced information and communication inventions, such that the internet is accessed for most of the day. Adeniran (2018) noted that cybercriminals in Nigeria are usually between the ages of 18 and 30 and are youths who are outside the secondary schools but are either in the university or are about to be admitted into the university.

Similarly, a study conducted by the Youth Against Cybercrimes and Fraud in Nigeria (2018) corroborates this finding when it states that one out of every five youths in most cities in Nigeria is a cybercriminal. Ajibike (2019) claimed that the anonymity and privacy that the internet provides for potential users have excessively enhanced the degree of fluidity and structural

complexity of the “Yahoo boys” operations in Nigeria. Ewepu (2016) similarly posited that the majority of cybercrimes perpetrated in Nigeria are mostly targeted at individuals and not necessarily computer systems; hence, they require less technical expertise. This is an indicator that human weaknesses such as greed and gullibility are generally exploited by cyber criminals, who may use dubious means to achieve their aim of defrauding individuals; thus, the damage done to their victims is usually financial and psychological.

The study further found that the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualists has a significant and statistical effect on criminal victimization. The result of the finding is supported by past studies such as Ajayi (2016), Reep-vanden (2018), and Okpa et al. (2022) that found a similar result: the prevalence of cybercrime-ritualists has a significant and statistical effect on criminal victimization. This proved that the effect of cybercrime, particularly when intertwined with ritualist elements, manifests in heightened criminal victimization, posing significant threats to individuals and society as a whole.

Lastly, the study also found that cybercrime ritualists target both women and men in society. In tandem with the above, the studies by Tade (2003) and Jaishanker (2017) also go on to show that cybercrime ritualism is a prevalent social problem in Nigeria, as both studies discovered that cybercrime in Nigeria involves the snatching of female underwear, sometimes at gunshot, allegedly for ritual purposes. Thus, it becomes evident that individuals in Nigeria have become highly alert to the propensity that their organs may be used for ritual purposes. As opined by Ribadu (2007), many young ladies in Nigeria had taken to going out without wearing their undies, which caused quite a stir and trended on many online platforms. More so, some ladies think not putting on pants is the solution to the menace, but being careful is the core solution. Ajadi (2015) stressed that they control their clients (victims) with various spiritual means, which include casting spells, using various spiritual soaps to bathe before talking to and with their victims, and engaging in blood rituals so as to gain easy compliance from their victims. From the above, it is evident that cybercrime ritual is a social problem that is very prevalent in Nigeria, especially among youths, hence the need for measures to be put in place for it to be curbed.

Effect of invocation on criminal victimization in Kwara Central Senatorial District

Findings from the study revealed that invocation is not a common issue in Kwara Central Senatorial District, as a minority of the respondents opined to having no knowledge of it; however, it was found that there exists a discrepancy in the responses because some of the respondents agreed that invocations are intrinsically linked with criminal victimization in society. Invocation generally refers to the act of calling upon or summoning a deity, spirit, or some higher power. It can also be used in a broader sense to describe the act of requesting assistance, support, or inspiration, often through ritualistic or formal means. In Nigeria, invocation practices vary among different ethnic and religious groups. Traditional African religions, such as Yoruba or Igbo, often involve rituals and ceremonies where individuals invoke ancestral spirits or deities for guidance, protection, or assistance. These ceremonies may include chants, prayers, and offerings. In Islamic and Christian communities in Nigeria, invocation is also common but takes a different form. Muslims may engage in supplications or prayers (dua) to seek help from Allah, while Christians may invoke God through prayers for various purposes.

The study by Chantler and Broadhurst (2018) lends credence to the notion that invocation may lead to criminal victimisation when they state that through ritual invocation, fundamental issues

like wealth, accumulation of worldly wealth, deficits of inner faith, restoration of personal worth and significance, morality, recognition of the existence of a higher power, and the definitive meaning of life can be achieved, but the implication is that the coming generation of these people may end up remaining poor throughout their lives as a victim of his or her parent's actions. This shows that such incantations work with the belief systems of individuals and communities. Similarly, Baarda (2016) contended that finding meaning and purpose through spirituality has been recognised as important for cybercrime-ritualists; consequently, such cybercriminals may engage in such invocations and rituals as a means to an end, which will make the manipulation of their clients much easier since they believe in it, showing that spirituality in cybercrime-ritualists has been seen as a positive factor, especially in relation to their money seeking, wealth, and physical happiness.

Also, Schuchter and Levi (2016) stated that ritual invocation needs have been noted to emerge among our youths due to the economic hardship and high rate of unemployment, which serve as avenues through which cybercriminals seek wealth and perfect their lives economically. The social strain theory by Merton further supports this claim. The theory posited that the social strains in the economy of a society may make individuals innovate means to achieve the set societal goals since the prescribed acceptable means are stringent and beyond reach. In this way, cybercrime is seen as an alternative means of acquiring wealth and becoming successful, especially among youths who are facing economic hardship.

It was found that invocation has a positive and significant effect on criminal victimization in Kwara Central Senatorial District, which implies that the effect of invocation is often associated with occult practices or rituals, which potentially contribute to an increased vulnerability to criminal victimization as individuals engaging in such activities may become targets for exploitation or harm. This finding corroborates past studies by Okpa et al. (2021, Ndubueze & Igbo (2013), and Tamarkin (2014). It is important to note the diversity in Nigeria's cultural and religious landscape, leading to a range of invocation practices across the country. There may be a relationship between invocation and cybercrime in Nigeria. Invocation typically refers to spiritual or religious practices, while cybercrime involves criminal activities conducted through the use of digital technologies.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the concept of cybercrime-ritualism represents a hypothetical intersection between traditional rituals or cultural practices and the realm of cybercrime. While not widely recognized in mainstream discussions on cyber security, the speculative scenario involves cybercriminals exploiting cultural or religious beliefs in the digital space, incorporating ritualistic elements into deceptive practices. Criminal victimisation within this context could manifest through online scams that manipulate individuals using traditional rituals, leading to financial losses, identity theft, and emotional distress. The potential effects of cybercrime-ritualism on criminal victimization underscore the dynamic nature of cyber threats and the evolving tactics employed by criminals to exploit vulnerabilities. The psychological impact on victims is a critical consideration, as the deceptive fusion of cultural practices with cybercriminal activities leads to feelings of betrayal and erodes trust in online interactions. Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged:

Geographical scope: the study focused primarily on the Kwara Central Senatorial District, limiting its generalizability to other Senatorial District within the state. Secondly, Timeframe:

the study examined a specific timeframe, which may not account for recent development or changes.

The following recommendations are made on the basis on the findings from the study:

- i. Based on the research findings, which reveal a prevalence of cybercrime-ritualism in the central senatorial district of Kwara State, this study therefore recommends that the government should implement comprehensive cyber security awareness programs in schools and communities to raise consciousness about the ills and dangers of cybercrime and dispel myths about ritualism; the latter could be meaningfully achieved through traditional and religious leaders denouncing the use of any rituals or spiritual means to perpetuate crime. Further to this, there should be strict regulation of the movie industry (both local and international) in terms of showcasing films with occultist and ritualistic scenes.
- ii. The study further revealed a nexus between invocation and criminal victimization in Kwara Central Senatorial District. Thus, it is recommended that counselling programmes for youth be developed in order to guide and sway them from seeking shortcuts to success through invocation and occult practices. Also, public awareness programmes should be done to educate the public about the patterns and risks of invocation and its link to criminal victimisation, as well as provide counselling services for victims of invocation-related crimes.

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