Ecological Approach to Nigerian Youths Cyber Fraud Participation

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Abstract: The connectivity between urbanization, youthfulness and crime have been widely documented in research prior to and after Chicago School synergization. However, in the technological age, the varied dimension of connection and the changing nature of such relationships has received little attention. With the unabated spread of Internet technology globally there is a concomitant steady increase in crime participation mostly affecting the youths across notable cultures. The vulnerability of this section to economic upheavals attendant of the global environment constitute potent destabilizer and decelerator to the expected progress in the developing nation as Nigeria. This situation also present a bleak future for both e-relationship and the expansion of opportunities knitted with the global economy. Consequently, this study theoretically considers the ecological factors promoting youth crime affinity in the internet community in Nigeria and situates this within the framework of disorganization thesis of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay. It finally proffers a technical driven solution to the challenges of youth's crime participation.

Key words: Youth, urbanization, crime, culture, social disorganization, population, technology

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has a large youthful population. National baseline survey carried out in 2012, showed that 64 million Nigerians (15-35 year) are youths thus representing a third of the Nigerian population. Youths are the greatest asset that any nation can have as they are the centre of reconstruction and development. It is generally believed that youths are the leaders of tomorrow in every nation of the world. Youths constitute the greatest investment and vital resource for a country's development. The future prospect of the youth is intricately tied to that of their country. Youths serve as measure to which a country can sustain itself. The roles of the youths in the society and the extent to which they exhibit responsible conduct could have positive correlation with the development of their nation.

Sociologists acknowledge that the nature of youths varies significantly according to the social context. Sociological factors such as culture, social class, gender, ethnicity and geographical location of youths determine to a large extent the behavioural disposition of the affected group. The dispositions of youths are guided by both environmental and socio-economic factors. There is consistent strong attraction to yield to situations that appear so appealing and capable of solving socio-economic challenges in any given context by most members of the group. However, when exploring the fertile social environment likely to engender cyber fraud culture among the youths, it is quite pertinent to consider those social milieu and factors that contribute to the quality of youths' internet usage.

Research report indicates that the dramatic population increases of the late nineteenth and twentieth century were fueled by changes in the main components of the population equation: mortality, fertility and migration (Holdsworth et al., 2013). Majorly, change in population is a function of migration and ultimately natural increase. As migrants are now an increasing proportion of the population in many countries and as migration flow are becoming more complex with temporary, return and repeat migration becoming common place, the need for careful scientific study of the socio-economic impact of immigration across a wide range of countries and immigrant types is great. Of importance to this discourse is the migration of people mostly from rural to urban area; a development often occasioned by the search for the goodies such settings could offer the migrants.

The overall negative effect of movements of people across various geographical regions can be located in the expanding nature of crime globally. In 2007, half of the

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world's population lived in urban area and by 2030, three-quarter will live in the cities (Farmer, 2003). However, in the past two centuries, cities and urbanization have been a dominant influence on the life chances of men. Given the current and the future capacity of cities globally for human retention and sustenance, one should quickly point out to the fact that large proportion of urban population are youths (majorly in Africa) and will continue to be in a distant future which invariably retains the setting a youth arena. The influence which urbanism has on crime is located in the heterogeneous nature and population density of most cities both bearing negative consequences on people. This is partly responsible for the astronomical growth in cyber fraud participation across the various segment of most urbanized communities.

Considering the challenges relating to the cultural environment of youths, there is increasing concern about the magnitude of changes that are noticeable. The magnetic force binding most cultural elements together is consistently waning in strength by the wind of migration and globalization. Youths who migrate from the rural area for an urban setting are not only far away from parental and communal influence but also experience a disconnect from the rural cultural values to imbibe characteristics of urban youths required for survival. Thus the bond of connection between the individual and significant family members weakens while conformation to peer pressure in the urban setting develops and becomes stronger. This includes urban acceptable criminal behaviour for the sake of survival. For example, among other psycho-demographic predictors of internet fraudulent behaviour of youths in South-Western Nigeria, peer influence was found to be the major factor (Gregory and Grace, 2015). Result from the same study also indicated that youths who reported experiencing parental control exhibited higher level of internet fraudulent behaviour than those who experienced little or no parental control. This is an indication the parents do not have the required relevant internet skills to deal with the spate of fraudulent activities of their children.

Some adults are also conservative and relatively technologically non-compliant, thus creating a generational gap between the adults and the youths. By implication, the two operate within a polar thus promoting both attitudinal and character that are antagonistic in nature. Consequently, the ensuing mutual antagonistic attitudes often displayed by the significant adult public and the youths primary peer environment towards creating or making concerted effort to bequeath the youths the desired tomorrow. This also tends to promotes exposure of youths to external influences that are simultaneously resulting into a vacuum often filled by the media and their peers. With the lasers faire attitude on the part of the adult population in curtailing by surveillance the activities of the young people and the continued helplessness of most parents in attending to the needs of their children by reason of structural unstableness of affecting many nations of the world, the environment of the youths becomes uncontrollable. There is also apathy commonly displayed by the adult population toward modeling the behavioural disposition of youths in our modern technological driven society. "In significant cultures globally, youths behaviour are met with a look-the-other-way attitude by adults for fear of being accused of poking into others privacy or being confronted by unknown adult who might be aggressive in defense of his or her child (Quinn, 2004).

The deteriorating socio-economic conditions coupled with high youth unemployment make the youth category instruments of crime perpetration (Akinbode, 2009). Socio-economic instability pressurizes significant youths to enter into the threshold of what can be likened to 'youths at risk' with the potential of endangering our society and thus raising a state of emergency. With the availability of Internet cafés being more popular in the more densely populated area, most youths find it most convenient to manipulate the medium for meeting psychological and socio-economic needs (Schell, 2007). Identifiable development closely responsible for the current state of affairs lies in the growth of the capitalist/industrial society which concomitantly promotes individualism and urbanism. The effect of the latter on youth crime participation remains the concern of this study.

The contribution of youths to cyber-crime is most significant and requires a close examination with the view of finding a lasting solution to the problem of youth-crime involvement. It was earlier documented in both psychological and sociological studies that human environments play a significant part in the personality formation of people cross culturally (Gieryn, 2000). Consequently, this study attempts the evaluation of Internet-youth connectivity within the context of ecological factors encouraging youth-crime participation in Nigeria. The triad of the Internet, urbanization and youth-crime participation is engaged with a view of proffering solution to the problems of fraud crime mostly inherent in modern technological societies.

Internet-youth connectivity: The internet plays a prominent role in the life of youths today in many parts of the world. It is useful to know why Internet appears so important in the life of the youths. In his attempt to

establish the basis for youth-Internet connectivity, McLuhan (1994) asserts that specific media necessarily create or promote particular forms of consciousness and hence particular forms of social category bonding to expropriate varied opportunities endemic in its configuration. Research has also shown that technology serves as a stimulant for the youths who are described as a wired generation. They utilize the new information and communication technologies in almost all aspects of their lives: they use them to communicate, surf and do their homework or academic assignments. The internet is a prized educational resource. The internet is also an asset outside the classroom. Many young people across the world have expressed the view that internet materials provide the most current information on fashion and music. The internet is utilized by the youths as a relationship building tool as well.

Research has also shown that social interaction is a strong motivator of Internet behaviour among youths and that the most popular online activities within this group include e-mailing friends, instant messaging and using chat rooms (Cheskin, 1999). Youths having no access to the Internet were also reported as having developed the sense of deprivation in their lives. Apart from the positive contributions of the internet to youth's development, the medium also encourages anti-social behaviour among the studied group. The thrill of the earlier enumerated prospects has been accompanied by public fears about the potential scale of criminal opportunities that can arise (Wall, 2001). The medium became the centerpiece of pornography, Internet terrorism, cyber fraud/scam, money laundering and a host of other crimes.

Evaluating the positive and negative impact of Internet use therefore, one may be forced to ask the question why Nigerian youths would find it convenient to surf the Internet for the purpose of defrauding innocent people. Waskul was apt to direct attention to the nature of youthfulness and the instinct to glue with technology that supplies the maximum benefit. In his view, rational modern day youths are able to recognize and manipulate opportunities derivable from the click of a button and such rationalism helps ameliorate current difficult economic conditions. Waskul's position is quite accurate when one considers the factors predisposing youths in Nigeria to internet crime.

The socio-economic and political climate of Nigeria provides a very rich ground for various shades of fraud to thrive in as much as corruption has become a way of life. Different Scholars have also emphasized the importance of youth's social environment as a solid social capital' both offering and sustaining the continued existence of the social group. These scholars eulogized the gains of

social ties that can transform into numerous resources such as human capital or economic capital (Putnam, 2001; Loury, 1977; Putnam, 1995; Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986). Cyber fraud is perpetrated when the environment stifles social capital and the material environment remains economically bad. Apart, the youth's environment must be supportive of negative innovations in which the availability of cyber space and technology plays an important role (Rogers, 1983). Additionally, there is the existence of willing youths who possess the skills of Internet manipulations and are ready to stake their liberty or risk arrest in order to gain choice material. Crime activism in this context becomes enticing when the outcome (yield) outweighs the consequence (punishment) of participation.

Considering the negative use of the internet among Nigerian youths, Turkle argues that the Internet as a fleshless medium of interaction provides people with an excuse for irresponsibility' and when mirrored from Nigeria's fraud culture it is suggestive that the uses of the Internet for fraud related activisms are symptomatic of socio-economic and cultural crisis. Obada-Obieh also asserts that with Nigeria's prevailing socio-economic environment where a few rich opportunists get richer at the expense of the poor masses, delinquency among youths is bound to soar higher and higher by the day. This is clearly evident when evaluated from the angle of socio-economic predicaments continually experienced by her citizenry and the state of hopelessness that such predicament generates amongst Nigerian youths. With high rate of unemployment and unbridgeable gap between the impoverished masses and few strikingly rich 'elite, the stage is set for a variety of experimentation with criminal activities by Nigeria's youths

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKSOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

The basic philosophy underpinning the social disorganization theory involves the believe that people living in equivalent social environments tend to behave in a similar, predictable manner. The theory, links crime to neighbourhood ecological characteristics and focuses on the conditions within the urban environment that affects crime rates (Siegel and McCormick, 2010). Classical criminological theorists linked life in disorganized, transitional urban areas to neighbourhood crime rate. The first attempt can be traced to Shaw and McKay (1942) who built upon the work of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. The astonishing features identified with such urban growth by the duo include high rates of population turnover, disintegration of neighbourhood/traditional

cultures, division of divergent cultural standards, feelings of displacement, absence of definite values, poverty, proness to crime and moral dissolution. Shaw and McKay (1942) explained crime and delinquency within the context of these changing urban environment and ecological development of the city (184). The causative factor of crime was located in the ecological feature's of this urban area rather than linked to the group occupying the crime infected area (Brown and Esbensen, 2010). In this context, the disorganization breeding crime according to Siegel is nurtured by the diminishing influence of control institutions such as the family, commercial establishment and schools with attendant reduced impact in imbuing in children and youths alike the requisite standards of the society. The major indicators of social disorganization include high unemployment, school dropout rates, deteriorated housing, low income levels and large number of single parent household. There exist a quantifiable threat to human survival firmly rooted in deteriorated economy, corruption with attendant insecurity engendering the multiplicity of crime in most urban centres in many societies of the world. When one localizes the effect of environment on youth's behavioural outcomes, it is vividly clear that Nigeria's socio-economic presents similar impact on youth's survival. Considering the situation of Nigeria's youth within the context of the explications of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, there is a connectivity between neighborhood experience endemic in most cities and the outgrowth of cyber predatory culture among the affected youths. In a related manner, there is the co-existence of affluence and poverty in the Nigerian urban settings with the latter becoming excessively pronounced and promoting socio-economic dislocation among the people. Aliyu attributed the rising profile of poverty in Nigeria to poor macro and economic policies, dwindling performance of the manufacturing sector, increasing foreign debt, poor management of national resources and poor execution of government programmes. In essence, the dislocation portends a formidable threat to life and simultaneously propels or arouses survival instinct in most youths to take steps that are diametrically opposed to the conventional expectations. The culture of acute individualism, anonymity and bowling alone that characterizes the urban setting constitutes an affront to our enshrined conventional culture of collectivism based on good moral standards which has been our traditional African way of life. Consequently, crime occurs as a result of the ensuing conflict between urban based culture and the nearing absence of the indigenous morality basically expected to have been acquired from the informal settings by the concerned youths. In this regard, it was widely believed that the urban centre is the spawning grounds of young

criminals. With the high rate of poverty and massive youth unemployment, experimentation with diverse kinds of crime becomes the norm in the settings akin to the described by the scholars in the disorganization school. The instrumentality of the media then remains a means of information acquisition, adaptation and utilization especially in a bid to arrest most challenging situations. This practice corresponds with what scholars have earlier observed about the symbiotic relationship between the existence of socio-economic challenges, media effect and resultant consequences. Adorno and Horkheimer (cited in Ludwig) were quick to give an insight into the relationship between urban life and mediated effect. In their view, culture industry mediates the horizontal networks of associations existent in urban areas, the sections constitute urban self-formation with the nature of urbanism channeling population into individual units with isolated characteristics, seeking reconnection through the vertical means offered to them by the mass media. The more individual become reliant on media, the less they are dependent on horizontal networks. The Internet technology forms the basis of the rallying point and the urban setting by its characteristics constitutes and promotes circuits of relationship banding into different cycles. In the contemporary usage of Clifford and McKay's theoretical position, the concentric cycles remained vividly present and potent for crime commission but with a distinct departure in crime rate distribution in the modern society especially as it affects cyber related crimes. In most Nigerian urban centres, the existence of multiple cultures and diverse values contributing to crime perpetration cannot be denied. Corrupt politicians, bureaucrats, civil community, deteriorated family institution and peer influence offer variety of opportunities and professional leverage in the crime industry for potential youths who tend to lose out in the acquisition of conventional standards. The convenience required in choosing between conventional and non-conventional means for meeting socio-economic aspirations favours crime related options and in the process causing the bonding together of like minded youths who find it stressless to go on a collision course with the law. Although, these bonding youths as identified by Clifford and McKay often spring out from the lower class community, however, recent observation clearly shows that cyber fraud involvement for instance spans a particular stratum of the socio-economy hierarchy. As a matter of fact, cyber fraud culture is a high culture that is mostly involving children of the middle-class family and much less of the lower class family. Contrary to being conflictual with the middle class culture, cyber fraud culture is quite endemic in middle and upper class strata thus negating the theoretical assertions

of both scholars. One other departure from Clifford and McKay's postulation involves the centrality of crime in transitional areas. Distinctively, there is a quantifiable change in the core of crime from transitional districts into highbrow area of major cities when cyber fraud is considered. Nonetheless conceptually, the Nigeria's urban composition and factors promoting the pandemic of crime is quite valid when examined from the contextual usage of Clifford and McKay deteriorated communities. In study area, the families in their large number no longer provide adequate physiology and economic related needs of their children. Made worse is the gross inadequacy or dirt of industrial establishments needed to absorb the untapped energies of the youths. The dilapidated nature of the infrastructural base of Nigeria society constantly remains a disincentive to investment and hence there is a massive reduction in employable outlets and invariably high rate of unemployment among Nigerian youths. Coupled with this disadvantaged position is the factor associated with defective parenthood. Most pathetic is the fact that more male parents are either not having or losing their jobs in the Nigeria's unstable economic environment and there is an increasing rate of single parenting with the women bearing the brunt of child rearing and socialization. Apart from the fact that school drop-out is on the increase (a situation having implication for conventional crimes), graduate unemployment becomes a singular factor instantiating and nurturing modern technological crime located in Internet community. With their vast knowledge in computer and Internet uses, educated youths often find repose in the cyber arena for the alleviation of economic predative onslaughts. This group get more support in their intensification of technological related crime by recruiting their counterparts into the network of cyber fraud and other crimes.

REFLECTION ON THE DISORGANIZED NATURE OF NIGERIA'S URBAN CENTRES

Urbanization in Nigeria and other developing countries has been alarming over the past 10 years (Oyeleye, 2013). In their several responses to the growth in complexity of major cities globally, researchers opinion have supported the view that disordered communities akin to what is prevalent in most Nigerian cities tends to incubate and experience youth related crimes than communities that are well structured (Sampson, 1987). Community characterized by high rate of family disruptions, unemployment, poverty and inaccessibility to economic opportunity appear to be particularly vulnerable to youth violence and crime (MacDonald and

Gover, 2005). Sociologists interested in the workings of modern cities also report a correlation between neighbourhood character and the development of anti-social behaviours in youths (MacDonald and Gover, 2005; Kornhauser, 1978). In essence, the nature of environment will determine to a large extent the type and the prevalence rate of crime in any given community. There are several factors that make modern cities and industrial society prone to disorderliness and invariably induce crime mostly predominant among the youths. These factors include: poverty, high rate of divorce and family disorganization, ethical acumen of principal role models in both private and public spheres. These may also include migration trend occasioning free movement within and outside a geographical space facilitating concealment of crime and evasion of arrest and the level of corruption endemic within a society.

Apart from the neighbourhood character encouraging criminal related bonding among urban youths, substantial efforts have also been expended on finding the correlates of youth crime as an outgrowth of social disorderliness in mostly urban settings. It has been widely reported that there exist a typology of society that nurtures youths offending. Correlation has also been established between urbanization or what can best be described as urban living and crime (Shopeju, 2007). Most factors accounting for increment in crime rate in most cities in Nigeria identified by this scholar include availability of wealth and goods; attraction to luxury goods and proness to temptation, incessant exposure to non-conservative ways and means with defective institutions of social control. Youths are often made vulnerable to crime by reason of increased heterogeneous interaction promoted by high population density, relational anonymity which nurtures crime concealment and makes crime detection a difficult task and the socio-economic predicaments of city youths predisposing them to opt for unconventional means of meeting survival needs. Socio-economic correlate of youths crime clearly establishes a positive relationship among unemployment, poverty, social and economic deprivation, neglect and quality of one's neighbourhood as most probable factors in youth's crime (Ousey and Augustine, 2001). This becomes readily understandable as many families in urban centers lack the capacity to provide what it takes to nurture today's youths. Standard of living is vast falling day after day and this is equally made worse by the growing yearnings of the youths for relevance.

Research has also shown that family disruption and parental neglect account for most youths having difficulties with the law (MacDonald and Gover, 2005; Ousey, 2000; Lilly et al., 2002). Being abused or neglected

as a child increases the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59% as an adult by 28% and for a violent crime by 30%. Neglect is an important factor in crime participation and the urban environment becomes a booster for youthful acumen to engage in behaviours that are anti-social. Most of the youths who often find their ways into most urban centres in Nigeria are migrants from neighbouring communities around such major cities. In their characteristics, they are victims of neglect (leading to pawning), inadequate care (offered by the surrogate), defective behavioural modifications and control and of acute deprivation (in terms of physiological requirements for survival). Severally, it has been reported that youth crime is closely knitted to the prevalence or magnitude of poverty alongside lack of support within a family in particular and the society at large. Early criminologists extensively discussed the impacts of poverty and absence of parental support, youth deprivation and absence of supportive mechanisms in most communities as the major sustainers of crime among the youths (Thrasher and Short, 1963).

Social goals differ transnationally so also is aspirations of people. Taylor (2001) argues that the effects created by the absence of cushioning facilities vary from one geographical region to another. There are differences in the provision of succors between developed and developing nations. This equally function to determine the magnitude of crime in each socio-economic milieu. In his account, Sampson and Groves argued that most economically backward nations tend to be limited in order maintenance, possesses weak crime control structure and lacks goodwill of the informal communities. This is largely due in most cases to the non-responsiveness of public officials or structures to the plights of the people on one hand and the badly maintained crime control outfits on the other hand.

Ecologically, the structural arrangement of a country to a large extent exemplifies the characteristics of its citizens. This character variable identifiable with the citizens is also mitigated by the existence of supportive mechanism put in place by any given society to cushion the effects of the harsh socio-economic conditions confronting individuals and groups from time to time. Economic variable is quite important in deciding if crime will exist in a society or not. The comprehensiveness of and the accessibility to such supportive reinforcements will spell out the direction of behavioural cues available to the affected citizens.

This marks the differentiating factor that clearly distinguishes one nation from the others in their quest to control the impulses of citizens. While citizens of some notable countries are known for their notoriety in crime perpetration (such as in the case of Nigeria) there equally

exists nations with tolerable limits of crime (such as Switzerland). Shaw and McKay (1942) quickly pointed to the fact that neighbourhood organization in relation to poverty level, family and residential instability and ethnic composition of a society will greatly explain the dimension and vigour with which crime activism will be pursued in a given context.

Murray (1994) similarly argues that youths offending solely rest on the nature of a structure in place. In his view, the absence of supportive mechanisms and the existence of acute unemployment and government disregard explain the continued criminal career of youths. Youths in this regard constitute what he describes as the underclass. Owing to deprivation, youths in their coping strategies often jettison the adoption of the collectively acceptable means of goal attainment and in the process embrace criminality as the best option to address immediate challenges (Murray, 1994). He attributed this development to the generosity or otherwise of modern welfare states. Locating this within the social structure, high crime rates among the youths when drawn from Murray's argument have also been attributed to defective, non-implementable or badly managed youth empowerment policies and programmes among nations. Significant government initiatives directed at channeling youthful energies towards productive purposes have always been an herculean task majorly in Nigeria. This is quite obvious from the fallout registered from diverse past programmes.

Apart from the social correlates of crime affecting Nigeria's youths earlier identified, research equally shows that government limited sponsorship on research and development targeted at reducing the volume of youth's involvement in crime also remains one of those factors working against the generation of socially approved behaviour among the youths. Welsh and Horchi report that governmental efforts may be counter productive if not properly channeled to arrest the trend of crime among the youths. There have always been mouthwatering budgets often earmarked for youth development with the sole aim of preventing youths 'antisocial behaviour but unfortunately, less positive result is often recorded because of the misplacement of priorities in spending and implementation. In the same vein, Taylor (2001) posited that the marketization or economic deregulation of most societies has led to the decline in the openings for employment of youths globally thereby occasioning the formation of the distinctiveness demarcating the group from several other groups. There are ever growing inequality across different strata of human societies and to this extent, this is responsible for the development of a criminal subculture among the affected class. This is

linked to acute structural and cultural deprivation which also necessitates reaction formation among the youths. As a matter of fact, young and unskilled working class males have been particularly affected by the long term effects of increasing inequality and declining job opportunities in Nigeria.

The systemic closure to job openings and the lack of the will to ward off poverty through conventional means increase the misplacement of youth energies and in a way crime then becomes a tool for experiment (Sampson, 1987). This further generates a rebuffing of entreaties coming from other socialization media within the larger society. Although, this position have been criticized by few scholars (Tham, 1998), it nevertheless captures the reality of youth crime in Nigeria (Umeogu and Ojiakor, 2014).

Deprivation often causes the loss of status and this situation is obviously visible across cultures. Once the youths get stock at the rung of the stratification ladder, it will automatically elicit a negative response from them. Further, there will be an outgrowth of frustration. Consequent to this, Cohen directed attention to the possibility of the substitution of youths devised values for the mainstream values. There is the tendency to replace collective values with self made alternatives that can expedite the attainment of individual and other goals. The most accessible means to achieve success and gain prestige becomes the course of action. Reinforcing peers are formed and patronized from time to time to review and chart ways toward realizing group common cause (Elliott, 2006; Farrington, 1989). To arrest this trend therefore, spontaneous action should of necessity be directed towards addressing the collectively perceived problems among youths, thereby supplying the elusive solution to the experienced socio-economic related challenges.

While a significant number of studies have identified environmental and demographic characteristics such as income, education, gender, age, ethnicity, etc. as probable causes of Internet attraction among youths, others have emphasized the importance of the relative newness of the Internet technology as factor in the attraction the youths have for the Internet. More recent studies focus on factors related to social networks such as influence from family or friends, user's characteristics, anticipated gains of adoption, youth's priorities, etc. (Fischer, 1994; Schmitz and Fulk, 1991; Fulk *et al.*, 1991; Marvin, 1990; Roger, 1983). Despite the number of studies that have consider youth-Internet connectivity, relatively few has considered the role of neighbourhood in the increasing rates of crime. It then becomes quite important to considering the facilitating factors promoting cyber crimes from the environmental context.

Cyber fraud culture, a metropolitan culture: The world is witnessing an unprecedented increase in flow of people across borders for business, pleasure, education or to seek wellbeing in a foreign land. When evaluating the social context of modern Internet fraud, the locus of crime resides in large urban centers. Cyber culture is related to urban culture. The urban nature of cyber fraud finds expression in the neighbourhood of most cities in Nigeria and their supportive nature of crime is the concern of this study. It has been argued that the highest rate of serious property and violent crime were associated with large urban centers. Research in Nigeria also affirms the existence of high rate of crime in most Nigerian cities. People in the city are more likely to commit crimes or to be victimized. As the population of cities increases, the overall rates of violent and property crimes increase and the same is generally true for each of the individual categories of crime. Other scholars equally wrote on the structural reality of crime (Byrne and Sampson, 1986; Coster *et al.*, 2006). They argue that there exists an informal economy operating throughout the world. Some operate outside the law, much of it within the boundaries of large cities, where it flourishes in poor neighborhoods, shanty towns and ethnic minority neighbourhoods. All these places engender the conditions which restrict opportunities for legal employment and entrepreneurship.

The plethora of opportunities in existence abounds in the illegal sector of the informal economy and this domain is popularly embraced by the frustrated class. The illegal sector of the informal economy includes drug trafficking, prostitution, cyber fraud and other illegal services, extortion and full range of the usual street crimes. Most astonishing is the search for those that are mainly responsible for this state of decadence. Sandler (2010) was quick to inform that something one has to keep in mind about the composition of cities and its attendant mode of communication that is often implicated in the use of the Internet technology involves the existence of some nasty and ugly people in the world. They are on the street, they are at the mall, they may be in the schools and they are certainly lurking in the dark corners of the cyberspace. Other researchers have also attested to the fact that people within the category of the description of Sandler are mostly youths (Bidwell *et al.*, 2002; Sheldon and Howitt, 2007; Connolly and Stansfield, 2007; Salkowitz, 2010). Apart from what is applicable in research, the population data in Nigeria equally attested to the fact that youths dominate the urban centres. Considering the age composition of Nigeria's population as provided on the Table 1, the years listed reveal that most of those in age 0-14 are likely to have crossed into

Table 1: Nigeria's population age composition between 1950-2010

Variables	Total population (×1000)	Population aged 0-4 (%)	Population aged 15-64 (%)	Population aged 65+(%)
1950	37,860	41.7	55.3	3.0
1955	41,122	41.6	55.6	2.8
1960	45,212	41.6	55.6	2.8
1965	50,239	41.9	55.2	2.9
1970	56,132	42.6	54.6	2.8
1975	63,566	43.4	53.8	2.8
1980	73,698	44.0	53.2	2.8
1985	83,902	45.0	52.2	2.8
1990	95,617	44.9	52.3	2.9
1995	108,425	44.1	53.0	2.9
2000	122,877	43.5	53.7	2.8
2005	139,586	43.6	53.7	2.7
2010	159,708	44.0	53.2	2.7

Wikipedia, 2015, World Development Indicators 2005-2007

their youthful ages while those in the other categories may likely be composed of youth who are in their transition to adulthood. This by implication shows that chunk of the country's population will be mainly youths which are likely to be affected by the socio-economic challenges confronting Nigeria in its recent times. Another fact closely tied to this condition is the residency pattern of a large portion of this population in the urban centres.

According to Paradigm Initiative, (2014), (https://www.pinigeria.org/download/pinbrief004.pdf), Nigeria had a two hundred percent (200%) growth in internet use between 2009 and 2013 thus overtaking South Africa. Its population is expected to surpass that of the United States of America (USA) by 2050. In 2012, Nigeria had 55, 930,391 million internet users ranked 8th in the world with a penetration rate of 32.9%. Nigeria is closely followed by United Kingdom ranked 9th with a population of 54,861,245 and penetration rate of 81% (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki). An overwhelming number of youths are using free Internet accounts thereby soaring the rate of offending and promoting the risks of victimization in the urban centres of modern society (McShane *et al.*, 2007). The use of the Internet to surf for free material or fund is often borne by the constraining effect of Nigeria's economic situation and this is most impactful on the youths.

CONCLUSION

This study has presented the contributions of urbanization, socio-economic environment and adult characteristics to the growth of youth participation in Internet driven crimes. In doing so, the discourse revealed the challenges in the urban areas promoting the vulnerability of youths. The growth in crime rate in most developing nations can be tied to the challenges relating to increasing urbanization. With the incessant growth in population in most developing countries and the dwindling economic fortune in such areas, there is a consistent promotion of negative innovative tendencies to ward off the excruciating effect of such development. Youth in the developing society are not insulated from the vicissitudes of downturns, unemployment, persistently deteriorating standard of living insecurity and violence. Participation in crime becomes one of the avenues through which the affected group responds to the situational occurrences in their cultural environment. This is further reinforced by the instrumentality of crime enhancers inherent in the favourable climatic conditions promoting and nurturing crime primarily embedded in the city centers globally. To curtail the rising profile of youths involvement in crime therefore, nations of the world must make concerted efforts to drive policy that will counter urbanization. This pragmatic strategy has been identified as measures taken by developed economies to minimize migration, dowse the tension created via pressure on urban industrial environment and infrastructure, sanitation problems, pollution, overcrowding and predatory tendencies likely to be caused by frustration among urban dwellers (Champion, 1989; Halfacree, 2008). Counter urbanization helps to provide succor to myriad of challenges confronting most urban centers today. This is made possible by the concentration of industrial facilities, infrastructures, seed loans capable of boosting entrepreneurial drive and tax holiday to would be rural settlers/producers. With the concerted efforts aimed at creating parity between urban and rural areas, the fortune of the youths will be ettered and this will invariably reduce their participation in crime. Governments of developing nations should maximize efforts at discouraging migration of youths through the promotion of policies that will help retain the youths in the areas of their natural abode. Adults in the technological advanced modern societies require effective adequate parenting skills, knowledge and competence in internet usage to assist them in curbing the prevalence of criminal behaviour among youths. Charity begins at home.

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