

CYBERCRIME INVOLVEMENT AND CLASS ATTENDANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI, NIGERIA

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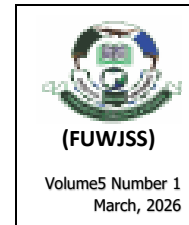
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Abstract

The proliferation of the internet has transformed communication but has concurrently facilitated cybercrime. Among Nigerian undergraduates, economic hardship, peer influence, and the allure of quick wealth have intensified engagement in cybercriminal activities. This study examines the relationship between cybercrime involvement and class attendance among students of Benue State University. The research was guided by Jaishankar's Space Transition Theory, which explains how individuals' behavior may differ as they move between physical and cyberspace. A quantitative research approach was employed for the study, with a sample of 400 students selected out of 27,712 using Yamane's formula. Data were collected via structured Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. Findings indicate that students generally perceive maintaining multiple social media accounts as normative, while 32 respondents reject the notion that unauthorized computer use is "smart." Fear of detection was reported to discourage some students from attending lectures, though perceptions of class attendance varied. Strong support was expressed for integrating cybercrime prevention into the curriculum. Linear regression analysis revealed a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship between cybercrime involvement and class attendance ($R = 0.053$, $R^2 = 0.003$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting other factors play a more significant role in academic participation. The study concludes that while cybercrime is prevalent among undergraduates, its direct effect on class attendance is minimal. Recommendations include implementing cybercrime awareness programmes, promoting responsible digital behavior, enhancing classroom engagement, establishing monitoring and support systems, and conducting further research on academic and digital behaviours to improve student outcomes.

Keywords: Academic performance, class attendance, cybercrime, economic hardship

Introduction

One of the benefits of the internet's development is that it allows individuals to communicate with each other no matter where they are. However, it has drawbacks, including identity theft, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and other online crimes. In the view of Odumesi (2014), In addition to causing a sharp rise in the frequency of criminal activity, technological advancements and online interactions have also given rise to what seems to be a new range of criminal activity. One of such criminal activities is cybercrime which according to Akogwo (2018) opined that cyber-crimes constitute offenses done against individuals or groups of individuals with a criminal motive to intentionally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly or using indirect modern communication networks such as the internet and mobile devices/phones, such crimes may threaten the nation's security and financial health. With the advent of computer viruses and hacking incidents in the 1970s, the idea of cybercrime first emerged. But as the internet and digital technologies spread over the world in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the term "cybercrime" attracted a lot of attention (Wall, 2007). This signaled the start of a new era in which significant financial and data losses could result from cybercrime. Global damages from cybercrime have increased recently, and by 2021, it is expected to cost \$6 trillion a year (Morgan, 2020).

According to a report by the African Union, the lack of robust cybersecurity frameworks and inadequate awareness among young internet users have exacerbated the problem (African Union, 2016). Significantly, Cassim, (2011) highlights that cybercrime is thriving on the African continent. In the past, it was restricted to Advance Fee Fraud, sometimes known as "419," in which Nigerian con artists attempt to defraud foreigners, primarily Americans, of their money by promising them oil deal (Gbenemene & Aaron 2025). Nigeria internet penetration rate has grown significantly around 40 % to 46 % over the past decade, resulting in more Nigerians, especially youths, being online (NCC, 2020). Attending classes regularly is essential for learning, engagement, and academic success (Chang, Chen, & Huang, 2019).

Benue State is not immune to the expanding national trend of undergraduates engaging in cybercrime due to causes like financial difficulty, peer pressure, and the lure of rapid wealth (Ekpenyong, 2012). However, cybercrime brings new threats that make it harder for students to attend consistently. As universities increase their online resources and students rely more on digital tools, they become exposed to cybercrime's varied social, psychological, and structural effects on attendance (Holt & Bossler, 2022; Palfrey & Gasser, 2020).

Cybercrime now constitutes a global threat, spanning from Africa to Asia and from Europe to the Americas, with Nigeria's national and international reputation particularly affected, as highlighted in global criminal reports. Sorunke, (2011) said that systemic flaws and inadequacies in payment networks make Nigeria extremely susceptible in cyberspace. The anonymity afforded by computers and the internet further incentivizes cybercrime, making illicit activities increasingly attractive (Weber, 2006). Among undergraduates, engagement in cybercrime not only jeopardizes personal and national security but also negatively affects academic focus and performance (Al-Mutawa, 2020; Adejo, Alabi, Adisa, and Emezie, 2019). The study therefore aims to investigate cybercrime involvement on class attendance among undergraduates in Benue State University. And also recommend actionable solutions.

Prevalence of Cyber Crime among University Students in Nigeria

Cybercrime, often known as computer crime, is the use of a computer to carry out illicit activities, such as identity theft, fraud, trafficking in child pornography and intellectual property, or invasions of privacy. The relevance of cybercrime, particularly over the Internet, has increased as computers have become essential to government, commerce, and entertainment (Dennis, 2019). However, Wall (2007), argued that the very concept of cyber-crime as a side-effect of the "information revolution" and its most famous "product", the internet is still a very vague notion. There are several discourses within the extensive body of literature regarding the nature of cybercrime. He identifies, for example: (1) the legislative discourse about cybercrime that aims to define the rules that set boundaries for (un)acceptable behaviour; (2) the academic discourse that attempts to understand the phenomenon through computer science, information management, economics, and from the perspective of the socio-legal and criminological disciplines; (3) the expert knowledge that investigates and seeks to understand trends in cybercrimes in order to provide explanations and inform solutions; and (4) the popular/layperson's discourse that reflects a "common sense-based" understanding of crime.

From the assertion of Wall (2007), it suffices to say that the term "cybercrime" is not amenable to any exact definition as every cyber-crime is different from the other. In fact, the term cyber-crime is a generic term that refers to all the criminal activities committed using the internet and the computer. However, it primarily refers to crimes committed online that is, while the offender and the victim are both connected through the World Wide Web (WWW).

Almost anything that is connected to computers and networks has been referred to as "cyber." Unfortunately, there isn't a universally accepted

definition of "cyberspace." Ottis & Lorents (2010) use the following definition to help explain this situation: "Cyberspace is a time-dependent set of interconnected information systems and the human users that interact with these systems." The definitions of the cyber environment and the cyber world are nearly identical. Similar ideas are presented by Hathaway and Klimburg (2012), who contend that in addition to the internet's hardware, software, and information systems, cyberspace also includes people and social interaction within networks.

For learning, engagement, and academic performance, frequent attendance is crucial (Chang, Chen, & Huang, 2019). However, increased risks brought about by cybercrime make it more difficult for students to regularly attend. Students are exposed to the many social, psychological, and structural implications of cybercrime on attendance as institutions expand their online resources and students depend more on digital technologies (Holt & Bossler, 2022; Palfrey & Gasser, 2020). Although it is widely acknowledged that cybercrime puts students' educational participation at risk, some academics contend that the consequences can differ based on students' resilience, digital proficiency, and institutional assistance.

Although most academics concur that institutional practices affect attendance results, there is disagreement over whether punitive measures are beneficial or detrimental. Cybercrime victims frequently experience psychological damage that lowers their motivation and makes it harder for them to attend lessons. For instance, Lee & Chen (2023) discovered that East Asian students who were the targets of phishing scams had greater levels of anxiety and sadness, which resulted in more absences. Students frequently skipped class because they were embarrassed or afraid they would be targeted again. In a similar vein, Fisher, Martin, and Cullen (2020) discovered that victims of sextortion and non-consensual image sharing in North America frequently skipped classes in order to avoid social shame or their harassers. Students' propensity to attend lessons is strongly impacted by these psychological impacts. These results provide credence to the idea that cybercrime's psychological effects can seriously impair students' participation in formal education.

Adegbola & Ojo (2022) conducted research on cybercrime among Oyo State undergraduates studying mathematical science. The study, which used the design approach with 150 respondents from NCE I–III, finds that students who engage in cybercrime struggle to focus in class, have bad study habits, and ultimately drop out of school. Additionally, the government was advised to incorporate cybercrime education into school and university curricula. Despite being restricted to a certain college of

education department, this is pertinent to the study's conclusions on study habits, which highlights the necessity of this research in higher education.

The Impact of Extravagant Lifestyle on Cybercrime among University Students in Ibadan: The Mediating Effect of Emotional Intelligence is a study by Obasajo, Solomon, Zacheaus, and Richard (2024). 305 participants between the ages of 16 and 25 were chosen using a cross-sectional survey design and multiple-stage sampling procedure. A 20-item criminality scale and a 34-item lavish lifestyle assessment scale (ELAS) were used to measure cybercrime. According to the study, both cybercrime and emotional intelligence are directly and significantly impacted by expensive lives, and cybercrime is influenced by emotional intelligence. According to the study's results, the government should conduct extensive internet surveillance, institutions should provide emotional intelligence training, and parents, NGOs, and religious leaders should engage in costly sensitisation. Although the study provides insights into the relationship between opulent lives and cybercrime, it does not define "extravagant sensitisation" as advised.

The study "Mitigation of cybercrime in Nigeria through adoption of national strategies on cybercrime security skill and manpower development" by Akpan (2019) looked at a method of reducing cybercrime in Nigeria by implementing national strategies on cybercrime security skill and manpower development. All employees of NCC, ICPC, EFCC, NPF, NCWG, NCIC, CBN, and commercial banks made up the study's population. The respondents' information was gathered using the "Cybercrimes and Combating Strategies Questionnaire (CCSQ)." According to the results of the data collection and analysis, the majority of respondents confirmed that the national strategy on cyber security skill and manpower development greatly aids in the fight against cybercrimes in Nigeria. One of the conclusions was that the operational cyber security controls of the energy utilities are not implemented in a way that is compatible with the risks that are anticipated and are routinely tested, monitored, and revised. Another recommendation was that the Nigerian Police make sure that appropriate network information technology is used, that mobile network devices are understood, and that the length of the internet is carefully considered and put in place to avoid danger. According to the report, new cybersecurity information programs should be added to the curriculum, and the current ones should be reviewed and redesigned. The study was unable to articulate the consequences of the current cybersecurity initiatives for comprehending digital awareness.

Theoretical Framework

The study employed Space Transition Theory to explain the consequences of cybercrime involvement on academic performance in Benue State University. The major proponent of the theory is K. Jaishankar propounded in 2008 in his work cyber criminology. According to his idea, crimes transfer from one space to another and vice versa during a space transition. That is, both from cyberspace to traditional space and from traditional space to cyberspace. However, people bring their societal values and attitudes with them as they travel from the real world to the virtual one. Therefore, although it may make it easier to articulate such ideas, a person's value orientation is not fundamentally altered by a shift in space (Ndubueze, 2017). Jaishankar's Space Transition Theory of Cybercrimes makes seven key assumptions. The following are:

People who have repressed their criminal impulses in real life are more inclined to commit crimes online, something they would typically be unwilling to do due to their rank or position. Cybercrime is made easier by some characteristics of the internet, such as identity flexibility, dissociative anonymity, and weak deterrent. Escape is quite simple due to the cyberspace's shifting spatiotemporal characteristics and the erratic emergence of criminals.

Friends in the real world may work together to perpetrate crimes in the virtual world, while strangers may gather in the virtual world to carry out crimes in the real world. The inconsistency between norms and values of the physical space with those of the cyberspace may facilitate cybercrimes. Using this theory to explain why undergraduate students commit cybercrime in Benue State, the first postulation claims that identity flexibility, dissociative anonymity, and the absence of deterrence factors in cyberspace give offenders the option to commit cybercrime. Nigerian students open emails and social media accounts using a non-name-specific address, which allows them to have a flexible online persona. Students are led to assume they are unknown to other online users by these pseudonyms provided by email service providers.

The space transition theory's second and fifth postulations have bearing on how undergraduate students commit cybercrimes. The second portion of the postulate argues that "associates of physical space are likely to unite to commit crime in cyber space," but the fifth postulate says that "strangers are likely to unite together in cyberspace to commit crime in the physical space." Students can communicate with strangers in the anonymity and speed of cyberspace thanks to the realities of the computer era, which have made it simpler to meet new people at an unbelievable rate. In any corner of the globe, kids can make friends with people they have never met in person.

The strength of this theory emphasizes Social and Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace because it goes beyond technical explanations for cybercrime by emphasizing the ways in which various virtual environments affect social norms and self-perception. It encapsulates the psychological factors that influence people's propensity to behave differently online.

However, the theory also lacks consideration for offline implications. Failed to address how online actions may carry over into offline consequences, such as how cyberbullying or harassment can impact individuals beyond cyberspace, nor does it factor in how laws, regulations, and technological monitoring affect behavior.

The Space Transition Theory, put forth by Jaishankar in 2007, was used in the study. Because it provides a useful framework for comprehending cybercrime, the theory is pertinent to the study. According to this idea, people react differently when they move from the real world to the virtual world, which influences their propensity to commit crimes or become victims. Because it recognises that cybercrime is distinct from traditional crime because of the virtual environment, the Space Transition Theory is crucial to comprehending cybercrime. This hypothesis also explains behavioural shifts, which helps explain why people could commit crimes online that they wouldn't in person.

Furthermore, the Space Transition Theory informs prevention and intervention strategies, providing insights into how to mitigate cybercrime risks and protect potential victims. By applying this theory, researchers and policymakers can better comprehend the complexities of cybercrime and develop effective countermeasures to combat this growing threat.

Research Methodology

The study employs a quantitative approach. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula as determined below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where,

n = Sample size (?),
N = population size (27,712),
e = level of precision (0.05),
1 = constant

$$n = \frac{27712}{1 + 27712(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{27712}{1 + 27712(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{27712}{69.28}$$

n = 399 Approximated to..... n = 400

A sample size of 400 was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, which ensures that different segments of the population are represented proportionally in the sample. This approach helps to improve the findings to the wider population of the University. Data collection is conducted through likert scale questionnaire allowing the researchers to collect standardized information from participants. Structured questions to ensure all participants are asked the same questions in reducing the potential for bias in data collection.

A Linear Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis that Cybercrime Involvement has no significant relation with Class Attendance in Benue State University Linear Regression analysis is a statistical method used to determine whether there is a significant relationship between categorical variables.

The participants for the study were four hundred (400) students from Benue State University randomly selected across faculties of the University with 396 returned questionnaires. They consist of students of varying ages, gender, level, religion, and parent/guidance occupation. They included: 201 (51%) males and 195 (49%) females with ages ranging from; 16-21 126 (32%), 22-27 182 (46%), 28-33 63 (16%) while 34 and above 25 (6%). Level shows 63 (16%) were in 100L, 98 (25%) 200L, 110 (28%) 300L, 87 (22%) 400L while 38 (9%) were in 500L. 226 (57%) Christians, 139 (35%) Muslims, while 31(8%) ATR. Finally, their parents/guidance occupations 161 (41%) civil servant, 118 (30%) self-employed, 66 (16%) farmers, 36 (9%) unemployed, and 15 (4%) were engaged in other occupations like drivers, artisans etc.

First, descriptive statistics was conducted for the socio demographic variables, objectives of the study, and finally, Linear Regression Analysis was used to examine relationship between cybercrime involvement and class attendance among undergraduates in Benue State University.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: 4 point Likert Questionnaire based on the Objectives of the Study

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Having multiple social media accounts with different names is a normal lifestyle	166	198	20	12	1.70	0.71
Using computer without authorization from the owner is smartness	224	122	25	25	1.62	0.86

Fear of being caught among perpetrators of cybercrime discourages class attendance	202	125	46	23	1.72	0.88
Attending lectures is seen as a distraction to undergraduates instead of a study process	158	107	91	40	2.03	1.01
Cybercrime prevention methods should be introduced as a compulsory general study in schools	129	193	71	3	1.86	0.72

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The survey results indicate that a significant portion of respondents perceive having multiple social media accounts with different names as a normal lifestyle. The frequencies suggest a range of responses, with the majority leaning toward agreement. The mean of 1.62 that corroborates Jaishankar's postulation on identity flexibility and dissociative anonymity, and a standard deviation of 0.71 indicate that most respondents generally agree with this statement, and there is relatively low variation in responses. This suggests that among the surveyed students, maintaining multiple online identities is considered a common or accepted practice, reflecting the normalization of online anonymity in their digital lifestyles. To Space Transition Theory, individuals who suppress deviant tendencies in physical space are likely to express them in cyberspace because the digital environment allows concealment of identity and reduced fear of social sanctions. This digital anonymity lowers psychological restraints and may increase susceptibility to cybercrime engagement.

Responses to the statement regarding unauthorized computer use as a sign of "smartness" showed varied opinions, though the majority disagreed. Mean of 1.70 and a standard deviation of 0.86. This aligns with Jaishankar's argument that individuals carry their societal values and moral orientations from physical space into cyberspace. The data suggest that most respondents do not consider illicit computer use a desirable or "smart" behavior, but there is some divergence in perception. This indicates that while some students may view unauthorized access as clever, the prevailing attitude is that it is not an acceptable measure of intelligence or skill. Despite the availability of anonymity online, this demonstrates that a shift in space does not automatically erase value systems. That transition to cyberspace may create opportunities for deviance, but moral conditioning from physical space still influences behaviour.

The data indicate that fear of detection may influence students' academic behaviors. With a mean of 1.72 and a standard deviation of 0.88, reflects the pace Transition theory's emphasis on weak deterrence and ease of escape in cyberspace. Most respondents slightly agree that the fear of being caught while engaging in cybercrime can discourage class attendance. This suggests that some students may prioritize avoiding exposure to authorities over attending lectures, highlighting a potential indirect effect of cybercrime involvement on academic participation. Jaishankar argues that cyberspace enables offenders to operate with perceived minimal or no risk due to spatiotemporal flexibility. However, once detection becomes likely, behavioural patterns shift. In this case, students involved in cybercrime may avoid lectures to reduce exposure.

Survey responses reveal mixed perceptions of the role of lectures in undergraduate life. While the raw frequencies show both agreement and disagreement, the mean score of 2.03 and a relatively higher standard deviation of 1.01 indicate moderate agreement with some variability in opinion and can be interpreted through Jaishankar's postulation on normative inconsistency between physical and cyber spaces. This suggests that a portion of students view lectures as less valuable or even distracting, reflecting a potential challenge in motivating consistent class attendance. Cyberspace often promotes instant rewards, financial gain, and alternative social recognition systems, which may conflict with the discipline and delayed rewards associated with formal education. When students internalize online norms that prioritize quick economic success, the normal academic routine may appear less pleasing.

The majority of respondents strongly agree with introducing cybercrime prevention as a compulsory course. Mean of 1.86 with a standard deviation of 0.72, indicating that most students recognize the importance of formal education on cybercrime, and responses are relatively consistent. This reflects a general consensus on the need for structured awareness and preventive measures within the educational system to curb engagement in cybercrime activities. While Space Transition Theory emphasized on psychological and social drivers of cybercrime, this finding addresses one among its limitations on its limited emphasis on regulatory and institutional interventions.

Table 2: Linear Regression Analysis on the Relationship between Cybercrime and Academic Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error estimate	Sig.	
1	.053 ^a	.003	.000		1.37524	
F Change	.000					
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	2.072	1	2.072	1.095	.296 ^b	
Residual	745.168	394	1.891			
Total	747.240	395				
Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient			
Co-linearity Statistics						
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance
VIF						
Constant	3.544	.243		21.964	.000	
Cybercrime Involvement	.64	.061	.053	1.037	.300	1.000
1.000						

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025

The findings above showed that the regression model is not statistically significant, $F(1.095) = .296, p > .05$. Following the decision rule, since the probability value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate rejected.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the relationship between cybercrime involvement and academic performance, particularly class attendance, among undergraduate students. Findings from the survey revealed that students largely consider maintaining multiple social media accounts with different identities as a normalized aspect of their digital lifestyles. While a few respondents perceived unauthorized computer use as “smart,” the majority did not endorse such behavior, reflecting a general awareness of its inappropriateness. Additionally, fear of being caught engaging in cybercrime was reported to discourage some students from attending lectures, indicating a potential indirect effect of cybercrime on academic participation. Perceptions of lectures varied, with some students viewing

them as distractions rather than integral to learning. Importantly, respondents strongly supported introducing cybercrime prevention as a compulsory course, highlighting the perceived need for structured educational interventions.

The linear regression analysis further indicated that cybercrime involvement does not significantly predict class attendance. The very weak correlation ($R = 0.053$) and negligible explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.003$) suggest that factors other than cybercrime are more critical determinants of students' academic participation.

Overall, while cybercrime involvement is recognized among students, its direct effect on class attendance appears minimal, emphasizing the importance of addressing broader behavioral, motivational, and institutional factors in the university environment. Promote Responsible Digital Behavior: Institutions should encourage responsible use of social media and discourage practices such as maintaining multiple online identities for deceptive purposes through awareness campaigns and counseling services. Strengthen Classroom Engagement: Lecturers and administrators should adopt innovative teaching strategies to make lectures more engaging and relevant, reducing the perception that attending classes is a distraction. Enhance Monitoring and Support Systems: Universities should establish monitoring systems that identify at-risk students while providing supportive interventions to prevent cybercrime involvement and its indirect effects on academic participation. Encourage Research on Academic and Digital Behaviors: Further studies should explore other factors influencing class attendance and academic performance, such as time management, motivation, and peer influence, to design holistic interventions beyond addressing cybercrime alone.

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