

Research Paper

Study on Cybercrime Awareness Among Youths in Kaduna South Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Cybercrime, also known by the name computer crime, occurs daily in different forms, such as cyberbullying, cyberpornography, cyberstalking, hacking, and phishing, among others. Research has shown that youths are the most susceptible group of internet users who spend much of their time online. The purpose of this study was to examine cybercrime awareness among youth in Kaduna South Local Government Area (KSLGA) in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study adopted mixed-methods of data collection to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from 130 selected sampled respondents, including 65 males and 65 females to be representative of the local government area. A semi-structured questionnaire and in-depth interview were the instruments used to obtain primary data. The collected data were analyzed and presented using descriptive statistical methods. The results indicated that the majority of the surveyed youths (83%) were aware of various kinds of cyber threats. The survey further found that male youths demonstrate a higher awareness compared to their female counterparts. In conclusion, the study provides recommendations to increase cybercrime awareness among young individuals in KSLGA and elsewhere.

Keywords: *Cybercrime, Awareness, Youth, Kaduna South, Nigeria*

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Received: August 18, 2024; Revision Received: October 07, 2024; Accepted: October 10, 2024

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Cybercrime, also known as computer crime, refers to criminal acts committed with the use of computers or the internet. According to Parthasarathi (as cited in Paranjape 2019, p. 143), cybercrime is “the illegal criminal activity that uses a computer either as an instrumentality, target, or means of perpetrating further crime.” Ponnian (2008) defines cybercrime as illegal activity involving computer technology that causes harm to people, business entities, and governmental critical infrastructure. According to Rao (2014), cybercrime covers acts such as money laundering, cyberterrorism, cyberstalking, espionage, cyber pornography, tax evasion, and hacking, amongst others. In other words, the use of computers or modern communication devices to commit illegal activities such as committing fraud, stealing identities, trafficking child pornography, and stealing intellectual property is known as cybercrime (Okeshola & Adeta, 2013). Wall (2001) categorized cybercrime into:

- **Cyber deception:** This category entails the theft of money or valuable property through phishing, credit card fraud, and online violations of intellectual property.
- **Cyber violence:** This category encompasses criminal activities that cause physical harm and violate human rights, such as online hate speech, cyberbullying, and cyberstalking.
- **Cyber pornography:** This category includes all illegal activities that violate the law against obscenity and indecency, such as child pornography and revenge pornography.
- **Cyber trespass:** This category involves invading the property of others online with the purpose of causing harm.

The concept of youth

Gruber and Fandakova (2021) define youth as a transitional period between childhood and adolescence. According to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, youth is the period of a person’s life between childhood and adulthood. Youth, according to the United Nations, are those aged fifteen to twenty-four. While the Nigeria National Youth Policy (2009) describes youth as anyone aged eighteen and thirty-five.

The concept of awareness

Awareness is defined as being conscious of something. Abdul Gafoor (2012) explains awareness as a phenomenon that arises when the brain reacts in specific ways, such as seeing the color green when exposed to light waves. According to Kokoszka (2007), awareness is a sense that comes with the experience of phenomena such as cybercrime victimization. In essence, awareness is the ability to observe, feel, and be conscious of happenings, objects, or sensory patterns.

Statement of the Study Problem

Study on cybercrime awareness among youths in Kaduna South Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Study objectives

The study aims to:

- Assess the cybercrime awareness of youths in KSLG.
- Identify the most common types of cybercrime that KSLGA youths are aware of.
- Explore gender differences in cybercrime awareness among youths in KSLGA.
- Assess KSLGA youth’s awareness of cybersecurity practices.

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- Offer recommendations for raising awareness of cybercrime among KSLGA youths.

RELATED STUDIES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Datt (2024) investigated cybercrime awareness among Indian adolescents and its effects on their life satisfaction. The study encompassed two hundred sampled participants aged 18 and 25. The study utilized the cybercrime awareness scale developed by Rajasekar (2011) to gather data. According to the study's findings, the majority of the youths have a modest level of awareness about cybercrime and life satisfaction.

Auwal (2023) conducted a survey of Nigerian students, teachers, and workers to assess cybercrime and cybersecurity awareness. The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire and data from the Economic and Financial Commission (EFCC). The study findings indicated that cyber threats in Nigeria are steadily increasing due to the government, stakeholders, and regulatory agencies inability to intervene effectively. The researcher suggested a synergy of law enforcement and regulatory agencies to combat the menace of cybercrime in Nigeria.

Parwani, Nikose, and Rathor's (2022) "Awareness Regarding Cyber Crime among People" sought to educate people about cybercrime and its consequences. They assessed the perceptions of 50 respondents to determine their level of awareness about cybercrime. They discovered that adults are more aware of cybercrime than young individuals.

Ndubueze and Abdullahi (2019) assessed the cyber victimization awareness among internet-active undergraduate students in Nigeria. A total of 99 undergraduate students from two public universities participated in the study. The scholars underscored the risk of cybercrime victimization due to unawareness. The study recommended increased cybercrime and cybersecurity awareness initiatives, especially for vulnerable internet-active students in Nigeria.

Archana and Vrajesh (2016) investigated the extent of cybercrime awareness among Indian citizens. The survey has a total of one hundred sampled respondents. The majority of the sampled respondents demonstrated moderate awareness, highlighting the need for increased awareness efforts.

Mehta and Singh (2013) did a comparative study titled "Awareness about Cyber Laws in the Indian Society" to investigate awareness of cyber laws in India. They found a significant gender difference, with males being more aware of Indian cyber laws than females.

Space transition theory

This study adopted the space transition theory (STT) of cybercrime. According to Ndubueze and Ismail (2021), SST was developed by Jaishankar Karupnnan in 2007 to explain the causes of offenses involving computers and the internet. Jaishankar believed that general theoretical explanations were insufficient to provide a comprehensive understanding of computer crime, necessitating the development of a distinct cybercrime theory (Ndubueze & Abdullahi, 2019).

Jaishankar (as cited in Danquah & Longe, 2011) posits that SST revolves around the concept of space transition, which refers to the movement of people from physical space to cyberspace, resulting in behavioral changes. This allows people to behave differently when

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they transit from physical space to cyberspace and vice versa. Danquah and Longe (2011) highlighted the key propositions of STT as follows:

- Persons with repressed criminal behavior in physical space may have the tendency to commit crimes in cyberspace that they would not commit in physical space due to their status and position.
- Identity flexibility, dissociative anonymity, and a lack of deterrence factors in cyberspace provide offenders with the choice to engage in cybercrime.
- Criminal behavior exhibited by offenders in cyberspace is likely to influence their behavior in physical space, and vice versa.
- Intermittent ventures of offenders in cyberspace and the dynamic spatio-temporal nature of cyberspace provide the chance to escape.
- Strangers are likely to unite in cyberspace to commit crimes in physical space, while (b) Associates from physical space are likely to unite to commit crimes in cyberspace.
- Persons from closed societies are more likely to commit crimes than people from open societies.
- The conflicts between the norms and values of physical space and the norms and values of cyberspace lead to cybercrime.

In line with the above, Jaishankar contends that the nature of cyberspace allows criminals to victimize people without being identified or apprehended. Identity flexibility, dissociative anonymity, a lack of deterrents, the intermittent involvement of offenders in cyberspace, and the dynamic nature of cyberspace all contribute to the prevalence of cybercrime. As a result, individuals and businesses that lack the awareness or skills to protect themselves are susceptible to cybercrime victimization. This danger is particularly concerning for youth, who may be oblivious to cyber threats.

Researchers have highlighted the strengths of STT; Danquah and Longe (2011) considered it one of the most influential theoretical explanations in the field of cybercriminology. Also, Ndubueze and Ismail (2021) posit that Jaishankar's STT has paved the way for new areas of investigation by focusing on the emerging trends of offenses involving computers and the internet. However, Muhammed and Ibrahim (as cited in Ndubueze & Ahmed, 2019) criticized the theory, arguing that it does not incorporate demographic factors that encourage cybercrime.

METHODOLOGY

Study area

This study was conducted in KSLGA of Kaduna State, located within the coordinates' latitude 10°27'43" N and longitude 7°25'38" E. KSLGA, with its headquarters in Makera, borders Kaduna North, Chikun, and Kachia local government areas.

Study population

The targeted population for this study comprises all youths aged 18 to 30 residing in the KSLGA of Kaduna State. The population of KSLGA was 402,731 according to the 2006 National Population Census.

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Sample

A simple random sampling technique was utilized for the selection of the sampled respondents. 130 youths, comprising 65 males and 65 females, were selected from the 13 political wards in KSLGA, including Badiko, Barnawa, Kakuri Gwari, Kakuri Hausa, Makera, Tudun Wada South, Tudun Wada North, Tudun Wada West, Tudun Nupawa, Sabon Gari North, Sabon Gari South, Unguwan Sanusi, and Television. Furthermore, for the qualitative data, a combined group of thirteen youths was selected, one from each of the political wards.

Study design

The study employed a descriptive survey design.

Data collection

The study data were collected using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A semi-structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview (IDI) were the main instruments used to gather data for the study. The survey instrument was self-administered. The informed consent of the questionnaire and interview participants was obtained.

Data analysis

The collected data was analyzed and presented using descriptive statistical methods. Microsoft Word, Excel, and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 were used for data entry, coding, editing, and quantitative data analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographics of the sampled respondents

Variables	Details	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Gender	Male	65	50	50
	Female	65	50	100
	Total	130	100	
Age	16-20	51	39.2	39.2
	21-25	49	37.6	76.8
	26-30	30	23.1	100
	Total	130	100	
Education level	Primary	10	7.7	7.7
	Secondary	63	48.5	56.2
	Tertiary	57	43.8	100
	Total	100	100	
Religion	Islam	85	65.3	65.3
	Christianity	45	34.6	100
	Total	130	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the demographics of the sampled respondents. According to the findings, the majority (76.8%) of the sampled respondents were between the ages of 16 and 25, with 23.1% being between 26 and 30. The sampled respondents were equally distributed between both genders. With regards to educational level, the sampled respondents indicated different levels of education: the majority (48.5%) had secondary education, 43.8% had tertiary

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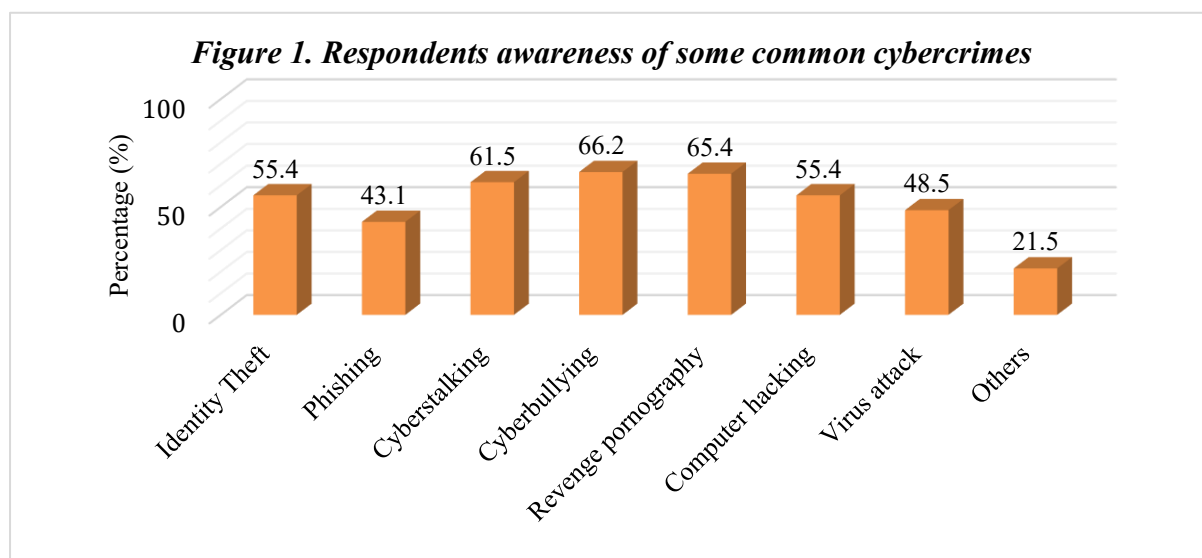
education, and 7.7% had primary education. Furthermore, the majority of the sampled respondents, 85%, identified as Muslims, and 34.6% identified as Christians.

Table 2: Cybercrime awareness

Questions	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Are you aware of cybercrime?	Yes	108	83	83
	No	17	13	96
	No Response	5	3.9	100
	Total	130	100	
Where have you heard about cybercrime?	Social media	31	23.8	23.8
	School	28	21.5	45.3
	Parents/siblings	15	11.5	56.8
	Friends	42	32.3	89.1
	Others	14	10.7	100
	Total	130	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

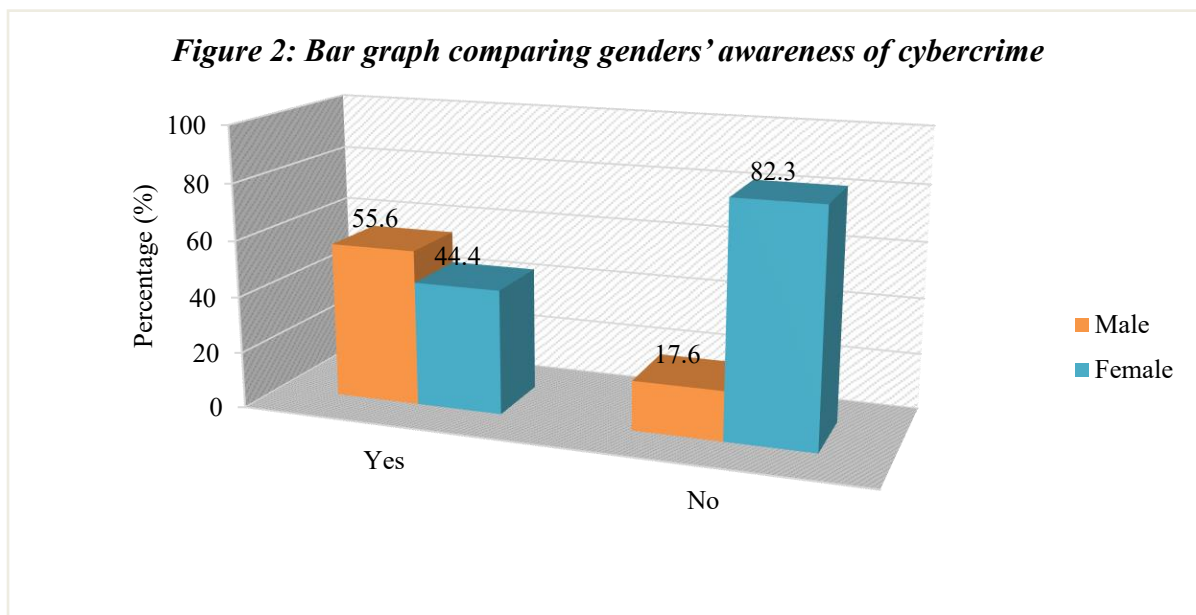
Table 2 shows data about cybercrime awareness and its sources. The majority of the sampled respondents (83%) said they were aware of cybercrime. It is worth mentioning that 13% reported being unaware, and 3.9% did not respond. When asked where they knew about cybercrime, the majority of the sampled respondents (32.2%) knew about it from their friends, 23.8% from social media platforms, 21.5% from school, 11.5% from their parents or siblings, and 10% from other sources.



Source: Field Survey, 2023

Figure 1 shows how the sampled respondents expressed awareness of some common cybercrimes. Study findings show that the majority of the sampled respondents (66.2%) were aware of cyberbullying, 65.4% were aware of pornography, 61.5% were aware of cyberstalking, 55.4% were aware of identity theft, 55.4% were aware of hacking, 48.5% were aware of virus attacks, 43.1% were aware of phishing, and 4.3% were aware of other types of cybercrime such as spamming, social engineering, and software piracy, among others.

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Source: Field Survey, 2023

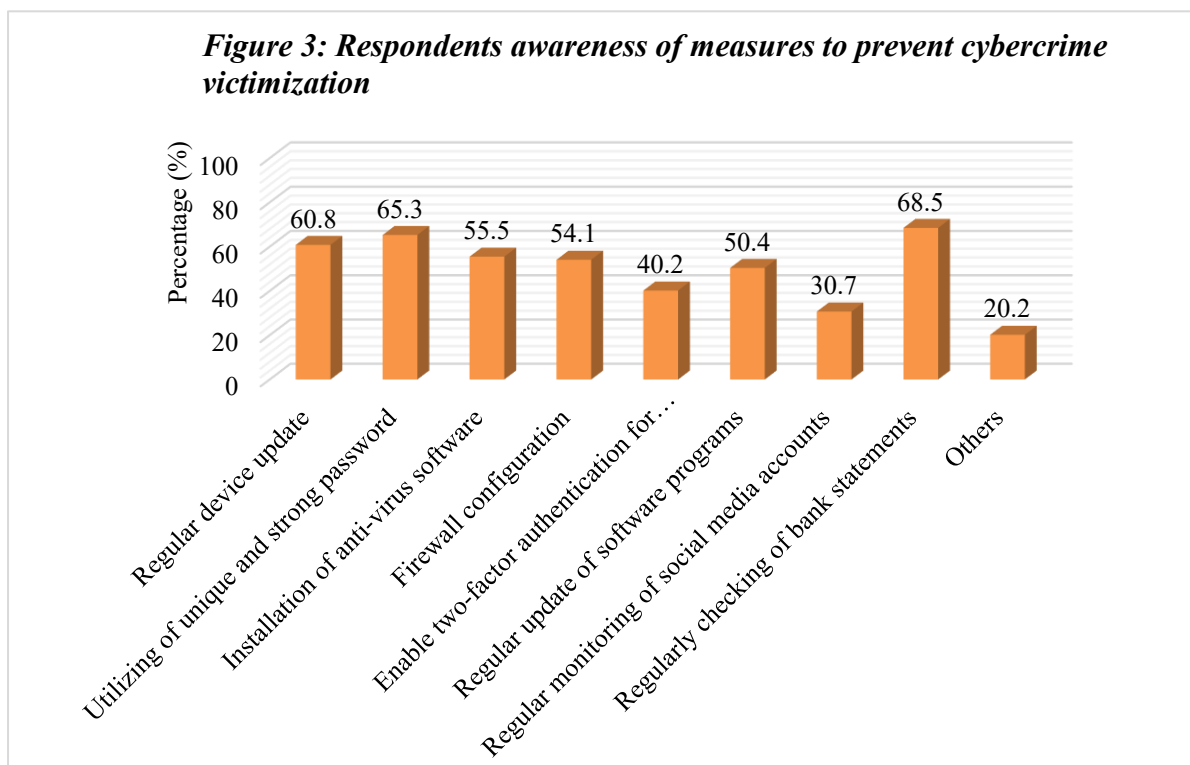
The study compared and contrasted male and female youths to determine which was more aware of cybercrime. The data presented in Figure 2 show that both genders were aware of cybercrime; however, male youths had a higher awareness than female youths.

Table 3: Respondents opinions regarding cybercrime victimization

Questions	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Have you ever been a victim of cybercrime?	Yes	99	76.1	76.1
	No	20	15.3	91.4
	No Response	11	8.4	100
	Total	130	100	
If yes, did you report the incident to the appropriate authority?	Yes	36	27.6	27.6
	No	63	48.4	76
	No Response	31	23.8	100
	Total	130	100	
Do you think reporting cybercrime incidents is important?	Yes	87	66.9	66.9
	No	35	26.9	93.8
	Not sure	8	6.1	100
	Total	130	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 shows the sampled respondents' opinions on cybercrime victimization. According to the findings, a significant portion of the sampled respondents (76.1%) reported being victimized by cybercriminals, while 23.7% were unsure. In terms of reporting victimization, the majority of the sampled respondents (48.4%) did not report the incidences to the appropriate authority, while 27.6% did, and 23.8% of the sampled respondents did not respond. Furthermore, when asked about the importance of reporting cybercrime incidents, the majority of the sampled respondents (67%) agreed, while 33% disagreed.



Source: Field Survey, 2023

Figure 3 illustrates the respondent’s awareness of measures to prevent cybercrime victimization. Respondents were asked to select the cybersecurity measures that they were familiar with. The findings show that the majority of the sampled respondents were aware of and utilized various cybersecurity measures. According to the findings, the majority of the sampled respondents (68.5%) were aware of regular monitoring of bank statements for fraudulent activities; 65.3% were aware of using strong passwords; 60.8% were aware of regular device updates; 55.5% were aware of installing anti-virus software; 54.1% were aware of firewalls; 50.4% were aware of software program or application updates; 40.2% were aware of two-factor authentication; 30.7% were aware of regularly monitoring social media accounts; and 20.2% were aware of other cybersecurity measures not included in the questionnaire.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of the study is to examine cybercrime awareness among youth, with special reference to KSLGA in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The quantitative data revealed that the vast majority of the sampled respondents (83%) were aware of the menace of cybercrime. These findings are consistent with those of Meenah, Sankhla, Mohrill, and Kumar (2020) who found a high degree of awareness among young people in Delhi, NCR, India. While expressing their awareness, it was found that all the sampled respondents knew about cybercrime through different sources, with 32.3% of the sampled respondents knowing about it from their friends, followed by social media platforms (23.8%) and school (22%). Accordingly, these findings were further corroborated during the IDI. A 25-year-old male participant who lives in Makera ward revealed that:

“My peers at school have made me aware of cyber threats and online illegal activities. They regularly share information and experiences about cybercrime incidents.”

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Another female participant from Barnawa Ward, aged 18, emphasized the importance of being aware of cybercrime. She stated that:

“Being aware of online criminal activities is important in today’s digital era. My friends are the source of information, especially when discussing cybercrime incidents. I also knew about cybercrime through different social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram.”

The study also identified common types of cybercrime known to KSLGA youths. According to the findings, the sampled respondents knew about the various types of cybercrimes, such as cyberbullying, revenge pornography, cyberstalking, computer hacking, identity theft, malware attacks, and phishing. Further, the qualitative data from the IDI sessions corroborated these findings. Participants stressed the need to be aware of these cyber threats and adopt preventive measures. For example, one female participant, aged 21 and living in Sabon Tasha ward, discoursed that:

“When it comes to cybercrime, it is important to be aware of various cyber threats that can harm people and businesses. Criminals, for example, threatened, harassed, and intimidated innocent people using computers and the internet.”

She added that:

“Being informed about cybercrimes helps me recognize warning signs, take precautionary measures, and notify others about malicious online behaviors such as cyberstalking, cyberbullying, revenge pornography, identity theft, phishing, and more.”

Further, the quantitative data indicated that the surveyed respondents were conversant with cybersecurity measures. Supporting these findings, participants during the IDI sessions shared their proactive measures to online safety, such as using regular device updates, using strong passwords, installing malware software, enabling two-factor authentication, software updates, monitoring social media accounts, and constant checking of bank statements to prevent unauthorized transactions. A 23-year-old male participant who lives in Kakuri Hausa Ward opined that:

“To boost my cybersecurity, I have taken different steps to protect my internet exposure. For example, I regularly update my devices to ensure that they are well safeguarded against potential attacks. In addition, I prefer using strong passwords that contain letters, numbers, and special characters to secure my social media and bank accounts.”

Another 19-year-old female participant from Narayi Ward emphasized the significance of protecting oneself from online attacks in today’s digital era. She stated that:

“I keep my computer and smartphone up-to-date, use strong passwords, and have antivirus software installed. Also, I routinely check my social media accounts for unauthorized access. To increase security, I have implemented two-factor authentication on all my accounts, guaranteeing that even when my password is compromised, unauthorized access is barred.”

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined cybercrime awareness among youth in KSLGA, Kaduna State, using Badiko, Barnawa, Kakuri Gwari, Kakuri Hausa, Makera, Tudun Wada South, Tudun Wada North, Tudun Wada West, Tudun Nupawa, Sabon Gari North, Sabon Gari South, Unguwan Sanusi, and Television as the bases for the study. Out of the sampled respondents, a significant proportion (83%) knew about cybercrimes through friends, social media

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platforms, schools, and other sources. Male youths in KSLGA demonstrated a higher level of awareness than female youths. In addition, findings show that the sampled respondents were aware of and adopted different cybersecurity measures to prevent cybercrime victimization. Based on the survey findings, the study recommends that:

1. Future studies should consider expanding the sample size, preferably with a more diverse demographic representation.
2. There is a need for parents or guardians to closely monitor their children's online activities.
3. There is a need for schools to launch a mass cybercrime awareness campaign to provide students with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from cybercriminals and deviants.
4. There is a need for authorities and regulatory agencies such as the Nigerian Communications Commission, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the National Orientation Agency, and the Nigeria Police Force to engage in mass cybercrime awareness to sensitize youths and the general public about the risks of engaging in cybercrime.
5. There is a need for the youth, especially the susceptible, to know and take the appropriate measures to safeguard themselves from cyber threats.

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Acknowledgment

The researchers appreciate all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process. Also, this study received no financial support from individuals or organizations.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Sani, K.M., Hassan, M.A., Danjuma, A.H., Adam, M.M., Nadama, S.G., Udu, M.S., & Mohammed, F. (2024). Study on Cybercrime Awareness Among Youths in Kaduna South Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(4), 047-057. DIP:18.01.006.20241204, DOI:10.25215/1204.006