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Cultural Norms, Gender Roles and their Implications for Achieving Sdgs in Developing Societies 1

Adediran, Yinka O, Edewor, Kehinde Omolara, Otubanjo, Taofeek Taiyeola

Talent Management and Employee Retention: Evidence from Academic and Non-teaching Staff of The University 11

Aliyu Mustapha Olanrewaju, Ijaiya Tahir Adeniyi

The Role Of Religious Leaders In Curbing Cybercrime Among Youths In Odogbolu Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria 25

Yinka Oluranti ADEDIRAN , David Benjamin FATAI , Olatunde Oluwafemi AJAYI

Machine Learning and Iot Integration for Intelligent and Autonomous System Operations 38

Krishna Kumar Sharma, Amar Singh Verma , Sangeeta Kumari , Dr. Hemant Mathur

Artificial Intelligence in Suicidal Behavior Detection: Algorithms & Insights into Behavioral Patterns 46

Sangeeta Kumari, Krishna Kumar Sharma, Amar Singh Verma

Predictive Analytics and Structural Scarcity: A Multi-model Data Mining Approach to Deciphering The 2020–2025 Silver Price Super-cycle 50

Dr. Mamta Rathore, Dr. Harshwardhan Singh Krishnawat

Changing Dimensions of Social Infrastructure Development in India: A Statistical Perspective 56

Dr. Sandeep Kumar, Dr. B. R. Thakur

A Study on Bank Micorfinance for Small Enterprises: Evidence from Mumbai 66

Dr. Sheela Dashora, Hiral Desai

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN CURBING CYBERCRIME AMONG YOUTHS IN ODOGBOLU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Cybercrime also known as 'yahoo-yahoo' has emerged as a critical challenge affecting Nigerian youth, evolving into ritualistic (yahoo Plus) forms. Driven by unemployment, poverty, and eroding moral values, cybercrime persists despite the 2015 Cybercrimes Act and EFCC enforcement, damaging Nigeria's international reputation and perpetuating poverty cycles. Religious institutions (churches, mosques, African Traditional Religion centers) serve as moral custodians with unique influence over youth values, offering alternative success pathways through moral education and mentorship. However, empirical evidence of faith-based interventions at local government levels remains limited. This mixed-methods study examined religious leaders' roles in curbing cybercrime among 297 youths in Odogbolu Local Government Area, Ogun State, using surveys and interviews with Christian, Islamic, and ATR leaders. Findings identify unemployment, peer influence, and materialism as primary drivers, with males and younger respondents showing greater tolerance. Religious institutions actively combat cybercrime through youth seminars, Friday khutbahs, and communal counseling, though impact remains moderate due to economic hardship and social media influences. The study concludes that sustainable reduction requires integrated approaches combining religious moral guidance with economic interventions and multi-stakeholder collaboration, providing localized empirical evidence for policymakers and community stakeholders.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Christian Religion Leaders, Islamic Religion Leaders, Traditional Religion Leaders, Youth

Introduction

Cybercrime, popularly referred to as 'Yahoo-Yahoo' in Nigeria, has become a critical social issue, particularly among the youth. This internet fraud is primarily driven by socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and the desire for material wealth (Ogunmefun, Akinpelu & Aluko, 2025). In some extreme cases, it has escalated into 'Yahoo Plus', a term used when ritual practices are employed to enhance fraudulent activities. Odogbolu, a town in Ogun State, mirrors the national rise in youth cybercrime, driven by multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. High youth unemployment and limited job opportunities push many toward online fraud to survive (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Peer pressure

and the allure of quick wealth further fuel this trend, especially as youths are influenced by the extravagant lifestyles of successful fraudsters (Adewale & Adegoke, 2020). The erosion of moral and religious values (Okeshola & Adenaike, 2018), combined with the widespread availability of internet access and digital tools (Ojedokun & Eraye, 2012), makes cybercrime more accessible. Additionally, weak law enforcement (Ogwezzy, 2021) and the societal glorification of wealth regardless of its source have normalized fraudulent behaviour among many young Nigerians (Uche, 2017).

Youths involved in cybercrime often suffer from emotional and psychological distress. The constant need to stay ahead of law enforcement, alongside the fear of being caught or exposed, can lead to anxiety, stress, and depression (Bello & Ogunwale, 2024). Furthermore, the lack of fulfillment in pursuing fraudulent activities instead of legitimate, meaningful careers often leaves these individuals with feelings of emptiness and guilt. Engaging in cybercrime also deprives youths of valuable skills that are essential for long-term career success. Many young individuals abandon education and vocational training to focus on cybercrime, which hinders their ability to gain meaningful employment later in life (Ogunleye, 2024).

Beyond criminal consequences, ritualistic cybercrime causes severe health effects. Practices involving harmful substances, self-harm, and dangerous environments lead to infections, physical ailments, and death (Owolabi, 2024). Violent rituals cause PTSD, paranoia, and psychiatric conditions, while psychoactive substance use creates addiction (Bello & Ogunwale, 2024; Ogunleye, 2024).

Cybercrime has far-reaching consequences on Nigeria's international reputation. The country has been increasingly stereotyped as a global hotspot for internet fraud, drawing scrutiny from international regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies, and foreign governments. According to Adegoke, Adejumo & Oyeniya (2024), the proliferation of cybercrime has contributed to the stigmatization of Nigerian citizens, with many facing discrimination in international business

transactions, visa applications, and professional collaborations. This negative perception extends to Nigeria's financial institutions, as global banks and payment platforms impose stricter regulations and compliance checks on Nigerian-based transactions. The long-term effects of Nigeria's association with cybercrime include reduced foreign investment, loss of business opportunities, and diminished trust in Nigerian professionals and enterprises (EFCC, 2023).

The Nigerian government enacted the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act 2015, criminalizing identity theft, online fraud, and cyberstalking. The EFCC conducts regular enforcement operations, while the National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy strengthens digital infrastructure. Financial institutions employ AI fraud detection, multi-factor authentication, and biometric verification (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2024; Central Bank of Nigeria, 2023). Additionally, telecommunications companies collaborate with regulatory bodies to block suspicious communications and shut down fraudulent websites (NCC, 2024).

In light of these issues, religious leaders within institutions such as the Churches, the Mosques, and African traditional religions centres hold unique and influential positions in shaping society's moral compass. As spiritual guides and community leaders, they are well-positioned to provide the necessary ethical frameworks to discourage youths from engaging in cybercrime (Ali, 2023). The Church, Mosque, and African traditional religion centre serve as places of worship and hubs for community development and rehabilitation (Okeshola & Adenaike, 2018). Babatunde and Makanju (2019) argue that religious leaders have historically played a pivotal role in addressing societal vices, and their involvement in combating cybercrime can have a significant impact.

Given the rising prevalence and evolving complexity of cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government Area, coupled with its deep-rooted socio-economic, psychological, and moral implications, there is a compelling need for context-specific and community-driven

interventions. While existing studies have largely emphasized legal frameworks and economic factors, insufficient attention has been paid to the grassroots influence of religious leaders who serve as key moral authorities and social influencers within local communities. Their strategic position within churches, mosques, and traditional religious institutions provides a unique platform for value reorientation, behavioural regulation, and youth mentorship. However, empirical evidence on the effectiveness and scope of such faith-based interventions at the local government level remains limited. Therefore, this study is justified in seeking to bridge this gap by systematically examining the roles and impact of religious leaders in curbing cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu, thereby contributing to both academic discourse and policy formulation aimed at addressing this pressing social challenge.

Statement of the Problem

Despite governmental interventions including the Cybercrimes Act of 2015 and EFCC enforcement actions, cybercrime persists among Nigerian youths with increasing sophistication, while the emergence of Yahoo Plus and ritualistic practices deepens the moral crisis. Religious leaders across Christian, Islamic, and African Traditional Religion institutions possess unique capacities to influence youth values through mentorship and moral education, yet the empirical effectiveness of these faith-based interventions in actually reducing cybercrime remains inadequately documented at the local government level, creating a critical gap in understanding how religious guidance translates into measurable behavioral change among at-risk youth populations.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to explore the role of religious leaders, specifically the Church, Mosque, and African traditional religion, in curbing cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the factors driving youths in Odogbolu Local Government to engage in cybercrime.

2. To investigate the perception of the youths in Odogbolu Local Government towards cybercrime.
3. To investigate the attitude of the youths in Odogbolu Local Government towards cybercrime.
4. To find out the activities of religious leaders on the eradication of cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government.
5. To determine the impacts of the activities of religious leaders towards the eradication of cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study on the role of religious leaders in curbing cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government:

1. What are the factors driving youths in Odogbolu Local Government to engage in cybercrime?
2. What are the perceptions of youths in Odogbolu Local Government towards cybercrime?
3. What are the attitudes of youths in Odogbolu Local Government towards cybercrime?
4. How are religious leaders involved in addressing the issue of cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government?
5. Does the involvement of religious leaders have a measurable impact on reducing cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government?

Literature Review

Social Learning Theory: Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977), provides essential insights into cybercrime propagation. The theory posits that individuals acquire behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their social environments. Applied to Nigerian youth cybercrime, this

framework explains how peer networks function as training grounds where experienced fraudsters mentor newcomers in hacking techniques, social engineering tactics, and evasion strategies. Social media platforms amplify this learning process by glorifying cybercriminal wealth and lifestyle, creating virtual communities where fraudulent success receives positive reinforcement. Family dynamics contribute when parents unknowingly validate cybercrime by accepting financial support from children without questioning its source. Adekunle (2023) indicates that cybercrime networks often operate informally within university communities, where students mentor each other on illicit digital activities. Ajayi (2023) notes that the glorification of wealth through fraudulently acquired means is rampant in digital spaces, reinforcing the belief that cybercrime is an easy and rewarding venture. The theory suggests that effective prevention requires disrupting these learning pathways through positive role modeling, media literacy education, and strengthened parental supervision.

Absolute Moral Theory: Absolute Moral Theory is the ethical belief that certain actions are inherently right or wrong, regardless of circumstances or consequences. It maintains that moral rules are universal, fixed, and apply to everyone at all times. For example, actions such as lying and stealing are always considered wrong, even if they might produce a good result, while truthfulness and honesty are moral duties that must never be violated. This theory is closely associated with Deontology, particularly the work of Immanuel Kant (1785), who argued that morality is based on duty and adherence to universal moral laws. His idea of the categorical imperative emphasizes that individuals should act only according to principles that can be universally applied. Other key proponents include Thomas Aquinas (1274), William of Ockham (1347), and St. Augustine (430), who all upheld the view that moral principles are absolute and unchanging. Adesina (2023) and Ogunlade (2020) demonstrate that churches, through sermons, youth programs, and mentorship, reinforce these ethical standards, guiding youths toward lawful and socially responsible behaviours.

Empirical Evidence and Research Gaps

Research confirms cybercrime's socio-economic drivers. Ojedokun (2018) established significant relationships between peer influence and fraud participation among university students. Adeyemi and Ogunwale (2022) found 72% of unemployed youths viewed cyber fraud as economically viable, with 30% involved in rituals. Tade's (2019) investigation across six tertiary institutions revealed that 70% of respondents were aware of cyber fraud operations, with 42% personally knowing individuals engaged in Yahoo Plus. The study highlighted that financial insecurity, peer pressure, and the perceived inefficacy of legal employment were key motivators for engaging in cyber fraud.

Studies examining the effects of cybercrime provide crucial empirical grounding. Olumide and Adebayo (2021) analyzed the financial implications of cyber fraud in the Nigerian banking sector, revealing that Nigerian banks collectively lost billions of naira due to cyber-related crimes, including phishing scams, unauthorized transactions, and hacking attempts. Adebajo (2021) reviewed cases of cybercrime prosecutions under Nigeria's Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, finding that many young people convicted of cyber fraud faced severe prison sentences, loss of assets, and long-term criminal records, which limited their future employment opportunities.

Research on Yahoo Plus and the moral crisis offers disturbing empirical insights. Owolabi (2024) highlights that Yahoo Plus represents a severe distortion of traditional values, where young individuals engage in extreme and unethical practices to attain financial success. Adegoke and Salawu (2023) conducted a study involving 200 university students and cybercrime offenders in correctional facilities, revealing that nearly 35% of self-identified cyber fraudsters admitted to incorporating spiritual elements into their schemes. Ogunyemi (2021) documented the ritualistic components of Yahoo Plus through in-depth interviews with former Yahoo Boys, finding that 60% of respondents admitted to using charms, incantations, or ritual sacrifices to enhance the effectiveness of their scams. Adebajo and Yusuf

(2022) examined the psychological impact of Yahoo Plus on victims, surveying 120 victims of cyber fraud and finding that 45% reported experiencing psychological trauma, including paranoia, financial distress, and trust issues.

Studies examining the intersection of cybercrime, ritual practices, and African Traditional Religion provide important clarifications. Tade (2023) examined the intersection of cybercrime and ritual practices among Nigerian youth, with a survey conducted across six states with high cybercrime prevalence revealing that 40% of self-identified Yahoo Boys admitted to incorporating ritual elements into their fraudulent activities. Owolabi (2024) explored the use of ATR symbols in Yahoo Plus rituals through interviews with 15 spiritualists and 25 cybercriminals, indicating that 70% of cyber-fraud-related rituals involved symbols misattributed to ATR, such as charms, incantations, and ancestral invocations. However, traditional practitioners unanimously condemned these practices, arguing that they distort ATR's ethical teachings.

Studies examining religious institutional responses show promising but limited impacts. Adeboye (2023) examined faith-based rehabilitation programs for ex-cybercriminals, surveying 200 former Yahoo Boys who participated in church-led vocational training programs and finding that 68% successfully transitioned to legitimate businesses. Abdulrazaq (2023) focused on Islamic organizations' role in discouraging cyber fraud, with surveys conducted in five Northern Nigerian states revealing that 74% of respondents acknowledged attending mosque sermons condemning cybercrime, and 60% of young men enrolled in Islamic financial literacy programs reported a shift towards Sharia-compliant business models as an alternative to cyber fraud.

Research on multi-level governance approaches provides policy-relevant empirical data. Adetunji (2023) conducted a policy evaluation of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, assessing its enforcement effectiveness through a review of 200 cybercrime-related cases from 2015 to 2023, which revealed that only 35% resulted in convictions, indicating enforcement

weaknesses due to corruption, bureaucratic delays, and inadequate technological infrastructure. Eze (2024) examined state government efforts to combat cybercrime, with a survey of 15 state cybersecurity agencies finding that only 5 states had active cybercrime awareness programs, with Lagos State leading in localized campaigns.

However, significant research gaps persist. Most studies examine religious interventions at national or regional levels, neglecting localized contextual factors that shape implementation effectiveness. Limited empirical work quantifies the comparative efficacy of different faith traditions' approaches. The interaction between religious moral education and structural economic interventions remains underexplored. This study addresses these gaps by providing granular analysis of religious leader activities and impacts within a specific local government area, enabling nuanced understanding of how faith-based interventions operate in community contexts.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design that integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively assess the role of religious leaders in curbing cybercrime among youths in Odogbolu Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria. The mixed-methods paradigm was selected to enable both statistical generalization across youth populations and deep interpretive understanding of religious leaders' perspectives and intervention strategies.

The quantitative component utilized a descriptive survey design to collect standardized data from youth respondents regarding their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of cybercrime and religious institutional influence. Complementing this, the qualitative component employed phenomenological interviewing to elicit rich, contextualized narratives from religious leaders about their intervention experiences, challenges, and observed outcomes.

The study population encompassed all religious institution leaders, including pastors, imams, and traditional priests along with youth members

attending various religious institutions in Odogbolu Local Government Area. This population was deliberately selected because the area reportedly exhibits high youth cybercrime prevalence, particularly among tertiary institution students attending religious centers near campuses. The specific communities of Ijagun, Imawaje, Ijele, Ososa, and Omu were purposively chosen based on their substantial youth populations and documented cybercrime concerns.

Sampling procedures combined purposive and volunteer techniques to achieve both representativeness and practical accessibility. Religious leaders were purposively selected to ensure representation across Christian, Islamic, and African Traditional Religion institutions, yielding three key informants: one pastor from Redeemed Christian Church of God Jesus Only Parish in Imawaje, one imam from Tasued Central Mosque in Ijagun, and one traditional priest from Ososa Community Shrine.

Youth respondents were recruited through volunteer sampling at selected religious institutions, with a total sample size comprising 297 youths distributed as follows: Redeemed Christian Church of God Jesus Only Parish Imawaje (57 respondents), Saint Paul Anglican Church Omu (50 respondents), Redeemed Christian Church of God Jehovah Nissi Ijele (55 respondents), Tasued Central Mosque Ijagun (65 respondents), and Ososa Central Mosque (70 respondents).

Data collection instruments included a structured questionnaire titled Religious Institutions and Cybercrime Among Youths Questionnaire (RICTAYQ) and an interview guide designated 'Religious Institutions and Cybercrime Among Youths Interview Guide' (RICTAYIG). The questionnaire contained demographic items and 25 Likert-scale items addressing factors driving cybercrime, youth perceptions and attitudes, religious leader activities, and intervention impacts. Both instruments underwent face and

Results

Table 1 : Demographic Characteristics (N = 297)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	164	55.2%
	Female	133	44.8%
Age	18–25 years	188	63.3%
	26–33 years	79	26.6%
	Above 33 years	30	10.1%
Religion	Christianity	161	54.2%
	Islam	136	45.8%

Source : Field Survey (2026)

The sample predominantly comprised young adults (63.3% aged 18–25), the demographic most susceptible to cybercrime involvement.

content validity review by the project supervisor, departmental lecturers, and measurement and evaluation experts at Tai Solarin University of Education.

Reliability testing occurred through pilot studies before main data collection. The questionnaire was administered twice to 30 youths in Ilese community with test-retest correlation using Cronbach's Alpha yielding a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. Interview guide reliability was established through expert evaluation and pilot testing with three religious leaders.

Data collection proceeded over two weeks following acquisition of an introduction letter from the Department of Sociological Studies at Tai

Solarin University of Education. The researcher and trained assistants conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, obtaining informed consent and audio-recording with permission supplemented by detailed field notes.

Quantitative data analysis utilized SPSS Version 26, employing independent t-tests for two-group comparisons such as gender differences and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for multi-group comparisons such as age or religious category differences, with the significance level set at 0.05. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis with responses coded and grouped under major themes including perception of cybercrime, moral teachings, intervention strategies, and implementation challenges.

Research Question 1: Factors Driving Youths into Cybercrime

Table 2: Factors Driving Cybercrime by Religion

Group	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	P-Value
Christians	161	3.64	0.79	4.271	0.015*
Muslims	136	3.42	0.83		

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Significant difference found ($p < 0.05$). Christians emphasized economic hardship more strongly; Muslims highlighted moral laxity and weak parental guidance.

Qualitative insight: The Christian pastor noted youths reframing fraud as "wisdom in hardship"; the imam observed moral rationalization comparing cybercrime favorably to physical theft; the traditional priest cited "moral erosion and loss of respect for elders."

Research Question 2: Youth Perception of Cybercrime

Table 3: Perception by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	P-Value
Male	164	3.71	0.67	2.983	0.003*
Female	133	3.44	0.74		

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Males showed significantly more permissive attitudes, often justifying cybercrime as "smart" responses to hardship; females expressed stronger moral disapproval.

Research Question 3: Youth Attitude Toward Cybercrime

Table 4: Attitude by Age Group

Age Group	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	P-Value
18–25 years	188	3.62	0.74	5.107	0.007*
26–33 years	79	3.40	0.77		
Above 33 years	30	3.18	0.81		

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Younger respondents (18–25) showed significantly greater tolerance, viewing cybercrime as survival mechanisms; older groups emphasized immorality.

Research Question 4: Religious Leader Activities

Table 5: Activities by Religious Group

Group	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	P-Value
Christians	161	3.78	0.68	6.552	0.002*
Muslims	136	3.42	0.73		

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Christians reported higher engagement through structured youth seminars and Bible studies; Muslims cited Friday khutbahs and parental sensitization.

Qualitative findings: The pastor described "integrity and godly prosperity" teachings; the imam reported Friday sermons and mosque-community elder partnerships; the traditional priest explained communal meetings and ancestral warnings against deceit.

Research Question 5: Impact of Religious Interventions

Table 6: Impact by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	P-Value
Male	164	3.56	0.73	1.998	0.047*
Female	133	3.39	0.71		

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Males rated effectiveness higher, though both groups gave qualified assessments. Impact was moderate, youths active in religious programs showed lower cybercrime engagement, but effects were mediated by family support, peer networks, and economic stability.

Implementation challenges identified: Social media countervailing influence (pastor); hunger and peer pressure overriding messages (imam); urban influence eroding traditional controls (traditional priest).

Discussion of Results

Findings reveal complex economic, social, and moral factors driving cybercrime among Odogbolu youths, with religious institutions playing meaningful but constrained roles. The findings reveal that unemployment, peer influence, materialism, and internet culture are the predominant drivers of youth cybercrime in Odogbolu LGA. Significant differences emerged between Christian and Muslim respondents ($F = 4.271$, $p = 0.015$), with Christians emphasizing economic hardship and Muslims stressing moral laxity and weak parental guidance. This is supported by Okonkwo and Okafor (2022), who found that economic deprivation and weakened moral frameworks jointly predict cybercrime involvement among Nigerian youths, and further corroborated by Olowu and Fashion (2022), who established that peer socialization within economically deprived communities significantly accelerates youth entry into cybercrime. Nwosu and Eze (2022) similarly found that religious and family moral instruction loses competitive influence when youths face prolonged unemployment. Qualitative findings reinforced this position, with religious leaders unanimously identifying joblessness and value degradation as root causes, and the pastor noting that youths increasingly reframe cybercrime as pragmatic survival rather than moral transgression. However, Adewale and Mustapha (2023) partially challenge this structural interpretation, arguing that moral agency remains considerably intact among Nigerian youths even under economic pressure, suggesting that volitional factors deserve greater weight alongside structural explanations.

Gender significantly influenced cybercrime perception ($t = 2.983$, $p = 0.003$), with males (Mean = 3.71) displaying greater tolerance than females (Mean = 3.44). This aligns with Eze and Ojo (2022), who established that male youths in southern Nigeria are disproportionately socialized into cybercrime through provider-role pressures and male-dominated peer networks. Adewumi (2022) further supports this, finding that masculinity narratives tied to wealth display intensify male susceptibility to cybercrime rationalization. Salami and Adebayo (2023) corroborate the gender pattern, confirming that females consistently demonstrate stronger moral disapproval of cybercrime across Nigerian communities, reinforcing the need for gender-sensitive intervention strategies. Age also significantly influenced attitudes ($F = 5.107$, $p = 0.007$), with younger respondents (18–25) exhibiting greater tolerance, consistent with Adewumi (2022), who found that younger Nigerian cohorts exposed to digital peer cultures experience accelerated erosion of traditional moral restraints, and with Ojedokun and Hassan (2022), who observed that the normalization of cybercrime within youth digital spaces has become self-reinforcing across age cohorts.

Religious institutions demonstrated active but differentiated engagement ($F = 6.552$, $p = 0.002$). Christian churches employed structured youth fellowships and integrity-focused teachings; Muslim institutions utilized Friday khutbahs and sensitization programs; traditional institutions deployed communal counseling and ancestral sanctions. Despite shared moral objectives, all leaders acknowledged that economic hardship, peer pressure, and social media systematically undermine their efforts. This is consistent with Chinonso and Okafor (2021), who noted that faith-based interventions in Nigeria face structural limitations when broader socioeconomic conditions remain unaddressed. Ugochukwu and Nweze (2023) further support this, finding that religious institutions which integrate digital literacy into their programming demonstrate measurably stronger behavioral influence over youth cybercrime attitudes, while Adebisi and Lawal (2022) confirm that interfaith collaboration amplifies the collective moral reach of religious institutions beyond what any single faith tradition

can achieve independently. Olawale and Ibrahim (2023) similarly establish that community-based religious programming is most effective when coordinated with family structures and local governance frameworks.

Religious impact was moderate but meaningful ($t = 1.998$, $p = 0.047$; Means 3.39–3.56), with males rating religious interventions slightly higher, suggesting that economically framed moral teachings resonate more strongly with male audiences. This is supported by Nwosu and Eze (2022), who found that religiously anchored mentorship programs reduce deviant tendencies among male youth when paired with livelihood interventions, and by Adeyemi and Obi (2023), who confirmed that faith-based programs incorporating vocational and entrepreneurship components record significantly higher behavioral change outcomes among at-risk youth. Eze and Iwu (2023) further demonstrate that faith institutions leveraging social media platforms for moral campaigns effectively extend their influence to digitally active youth populations. Nevertheless, Ugochukwu and Nweze (2023) caution that without sustained structural support from government and families, even well-designed religious interventions produce only short-term behavioral change, underscoring the need for holistic strategies. The study therefore concludes that sustainable intervention against youth cybercrime demands an integrated approach combining moral education, economic reform, family engagement, digital literacy, and interfaith collaboration.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that cybercrime among Odogbolu youths constitutes a complex social problem rooted in economic hardship, peer influence, and moral weakening. Religious leaders across Christian, Islamic, and African Traditional Religion institutions actively combat this phenomenon through diverse moral education strategies. However, their impact remains moderate due to persistent unemployment, poverty, and digital culture influences that undermine religious messaging. The findings support theoretical propositions that cybercrime results from learned behaviors and social

environmental factors rather than individual moral failure alone. Religious institutions provide essential moral counter-narratives but cannot single-handedly overcome structural economic deficiencies or technological cultural shifts. Sustainable cybercrime reduction requires integrated approaches combining religious moral guidance with economic opportunity creation and strengthened family-community networks.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. Intensify Interfaith Collaboration:** Religious institutions should develop joint campaigns, youth seminars, and community programs emphasizing shared values of integrity and lawful livelihood. Interfaith coordination amplifies messaging and demonstrates unified community standards against cybercrime.
- 2. Integrate Moral Education into Higher Learning:** Educational institutions should incorporate moral and religious education into curricula, building ethical foundations that resist deviant rationalizations. University-based interventions are critical given cybercrime concentration among tertiary students.
- 3. Strengthen Family and Community Monitoring:** Parents and community leaders must assume active monitoring and guidance roles, strengthening family values and community support systems against negative peer and media influences. Religious institutions should provide parenting education and family counseling.
- 4. Leverage Social Media for Positive Messaging:** Religious and government institutions should use digital platforms for moral campaigns, disseminating ethical messages and reformed youth testimonies. Counter-narratives must occupy the same digital spaces where cybercrime glorification occurs.
- 5. Combine Punishment with Rehabilitation:** Law enforcement policies should ensure offender reformation through religious counseling, vocational training, and mentorship rather than mere penalization. The 68% success rate for

church-led vocational programs (Adeboye, 2023) supports rehabilitation investment.

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