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Analysis of Emerging Cybercrime Entrepreneurship and Its Implication in Nigeria

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Abstract: Emerging realities in our society have glorified, celebrated and romanticized cybercriminals and their proceeds. This ugly and immoral societal acceptance of such criminal tendencies and their proceeds has extended the frontiers of Entrepreneurship due to its elastic nature to what is recently known as Cybercrime Entrepreneurship. Cybercrime Entrepreneurs on one hand, are experienced cybercriminals that sets up centers (virtual and physical) for teaching them while on the second hand, they are successful, experienced and wellconnected cyber criminals that set up ventures with enabling environment for less experienced individual to and efficiently carry out their criminal activities. This paper presents a review of theories of Entrepreneurship and their validity in understanding the recent disturbing publicity of Cybercrime Entrepreneurs and its subsequent indulgence by teenagers in Nigeria. The theories used are Economic factors theory by Joseph Schumpeter, Psychological factor theory by David Mccleland, Sociological factors theory by Thomas Cochranis and Alert Theory. It was observed that there are significant discontinuities and continuities in the configuration of cybercrime Entrepreneurship and traditional Entrepreneurship. The study concludes that Cyber Entrepreneurship is a function of psychological, sociological, criminological and economic factors and has negative implication to human capacity development of Nigeria. The research recommends amongst others that policy should be enacted to discourage the influx of youth into Cybercrime Entrepreneurship; punishment be explicitly spelt out in the law. Furthermore, government should also try to help our youths by engaging them positively to believe that there is dignity in labour.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship, Economy

1. Introduction

The recent emerging realities in digital entrepreneurship and businesses have epitomized the advances made by information technology to human endeavors. The business environments are continually submerged by ever increasing usability and acceptability of information technology to support businesses as there are indications of convergence of business and information technology. Businesses in Nigeria have been receptive to this new trend of doing businesses which ranges from office support, decision making, payment options, digital marketing, and digital communication and in recent times the use of social media platforms for advertising and as business

support channels to customers and potential customers. Businesses and entrepreneurial endeavors have also witnessed the magic touch of information and communication technology connecting clients and customers across cities and villages thereby making a virtual marketplace. The world has indeed become highly digitized and has turn into a global village. According to [19], the world has transcended to the point where many people spend a significant portion of their lives online. There is an inarguable conclusion that the virtual world mirrors our real world. Taking Nigeria as a case study, then president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who foraged into this area of development in 2001, has made Information 33and

Communication Technology affordable and a necessity for every Nigerian. The communicator Magazine of Feb. 2019, an NCC online publication, alluded that the nation's broadband penetration has increased from 6% in 2013 to over 30% in 2018 and to 32.34% as at January, 2019. According to the International Telecommunication Union, the overall number of mobile subscription in Nigeria including feature phone and smart phone users was almost 145 million in 2018.

The embarrassing economic situation of the country which is an indication of moral bankruptcy or decadence in our society which is a tragedy of our materialistic culture, our failing economic and political structures [26]. Materialistic culture which comes up as a result of violation of moral conscience through honoring and celebration of thieves which consequently builds an edifice which would produces beggars in no distant future. The recent mushrooming indulgence and acceptability of teenage youths in carrying out cybercrimes and consequently their epicurean lifestyle have taken up a disturbing publicity and have been weighed in the balance of morality and actionable progressive tendencies in the frontiers of national development and is found wanting [26]. Nigerian teenagers who are either graduates or artisans that are fed up with the struggling atmosphere of Nigeria's economy without a commensurable gain or benefit have decided to go into risky endeavors or small businesses and other entrepreneurial endeavors that would ensure quick materialistic gain, in this regard, cybercrime. According to ChannelsTv online platform of September 15th 2022 which reported that "Two proprietors of a center for training of internet fraudsters (Yahoo boys) and seven others have been arrested by the Benin Zonal command of the operatives of Economic and financial crimes commission. They were arrested on Tuesday 15th September 2022, in Benin City, Edo State at the internet fraud coaching center (A.K.A. HK)."The concept of risk underscores the idea of choices, decisions that may carry downsides but are made in order to reap a possible gain. Considering the recent disturbing publicity and indulgence of Nigerian youth into cybercrime and other criminal activities makes true the assertion of [3] that the connection between daring behavior and rational analysis as a central feature of modernity. It is therefore socially inexcusable for a society like Nigeria to be overwhelmingly submerged by a social deviant behavior such as cybercrime without recourse to effective approach to arrest it as it is detrimental to the economic development of the country

The recent trends has also suggested a gradual mistrust of the policies of the Government and as such young individuals have resorted to self-help with a huge moral burden on the country. The harsh economic situation of the country has made some citizens to prioritize their personal wellbeing over moral and values as well as social well-being which have been an integral part of humanity and economic development of any society. The quest for material gains has undermined the essence of societal well-being through misapplication and misuse of the digital landscape for negative endeavors which is now known as cybercrime. Quite a number of young individuals have towed the honorable path to success while others have sinisterly and in worst cases associated or

romanticized with criminal endeavors to survive or to get their supposed fame. There is these irrepressible urge to be materially and financially successful having tasted the bitter pill of poverty and its cohorts. Young individuals that are intelligent, well versed in their trade and have demonstrated high commitment to contribute to humanity have been misdirected, thronged to the wrong path by the nation's economic and moral woes. Their supposed dreams have been thwarted yet they will not give up in achieving it through criminal activities. They have a high sense of self efficacy which has transcended to the goals they chose, the aspirations, how much effort they now dedicate on a given task and the time they persist in the face of turbulent, difficult and disappointment times.

This study is timely especially when Nigerian government is trying to improve the quality of life of her teeming youths through entrepreneurial and vocational training programs. With the prevailing harsh economic situation of the country as well the unemployment rate, the emergence of cybercrime entrepreneur will soon be a new normal. This paper presents a review of theories of Entrepreneurship Emergence and their validity in understanding the recent disturbing publicity of Cybercrime Entrepreneurs and its subsequent indulgence by teenagers in Nigeria. This paper used four important theories which are vanguards and representatives of the distinct perspective of entrepreneurship and one criminology theory to explore how the new type of entrepreneurship dubbed Cybercrime Entrepreneurship goes beyond the boundaries of conventional entrepreneurship.

2.0 Literature review

Shehu (2014), coined the term "cybercrime" to distinguish computer programmes and coordinated interlocking sets of programmes designed specifically to animate financial crimes in relation to other types of malicious software. According to [8], cybercrime is characterized as crimes directed against a person or group of persons with a criminal disposition to taint the victim's image or cause physical or mental harm to the victim using modern telecommunication networks such as internet (social media, e-mails, notice board and groups) and mobile phones. This term confines cybercrime to illegal activities carried out with the assistance of the internet and directed at people and groups. The advent of new waves of crime has polluted the internet's contribution to the nation's progressive growth. The internet has evolved into a haven for the most lucrative and discreet forms of criminal activity. From Europe to America, Africa to Asia, cybercrime has spread around the globe. Cybercrime has come as a surprise and has become a strange phenomenon that has settled in Nigeria for the time being. According to [27], youths account for a large proportion of criminals in Nigeria. Saulawa & Abubakar (2014) opined that there is less technological sophistication required on the part of criminals, cybercrime in Nigeria is particularly directed at individuals rather than computer networks. According to [28], majority of cybercrimes in Nigeria include website cloning, false claims, internet purchases and other types of e-commerce fraud. Website cloning, financial fraud also popularly known as Yahoo-Yahoo, identity theft, credit card theft, cyber theft,

cyber stalking, fake electronic mails, cyber laundering and virus/ worms/ Trojans were also highlighted by [25]as the activities associated with cybercrimes that are carried out by these fraudsters

Examination malpractices, abduction, falsification admission, rape, robbery and theft, sexual harassment, assault, cultism amongst others are amongst the popular patterns of social disruptions in Nigeria perpetuated by the youths. However, in current times, cybercrimes, which is now a new type of crime, has emerged in our culture denting and digging holes in the economy. To carry out most online business transactions from Nigeria, France has introduced a policy that requires web camera verification. Despite the fact that the scope of cybercrime is such that geographical and political borders are meaningless, are not considered relevant, most cybercrimes studies focus on circumstances in the Western world, overlooking the fact that the nature of cybercrime is such that geographical and political boundaries are made irrelevant. Kumar (2003) argues that the participation, attempt and planning of a criminal act anywhere in the world can be carried out by a person who has access to computer and is connected to the internet. Awe (2009), opine that irrespective of geographical location, criminals can generate cybercrimes from anywhere in the world and these crimes can be extended in other areas. With the use of the internet, these criminal acts are easier, more damaging and faster. It is imperative for the Nigerian government to recognize the root causes and provide long lasting solutions as the above stamen proves that cybercrime a global malady. The perpetrators of this crime known as "yahoo boys"" take advantage of e-commerce system to swindle their victims who are mainly foreigners out of thousands to millions of dollars. It is either they mixed up in a loan scheme project or they falsely represent themselves as having peculiar goods to trade.

Shane (2012) defined Entrepreneurship as the process of discovery/co-creation, evaluation and exploitation opportunities to produce goods and services. How individuals think and act entrepreneurially has become an important question for researchers, educators and policy makers seeking to support entrepreneurial activities either taken individually or within organizations (Hisrich et. al, 2007). Though risktaking, uncertainty, leadership, creativity and proactivity are essential component of entrepreneurship yet persistence, selfefficacy and passion cannot be hurriedly overlooked. Entrepreneurship is an indispensable ingredient for national economic development which has taken a positive stride in recent times as government continues to underscore its importance and implement policies in that regards. However, young individuals have carved out a niche for themselves through the act of cybercrime and in some cases have become immorally successful in terms of monetary and material indices. This ugly trend has also enticed young individuals to see such acts and proceeds as morally right and normal since there is a negligent perceived risk associated with it. In the words of [15] wherein he stated that "Criminals have realized there are huge rewards to be reaped from online fraud, while the risk of getting arrested falls way below that of armed robbers". In addition, most young ones have lost faith and

confidence on their supposed mentors and role models thereby entrusting their trusts to themselves through vicarious learning. They learn from their supposed role models about how to cope with challenges, uncertainties and stress and are positively disposed to develop strategies to deal with challenges and exude a positive physiological state. According to [2], role models not only provide opportunities for learning from others but also a good source of social persuasion, making individuals feels more confident to pursue an entrepreneurial career.

According to a publication by [22], the adoption of effective legislation by all countries against the abuse of information and Communication Technology (ICT), for criminal or other purposes, including the actors intended to influence the integrity of national critical information infrastructures, is critical in achieving global cyber security. Nigeria is the 3rd most cybercrime prone countries in the world and it ranked 43rd in Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). Umo (2010) opine that the lack of enabling law makes monitoring even more complex. He further described Yahoo boys as a term to describe the activities of Nigerian internet youth fraudsters. Today the youths have taken cybercrime as an entrepreneur this have destroyed the educational system of our future leaders – the youths. According to a report conducted by Zero Tolerance (2006), cyber criminals commit these crimes mostly for the intent of surviving and having a good time. It is important to identify the attributes that these criminals of cybercrimes exhibit from these observations since it has been confirmed that the desire for wealth and good life is a major factor.

2.1 Cybercrime Entrepreneur

According to Merton's influential theory of social structure and anomie in 1938, crime is the result of the differential access to legitimate, institutionally defined means to achieve culturally defined goals especially monetary success. The Nigeria culture has been infiltrated with the American culture which places value on American dream. The dream considers money as everything as it is used to access all the encompassed desire for material objects. The Nigerian young individuals have taken to this lifestyle yet the institutions have failed to provide equal opportunities for all members of the society to achieve it. Deviant behavior such as crime and in recent times, cybercrime are born out of deviant adaptations to abandon the desired goal, legitimate means to achieve the goal or possibly both.

ChannelsTv through their online platform online September 15th 2022 reported that "Two proprietors of a center for training of internet fraudsters (Yahoo boys) and seven others have been arrested by the Benin Zonal command of the operatives of Economic and financial crimes commission. They were arrested on Tuesday September 15th 2022, in Benin City, Edo State at the internet fraud coaching center (A.K.A. HK)."

Daily Post.ng February 18th 2021 reported by Ishola Oludare

"A training center for internet fraudsters has been discovered at the federal capital territory, Abuja. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission uncovered the underworld academy for the grooming of internet fraudsters, known as yahoo boys. It was located in Arab Contractors Area of Mpape Hills – a suburb of Abuja. They were mostly school leavers ages 18-25."

Tribune online May 12th, 2022

"A man who runs an academy where internet fraudsters are being trained to defraud people has been arrested along with 16 trainees at the academy by operative of the Economic and financial crimes commission on Thursday May 12 in Abuja-Lokogoma- a suburb of Abuja".

Retrieved from EFCC website on 8th October 2022

"Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) on Thursday November 28th, 2019 arrested 23 internet fraud suspects at a building which is being used as a training outfit for potential cyber criminals in Essien Essien Street, Ikot Ibiok village in Eket Local government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The suspects confessed that they were undergoing training in various aspects of cyber criminality such as love scam, online training scam, and identity theft e.t.c. during questioning, the suspects narrated how they were recruited into the Academy to be trained in Cybercrime. According to them, while they were on training, they still carry out various functions such as cooks, daily master, ICT manager e.t.c to ensure a smooth running of the academy."

2.2 David Mccleland Theory

This is also referred to as the Achievement Motivation theory of entrepreneur. David Mccleland theory was psychologist that studied the motivating factors behind the performance and the activity of an entrepreneur to achieve a set goal or objective. He opines that the motivating factor behind the commitment and determination of an entrepreneur is dependent on the goal they want to achieve. The theorist stated that with high level of achievement anticipation will equally incorporate high level of performance. It is noteworthy that goal setting encourages performance. Performance without a fruitless venture ends in total waste of resources both human and material resources.

2.3 Schumpeters Theory

This theory was proposed by Joseph Schumpteter in 1991 is also called innovation theory of entrepreneurship. The theorist believes that entrepreneur brings change through the introduction of new technological processes or products, unlike Kirzner who believe that anybody has the potential to be an entrepreneur and they operate within set production constraints [24]. In order for an entrepreneur to become a specialist, he or she must have that creative or innovative ability. The innovative potential of every entrepreneur guarantee the sustainability of that entrepreneur in the market. Innovation is different from fraud in business as innovation is always out to improve on ideas in order to satisfy a need and not necessarily to make money by cutting corners or seeking an avenue to cheat people. The theory vehemently opposed to that idea. For an entrepreneur to perform better than his or her

equals, that innovative and creative ability is not negotiable. According to [7], the effect of technology innovation performance of organization generally is three (3)-way approach. The first approach is that the introduction and acceptability of ICT may improve productivity and economic performance which is called technologist, the second approach believes that innovation manufacturing and services are different sector known as service orientation while the third approach called integrative explores the boundaries between goods and services and try to bridge the gap. Despite the approach, be it technologist, integrative and service oriented approval toward innovation is critical to the success of very entrepreneur and nor being deceptive in entrepreneurial activities.

2.4 Thomas Cochrans theory of Entrepreneurship

This is another theory of entrepreneurship that needs to be considered in this research work. Some of the cultural values and norms inculcated into individuals go a long way in determining the choice of business and human endeavor. This is a sociological theory of entrepreneurship postulated by Thomas Cochram. The theorist opines that the environment in which an individual is reared, determines the entrepreneurial urge of the individual [23]. He further asserted that entrepreneurs are not seen as being deviant or supernormal individuals, but rather as representing society's model personality. Cultural values should be reflected in the economic growth and development of every nation. Cultural values that emphasizes the need to be determine and succeed as an entrepreneurs' need to be appreciated rather than picking interest in criminal activities in order to make profit or gain

2.5 Alert Theory of Entrepreurship

The Alert theory was advanced by Kizner in 1997. The theorist discovered that market which is the supplier and the customer's behavior plays a very significant role toward achieving a set goal. Therefore market situation and availability is a determining factor for an entrepreneur success. The market condition must be ascertained by entrepreneur before venturing into business. The idea of the theorist has no bearing with the idea of cybercrime measuring this type of market or business (Cybercrime Entrepreneurship). Every reliable market must be visible to access unlike the cybercrime entrepreneurship which is carried in hide-out (either at night or hidden places). The theorist also believes that an entrepreneur operates within the available opportunity that arises out of the technology submerged society.

2.6 Tolerance for Ambiguity

Budner(1982) cited in Irwan (2015) defined tolerance ambiguity as the propensity to view situation without clear outcomes as attractive as threatening. Schere (1982) cited in [16] opine that tolerance for ambiguity is an indispensable attribute for a good entrepreneur because facing challenges and potentials for success associated with business startups are by nature unpredictable. Bushan & Amal (1986) also opine that tolerance for ambiguity as an emotional reaction towards ambiguous environment, complex, and changing situations. This is evident in the fact that entrepreneur that have low tolerance for ambiguity will face stress, reacts prematurely,

avoids ambiguity. According to [20], a person who has high tolerance for ambiguity will feel the ambiguous situations as challenging, desirable and interesting because it requires an approach due to changes and problem from innovative perspective. The ability to react quickly and able to adjust successfully will be a critical ability that need to be increased [6].

Most cybercrime entrepreneurs ventured into it considering the perceived benefits and the huge financial gains which are closely related to the numbers of boys working under them. They believe in concerted effort of realizing their gains by employing the scheme of teaching the inexperienced neophyte, greenhorns how to get prospective clients or victims. At the early stage, the neophytes getting the victims which are passed out to more experienced worker in the venture or preferably the entrepreneur for finishing.

They are well prepared for situations that don't yield the expected gains or perhaps the victim end up not playing the game or taking the hook. They are also prepared to handle situation where the boys or some of the boys are not bringing the victims as anticipated and as such not viable for the entrepreneur for a period. Having been in the business for some time, they understand the dynamics associated with it. They are so well prepared for a situation where their trainee eventually pulls out after spending so much on them in terms of feeding, clothing, social life and even internet connectivity. They are also well prepared for police and other agencies disruptions through arrests.

3.0 Conclusion

We offer our analysis as a first step in seeking an in-depth and innovative approach in explaining and understanding Cybercrime Entrepreneurship owing to its nascency. This research work presents a critique and validity assessment of conventional Entrepreneurship theories to Cybercrime Entrepreneurship. This approach tries to merge Cybercrime Entrepreneurship and the traditional Entrepreneurial perspectives underscoring the by universality Entrepreneurial nature. Theoretically it contributes to the general understanding of the strengths and limitations of traditional entrepreneurial theories in relation to Cybercrime Entrepreneurship and reveals the extent to which these theories are valid explanation for Cybercrime Entrepreneurship, inter-temporarily. This paper answers the question of to what degree or extent the variables identified in the conventional Entrepreneurship theories as determinants are reflected in the emergence of Cybercrime Entrepreneurship as well the degree or extent the existing aetiologies of conventional Entrepreneurship could be transported into Cybercrime Entrepreneurship. It unearths how young individuals are motivated by their sociological, psychological, criminological and economic factors to become Cybercrime Entrepreneurs. The crux of this research work is that, it posits that Cybercrime Entrepreneurship is a function of both psychological, sociological, criminological and economic factors and conditions of the individuals and not on only one set of factors. The negative effect of cybercrime entrepreneurship on human capacity development can never be overestimated as far as quality and accountability is concerned. Cybercrime entrepreneurship encourages fraud and

cheats while it discourages diligent, hard work, and pursuit for quality education among young individuals in the society.

- The paper makes the following recommendations:
 - Government should put more effort into enacting relevant laws and policies that will discourage youth individuals or people from cybercrime entrepreneurship and cybercrime itself.
 - ii. Though there is ephemeral success associated with cybercrime entrepreneurship, its flamboyant and epicurean lifestyle of their perpetrators and its underlying fraudulent nature, the right doctrine of entrepreneurship should be inculcated into our future leaders even from primary school level.
 - iii. There should be consistent reinforcement learning through public awareness of cybercriminal trials and their ultimate punishmentwhich will ensure good cyber hygiene within the society.
 - iv. Government should put in more effort into making the society better by providing good amenities and providing enabling environment for economic, educational and human security well-being.
 - v. The role of parenting, religious institutions and the community as a tripod in molding the moral and value system of people (both young and old) should be reinforced.
 - vi. The government should collaborate with other countries since cybercrime is a cyber-pandemic by building technical expertise to combat the cybercriminals as part of her security measures.

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