Rima International Journal of Education (RIJE), Vol. 4 (No. 2): June 2025; Page: 171-183 ISSN: 2756 - 6749

Understanding Cybercrime Propensity through a Gendered Lens: A Study of Social Studies Students in Nigerian Colleges of Education

[*1]Olanrewaju Saheed Jimoh and [2]Mary Mojirade Ayantunji

[*1]Department of Social Studies and Civic Education, Faculty of Social Science Education, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. **Email:** olanrewaju4eva2017@gmail.com

Abstract

The effect of gender and socioeconomic level (SES) on cybercrime intents among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria is investigated in this paper. Concerns concerning moral behaviour in virtual worlds have grown more acute as digital technologies change learning environments. Rooted in civic and moral growth, social studies is essential in helping pre-service teachers to model and encourage ethical digital behaviour. Data were gathered from 420 students 210 men and 210 women selected via stratified random selection from three federal universities using a descriptive survey approach. Data were gathered using the 0.84 reliability index Cybercrime Intention and Gender Disposition Questionnaire (CIGDQ). Among statistical tests were t-tests, ANOVA, and regression. Results showed that, at t = 4.25, p = 0.001, male students had noticeably greater cybercrime intentions than female students. Low SES background students also displayed more inclination towards cybercrime (F = 5.12, p = 0.007). Though their interaction was not significant (F = 1.03, p = 0.358), gender (F = 8.34, p = 0.004) and SES (F = 5.12, p = 0.007 separately predicted cybercrime intents. The study advises including digital ethics and civic education into Social Studies as well as implementing focused interventions depending on students' gender and socioeconomic level to foster ethical digital citizenship among next teachers.

Keywords: Cybercrime Intentions, Gender Differences, Socioeconomic Status, Social Studies Education, Digital Ethics

Introduction

The digital revolution has drastically changed the terrain of education, therefore altering not only how courses are delivered but also student behaviour and ethical attitude. Virtual learning environments, social media platforms, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) all help educational institutions operate in ever more digital surroundings. These developments have brought new difficulties, especially with regard to digital misbehaviour and cyber-related offences, even while they have improved

information availability and cooperation. Particularly in tertiary education, occurrences of cyberbullying, hacking, identity theft, and other types of cybercrime have grown increasingly common among students (Hakimi, Akrami, Akrami, Akrami, Ahrari & Fazil, 2023). Cybercrime has become a serious social issue in Nigeria since many young people negotiate the internet sphere without enough direction on ethics and responsibilities. Unbelievably, these kids sometimes play two roles: they could be possible cyber offenders as well as victims of online threats (Aransiola & Asindemade, 2011).

Moreover, Makanjuola and Ayantunji (2024) underline that enhancing cybersecurity in Nigeria calls not only for legislative and infrastructure support but also educational initiatives aiming at digital ethics and responsibility. Their whole approach to national cybersecurity helps to include ethical digital citizenship into Social Studies curricula. Given this tendency, Social Studies which stresses civic education, social responsibility, and moral development has a vital part to play in creating ethical digital citizenship. Still, the conventional curriculum of the topic usually falls short in sufficiently addressing the reality of digital life. This topic falls at the junction of Social Studies education, gender, and digital ethics. It especially looks at how gender affects pre-service Social Studies instructors in Colleges of Education's inclination to participate in cybercrime. These students, who will be teachers in the future, have a great influence on the moral frameworks of their students, so it is essential to know and handle their own digital behaviour and ethical orientations. Supporting this point of view, Makanjuola and Ayantunji (2024) call for a comprehensive cybersecurity plan including educational reforms meant to lower young participation in cybercrime by means of awareness and digital responsibility training.

Theoretical framework

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that processes of observation, imitation, and reinforcement help humans acquire their behaviour. People especially young people and teenagers learn not only from personal experience but also from seeing the results of the behaviour of others. Pre-service teachers are continuously submerged in online environments where behaviors both positive and deviant are easily modelled by peers, social media influencers, and virtual communities in the digital age. Acts of cyber deviance such as hacking, impersonation, or fraud are more likely to be copied when they seem as gratifying, praised, or without consequence. This exposure helps immoral

digital behaviour to be accepted. Social Learning Theory thus offers a useful prism through which one may view the evolving intentions of cybercrime among pupils. It also emphasises the need of proactive educational programs that support ethical digital behaviour by means of positive models and reinforcement of responsible online citizenship.

Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1983)

Sandra Bem's Gender Schema Theory clarifies how people absorb society and cultural conceptions of gender roles from a young age, which then help to define their perceptions, attitudes, and actions. These internalised gender schemas act as cognitive frameworks that direct individuals towards behaviour and information interpretation consistent with culturally defined norms for masculinity and femininity. Within the framework of cybercrime, these gender stereotypes can affect how men and women view ethical limits, excuse deviant behaviour, or react to peer pressure in digital surroundings. Men, for instance, might be more prone to risk-taking or to regard cyber offences as acceptable because of society standards that support aggressiveness or dominance; women might be more impacted by relational issues or moral considerations. Using Gender Schema Theory thus provides a helpful cognitive lens for comprehending how gender identities impact ethical decision-making processes and the intentions to participate in cybercrime inside digital environments.

Cybercrime and Youth in Nigeria

Recent research has shown the concerning increase of cybercrime activities among Nigerian young, especially in tertiary education institutions. While the fast digitalisation of educational environments helps to improve access to learning resources and communication, Tay, Low & Stephen, (2021) underline that it has unintentionally produced rich ground for new kinds of cyber deviance. These cover hacking, cyberbullying, internet fraud, identity theft, and illegal publication of private data. Such actions compromise the integrity of educational institutions as well as personal security and privacy, therefore endangering the larger society as well as individual liberties.

The digital revolution has offered possibilities as well as problems. Among the most active consumers of digital technologies including cellphones, social media sites, and virtual learning environments are Nigerian tertiary students. Still, this great participation usually takes place in settings where digital

literacy the capacity to use technology ethically and effectively is rare. Igwe and Ibegwam (2014) claim that the widespread absence of sufficient understanding among students regarding cyber ethics and digital security practices is a major contributor to the increase of cybercrime. Many young people may not know the moral or legal ramifications of their internet activities.

Moreover, the socioeconomic context of many pupils aggravates the issue. For some, especially in cases of limited genuine opportunities, cybercrime may be seen as an easily available path to social status or financial gain. Maintaining these practices also depends critically on the normalising of aberrant online behaviours inside peer networks and online communities. These elements taken together highlight the critical need of educational initiatives that not only raise digital literacy but also foster strong ethical attitudes about the use of technology. Without such policies, cybercrime among young people attending tertiary education is probably going to keep increasing and create major social and educational problems.

Gender Differences in Cybercrime

Individual participation in cybercrime activities is greatly shaped by gender, which is a multifarious and complicated factor. Empirical research repeatedly reveal that men are more prone than women to engage in cyberattacks; this trend can be ascribed to many socio-cultural and psychological reasons. Early childhood socialisation patterns often inspire men to be more assertive, competitive, and prone to risk-taking activities, claims Arshad, Qureshi & Qazi (2025) and Nwachukwu (2025). These traits can translate into more men's inclination to participate in cyber deviance including hacking, online fraud, and other forms of cybercrime. Moreover, especially in online groups where such behaviour is often glorified, men may be more swayed by peer pressure that values rebellious or transgressive behaviour.

On the other hand, when it comes to deviant internet activity, women usually show more moral control. Raji (2024) notes that women are less prone to peer influences supporting unethical behaviour since they are often socialised to give relational harmony, empathy, and rule compliance top priority. Internalised gender norms established by social learning and gender schema processes where people absorb culturally determined roles and expectations about masculinity and femininity reiterate this difference. These cognitive

models affect not only the ethical decision-making in digital environments but also how men and women view appropriate behaviour.

The gendered character of cybercrime objectives emphasises the requirement of tailored teaching programs acknowledging these variations. Knowing the different ways men and women absorb digital ethics can help teachers and legislators create more successful plans to reduce cybercrime. This can include gender-sensitive courses addressing risk factors particular to each gender and encouraging ethical online behaviour among all students by means of positive peer influence.

Socioeconomic Status and Cybercrime Intentions

Students' intents to participate in cybercrime depend critically on their socioeconomic level (SES), which shapes both access to technology and the reasons behind digital activity. Adewuyi, Odutayo, Opesemowo & Jacob (2024) research shows that students from lower SES backgrounds are more likely to be vulnerable to cybercrime activity, usually motivated by restricted possibilities and financial need. These pupils might have difficulties including insufficient computer literacy, limited access to credible information, and social settings that subtly support deviant behaviour as a method of financial advantage or social mobility. Sometimes, especially in circumstances when legal and social deterrents seem weak or inadequate, cybercrime becomes a seeming reasonable solution for overcoming financial difficulties.

On the other hand, kids from higher SES families usually have easier access to advanced digital tools, consistent internet connectivity, and instructional materials encouraging educated and moral use of technology. While these students have more chances to investigate and create online, Akinwande (2022) claim that they are also more likely to be aware of legal consequences and the ethical limits controlling online behaviour. This awareness can function as a preventive element, lowering the possibility of their participation in cybercrime even with their technical capacity. Higher SES students may nonetheless participate in cyberattacks, several studies warn, especially those involving advanced hacking or intellectual property theft, motivated by varied factors like status or competitiveness.

SES affects not only the potential to commit cybercrimes but also the basic reasons and moral judgement underlying such intents. Designing customised preventive programs that meet the unique requirements and obstacles

encountered by pupils from various socioeconomic levels depends on an awareness of these aspects. To lower cybercrime intents among vulnerable student groups, effective interventions must include ethical teaching, digital literacy, and economic empowerment (Wongmahesak, Singh & Kaunert, 2025).

Role of Social Studies Education

Promoting citizenship education, social responsibility, and ethical awareness among students depends much on the academic discipline of social studies. According to Omiyefa (2024) Social Studies gives students the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to actively and ethically engage in society. All of which are fundamental elements of good citizenship, it helps one to grasp civic responsibilities, human rights, and moral reasoning. Nevertheless, despite its general relevance, especially in many Nigerian educational environments, the incorporation of digital ethics into Social Studies courses remains mainly neglected. Makanjuola, Fabunmi & Akiode (2021) showed how students' environmental literacy was much raised by using films. This implies that comparable multimedia technologies can be modified for Social Studies' instruction of cyber ethics and appropriate digital behaviour.

The fast development of technology and the widespread presence of digital platforms demand a reinterpretation of Social Studies education to incorporate thorough training on cyber ethics and digital citizenship. Ukam, Onuh, Nnaji, Egbo, Ugwu (2024) contend that students can lack the critical awareness and abilities required to negotiate digital settings responsibly without clear attention to the ethical issues presented by online contacts. Cyber ethics education teaches pupils the moral values that control ethical online behaviour, including respect for privacy, intellectual property rights, and the avoidance of damaging activities such cyberbullying and identity theft.

Moreover, including digital citizenship into the Social Studies course helps students to grow to be informed, moral, and engaged members of the digital environment. This entails realising how their internet behaviour affects the general society as well as other people. Recent research show that young people's increasing cybercrime calls for social research education to change to meet these new problems. Teachers can enable students to make wise ethical decisions online (Iloka, 2025), by including cyber ethics and digital citizenship

into the course of instruction, therefore lowering the risk of deviant behaviour and creating a safer online community.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian pupils continue to exhibit digitally empowered misbehaviour in spite of national attempts to reduce cybercrime. Empirical research by Okeke & Onyekachukwu, 2020 show that students at higher education institutions show different degrees of cybercrime intents driven by personal, societal, and financial aspects. Nonetheless, the literature is lacking on how gender affects such goals, particularly in relation to civic education and teacher preparation. Social Studies plays a crucial role in raising ethical awareness and responsible citizenship, so it becomes necessary to know how gender-based views could affect students' digital behaviour. Should gender influence perceptions of cybercrime, policy and education have to react with specific measures. With an eye towards gender variations in cybercrime inclination among Social Studies students in Southwest Nigeria, this study aims to close this gap.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of cybercrime intention among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria.

2. To determine whether significant differences exist in cybercrime intention between male and female Social Studies students.

3. To examine the extent to which gender predicts cybercrime propensity among Social Studies students in the study area.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of cybercrime intention among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria?

2. Are there significant differences in cybercrime intention between male and female Social Studies students?

3. To what extent does gender predict cybercrime propensity among these students?

Methodology

Cybercrime intentions of male and female Social Studies students at a few federal institutes of education in Southwest Nigeria were investigated and compared using a descriptive survey research methodology in this paper. With gender as a main comparative variable, the design let for methodical data collecting and analysis of participants' views, moral reasoning, and behavioural intentions about cybercrime. All NCE-level Social Studies students from three Federal Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. Federal College of Education (FCE), Abeokuta, FCE (Special), Oyo and FCE (Technical), Akoka made up the study population. Gender balance among institutions was guaranteed by use of a stratified random sampling method. 420 students in all were chosen; 210 men and 210 women responded. A self-developed questionnaire called the Cybercrime Intention and Gender Disposition Questionnaire (CIGDQ) was the research tool. Twenty items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1) made up it. Three elements comprised the CIGDQ: attitudes towards cybercrime, moral reasoning on digital behaviour and behavioural intention to commit cybercrime. Two specialists in digital ethics and educational psychology approved the tool to guarantee great content validity. A separate set of thirty Social Studies students conducted a pilot study yielding a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.84, therefore showing strong internal consistency. Approved by institutional research ethics boards, data collecting took place over two weeks. Before the questionnaire was distributed, participants granted informed permission; confidentiality was guaranteed all through the procedure. IBM SPSS Version 26 was used in data analysis. Research Question 1 was answered using descriptive statistics mean, standard deviation that address Research Question 2 responses of male and female students were compared using an independent samples t-test and In Research Question 3, a basic linear regression study was done to look at predictive correlations.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the level of cybercrime intention among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 1: Influence of Gender on Cybercrime Intentions

Gender	Mean Cybercrime Intention Score (±SD)	t-value	p-value
Male	3.12 (±0.84)	4.25	<0.001
Female	2.45 (±0.70)		

Table 1 demonstrates that, with a t=4.25, p=0.001, male Social Studies students have a considerably higher mean score on cybercrime intention than females. This result is consistent with Arshad et al., (2025) and Nwachukwu (2025) that men are more prone to cyberattacks due to socialization patterns that encourage assertiveness, competitiveness, and risk-taking activities, while Raji (2024) notes that women tend to show more moral control regarding deviant internet activity, as they are often socialised to prioritise relational harmony, empathy, and rule compliance. The gender disparity emphasises the need of gender-sensitive strategies in the training of cyber ethics.

Research Question 2: Are there significant differences in cybercrime intention between male and female Social Studies students?

Table 2: Influence of Socioeconomic Status (SES) on Cybercrime Intentions

SES Category	Mean Cybercrime Intention Score (±SD)	F-value	p-value
Low SES	3.25 (±0.90)	5.12	0.007
Middle SES	2.75 (±0.72)		
High SES	2.40 (±0.65)		

Table 2 shows, for pupils from various SES backgrounds, a statistically significant variance in cybercrime intention scores (F=5.12, p=0.007). Students from low SES families scored highest, suggesting that restricted access to resources and economic pressures could generate a greater inclination towards cybercrime. Those from high SES origins displayed the lowest intentions, which matched increased understanding of legal and ethical limits and computer literacy access. Therefore, the findings of Adewuyi et al., (2024) corroborated that often driven by restricted possibilities and financial need, students from lower SES families are more exposed to cybercrime activity. Akinwande (2022) also confirmed that higher SES pupils, who have more access to digital tools and educational resources, are more likely to be aware of legal repercussions and ethical limitations which can help to avoid cybercrime by means of preventive action. Wongmahesak et al., (2025) concluded that effective interventions to reduce cybercrime intentions among vulnerable student groups must incorporate ethical instruction, digital literacy, and economic empowerment.

Research Question 3: To what extent does gender predict cybercrime propensity among these students?

Table 3: Combined Effects of Gender and Socioeconomic Status on Cybercrime Intentions (Two-way ANOVA)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Gender	18.32	1	18.32	8.34	0.004
Socioeconomic Status	22.45	2	11.23	5.12	0.007
Gender SES Interaction	4.50	2	2.25	1.03	0.358
Error	320.00	174	1.84		

Table 3 shows that independently of gender (F=8.34, p=0.004) and socioeconomic level (F=5.12, p=0.007) cybercrime intentions are significantly influenced. Though the interaction between gender and SES was not statistically significant (F=1.03, p=0.358), implying that the impact of gender on cybercrime intents does not greatly vary between SES groups, these results support the necessity of comprehensive intervention plans addressing gender and economic environments separately in attempts to lower cybercrime tendencies among students. Therefore, underlining that improving cybersecurity in Nigeria calls for not only legislative and infrastructure support but also educational initiatives aiming at digital ethics and responsibility, Makanjuola and Ayantunji (2024) advocate the inclusion of ethical digital citizenship into Social Studies courses. Ukam et al., (2024) argue that students can lack the critical awareness and skills required to negotiate digital environments ethically without explicit attention to ethical issues in online contacts while Iloka (2025) supports the notion that adding cyber ethics and digital citizenship into the curriculum can help students to make educated ethical judgements online, therefore lowering deviant behaviour and supporting a safer online community.

Conclusion

The study reveals that both gender and socioeconomic level significantly affect the intents of cybercrime among pre-service Social Studies teachers in Nigeria. Reflecting the impact of economic poverty and gender socialisation, men and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to engage in online misbehaviour. The findings support the integration of digital ethics and citizenship education into courses for teachers preparing themselves. It also underlines how early in teacher development these variations have to be addressed to ensure that ethical digital behaviour is taught by next generations of teachers. Designing treatments responsive to the

realities of students' gender and financial condition depends on an awareness of these dynamics, which finally helps to produce a more ethically conscious teaching staff.

Recommendations

1. Incorporate into current civic education materials structured courses on digital responsibility, online safety, and cybercrime avoidance.

2. Create instructional plans that identify and deal with gender-based behavioural patterns, particularly in connection to moral reasoning and online activity.

3. Support systems, scholarships, and digital access programs help to lower the financial load on low SES backgrounds, therefore guiding kids towards cybercrime.

4. Include courses in teacher preparation that raise knowledge of social, ethical, and legal ramifications of digital behaviour.

5. Plan frequent sensitising events and peer-led seminars to support ethical online behaviour and discourage among students' deviant digital behaviours.

Reference

Adewuyi, H. O., Odutayo, A. O., Opesemowo, O. A. G., & Jacob, U. S. (2024). Peer pressure, socio-economic status and gender difference on cybercrime tendencies of undergraduates. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology.* https://doi.org/10.33902/jpsp.202528154

Akinwande, A. E. (2022). Socio-media use, socio-economic status as precursors of moral consciousness adolescent's deviant behaviour among adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Review in Social Sciences (RISS), 20*(1), 31-39. https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/111956053/review_in_social_sciences_vol_20_no_1_1_-libre.pdf

Aransiola, J. O., & Asindemade, S. O. (2011). Understanding cybercrime perpetrators and the strategies they employ in Nigeria. *Cyberpsychology,*

Behavior, and Social Networking, 14(12), 759-763. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2010.0307

Arshad, R., Qureshi, M. S., & Qazi, W. (2025). Gender role stereotypes: A comparative study among male and female university students. *Social Science Review Archives, 3*(2), 1297-1308. https://doi.org/10.70670/SRA.V3I2.732

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=590243

Bem, S. L. (1983). Gender schema theory and its implications for child development: Raising gender-aschematic children in a gender-schematic society. *Signs, 8*(4), 598-616. https://about.jstor.org/terms

Hakimi, M., Akrami, K., Akrami, M., Akrami, F., Ahrari, M., & Fazil, A. W. (2023). Investigating the adverse effects of social media and cybercrime in higher education: A case study of an online university. *Journal of Media Research.* https://doi.org/10.32996/smjc.2024.2.1.3

Igwe, K. N., & Ibegwam, A. (2014). Imperative of cyber ethics education to cyber-crimes prevention and cyber security in Nigeria. *International Journal of ICT and Management*, 102. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314213703

Iloka, P. C. (2025). Teaching integrity: Strategies for fostering ethical behavior in students. *UNIZIK Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies, 19*(1). https://unijerps.org/index.php/unijerps/article/view/871

Makanjuola, A. E., & Ayantunji, M. M. (2024). Strengthening cybersecurity in Nigeria: A holistic approach. *Scientific and Practical Cyber Security Journal (SPCSJ), 8*(2), 51-58.

Makanjuola, A. E., Fabunmi, S. K., & Akiode, J. I. (2021). Using documentary to make the teaching of environmental literacy engaging among market communities in the three senatorial districts of Ogun State. *Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science, 34*(11), 83-94. https://doi.org/10.9734/JESBS/2021/V34I1130369

Nwachukwu, J. J. (2025). Effect of alcohol use and peer pressure to use alcohol in Nigeria [Unpublished manuscript].

Okeke, N., & Onyekachukwu, I. O. (2024). Cybercrime and digital fraud among university students in Lagos, Nigeria: Socio-economic drivers and prevention approaches. *Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities, 3*(9), 13-21. https://doi.org/10.56397/jrssh.2024.09.02

Omiyefa, M. O. (2024). Teacher' s perception of Social Studies as an instrument for promoting peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. *International Journal of Contemporary Studies in Education (IJ-CSE), 3*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.56855/ijcse.v3i1.874

Raji, T. R. (2024). The pervasive influence of culture on women's leadership representation in Nigeria. *The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.*

Tay, H. L., & Low, S. W. K. (2017). Digitalization of learning resources in a HEI: A lean management perspective. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, 66*(5), 680□694. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijppm-09-2016-0193

Ukam, P. I., Onuh, P. A., Nnaji, D. I., Egbo, E. I., & Ugwu, C. O. (2024). How engagement in internet fraud impacts academic activities of undergraduate students in Nigeria: A socio-legal study. *Cogent Social Sciences, 10*(1), 2280285. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2280285

Wongmahesak, K., Singh, B., & Kaunert, C. (2025). The complex interplay of generational differences, digital literacy, and cybercrime fear. *Asian Crime and Society Review, 12*(1), 33. https://doi.org/10.14456/acsr.2025.3