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Exploring Newspaper Reports in the Fight Against Cybercrime and Internet Fraud in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores newspaper reports in the fight against cybercrime and Internet fraud in Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to: determine the source of the message; the prominence attached to it by the publications; evaluate whether offenders were arrested, prosecuted; and evaluate whether they were convicted. The agenda setting and gate-keeping theories were employed in this regard. The study adopted the quantitative content analysis with the coding sheet as the instrument for data collection. With a population of 103 newspapers in Nigeria both print and online, two newspapers were sampled- the Nation and Punch, published from January to December 2023 (which turned out seven hundred and thirty-two editions for the two publications. Out of the 732 editions, using the census sampling technique, 121 stories reported issues of cybercrime and Internet fraud in the publications. The message /showed that 100% are either government officials or EFCC agents as sources of the stories. The study found that the publications did not give prominence to the issue of cybercrime and internet fraud with only 18.8% of the stories appearing on the front page. In addition, the study found that more than 75% of the offenders were either 'Not Prosecuted' or 'Under Prosecution' based on the status of their prosecution. The study further revealed, based on the status of arrests, that more than 75% of 'Some of the Offenders' and 'All of the Offenders' were arrested of the newspapers analysed. Lastly, on the status of conviction, the study found that about 60% of the accused persons were either 'Cautioned and Discharged' or 'Discharged and Acquitted', while 17.8% were jailed . The study thus concludes that the agencies charged with cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria should stand up to its responsibilities in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud.
that children need to interact effectively in live interactions.

Keywords
Cybercrime; Agenda-Setting Theory; Internet Fraud; Gatekeeping Theory; and Newspaper Coverage

I. Introduction

The use of the internet in business and commerce has affected nations' and global economies in both negative and positive ways, Amponsah (2022), Ayodele, Kehinde and Olamide (2022), despite being designed for research and communication purposes, internet has been commercialized resulting in the rapid growth of web-based transactions (Ayodele, Oyedeji and Badmos, 2022). Tade and Aliyu (2011) referred cybercrime as computer fraud, and added that it is arguably one of the most prevalent forms of cybercrime. Internet refers to the worldwide communication system which includes hardware and infrastructure (Techopedia, 2020). Without any doubt, the proliferation of digital technologies has brought about unprecedented opportunities for connectivity and innovation, but it has also given rise to a surge in cybercrime and internet frauds (Matyek, Ejiga and Mwansat, 2024). Internet crime or fraud refers to the use of internet, computers and mobile phones as a means to

commit crimes such as hacking, phishing, piracy and so on (Usaini and Akinsunlola, 2012). Notable cybercrime range from the popular yahoo yahoo (or 419); hacking, software piracy; pornography; credit card or ATM fraud; denial of service attack; virus dissemination; phishing; cyber plagiarism; cyber stalking; cyber defamation, and so on.

The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) estimated that 600 billion US Dollars is lost to cybercrime each year, an increase from a 2014 study that put global losses at about 445 billion US Dollasr (BusinessDay, 2022). With such huge financial losses, economy of various countries will be impacted negatively. Just after most economies are recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. This will further undermine future economic growth and recovery especially among developing economies (Olufemi et al., 2025).

Report by the African Cyber Security states that African countries lost at least US$2 billion in cyber attacks in 2016. Based on the report, only eight African countries featured in the top 50 countries in cyber security in the world, namely; Mauritius (at 6th position), Egypt (at 14), Rwanda (at 36), Tunisia (at 40), Kenya (at 45), Nigeria (at 46), Morocco (at 49) and Uganda (at 50) (Jonathan, 2024). The report added that there is a massive rise in cybercrime in Africa within the first six months of 2022 with "phishing and scams hitting 438 percent and 174 percent in Kenya and Nigeria respectively (BusinessDay newspaper, 2022).

There is an assumption by experts that as Nigeria continues to expand its digital infrastructure, especially with the 4G-LTE revolution, the risk of cyber-attacks may grow if not properly managed (Mohammed & Aondover, 2025). Similarly, the Cyber Security Experts Association predicted a rise in insider threats for Nigeria in the year 2024, due to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Odeuyi, 2024).

More Nigerians have been involved in internet fraud known as yahoo yahoo. Undeterred, the more they are arrested the more the numbers of cases dominate the headlines in Nigerian newspapers. Some reasons have been adduced for this unwholesome acts by some of these youths. These include the quest to get rich quick irrespective of the means; the corrupting influence of unexplained wealth in the country where people showcase wealth without a credible source; societal expectations on the youths and the dwindling economy worsened by the level of poverty and unemployment which has heightened the quest for survival by all means possible (Leadership Newspaper, 2023). Apart from these obvious reasons, the kind of moral upbringing by parents has raised some issues (Adebogun et al., 2025).

1.1 Problem Statement

Various studies have been conducted on cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria and in other climes (Usaini and Akinsunlola, 2012; Guanah, Nwammou and Obi, 2020; Okon, 2017; Afolab, 2023; Eke, 2023; Olawe, 2023; Matyek, Ejiag, and Mwansat, 2024) among others. However, gaps still exists on how Nigerian newspapers explored the issue of cybercrime and internet fraud, especially as regards to the arrest, prosecution and conviction of offenders which have necessitated this present study. A study on the financial crimes commission war against cyber crime among youths in the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria, observed that young adults see internet fraud as an innovative means of economic survival rather than as a criminal enterprise (Ayodele, Ayodeji and Badmos (2022).

Literature on the reportage of top ten cyber crime hubs in the world (Matyek, Ejiga and Mwansat (2024); and awareness and perception of internet fraud epidemics among Nigerian youths, Eke (2024) among others focused on the role media play in creating

awareness on the growing concern of cybercrime and internet fraud and the need for more awareness. These studies adopted the qualitative and quantitative survey design and content analysis approach focusing on such themes as frequency, prominence, and few on the prosecution of offenders (Okunade et al., 2025). However, many of these studies failed to examine the arrest and conviction of offenders to serve as deterrent to others. This study, therefore, is necessitated to carryout an in-depth assessment of cybercrime and internet fraud in order to increase public knowledge on the issue. It is known fact that economic and financial crime is a major concern to individuals, corporate organisations and governments (Ogbonna & Okafo, 2020). It is against this backdrop that this study examined critical issues of cybercrime and internet fraud, based on the prominence, arrest, prosecution and conviction of offenders of cyber crime as reported in Nigerian newspapers through examining these research questions:

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the objective of this study which explored newspaper reports in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria the following research questions were answered by this study:

1. What is the message source in the online newspapers fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria?
2. What is the prominence attached to the newspaper reports in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria?
3. Who are the accused in the online newspapers coverage of cybercrime and internet fraud prosecuted in Nigeria?
4. What is the punishment of offenders of cybercrime and internet fraud when convicted based on the newspaper coverage in Nigeria?
5. Are offenders of cybercrime and internet fraud arrested based on the newspaper coverage in Nigeria?

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Cybercrime and Internet Fraud

The view of the world as a global village by Marshall McLuhan has continued to manifest as the cybercrime and internet fraud rates reported by various media across the globe is on the rise daily. People interact globally, devoid of physical contact and have shared experiences through technologies such as the internet and other social media platforms (Aondover et al., 2025). This system of integration has warranted a global issue of cybercrime committed through the use of information and communication technologies (Dilion et al. cited in Afolabi and Dogi, 2023). The internet which has brought the world to our homes and turned into a global village has created opportunities for business to be transacted both legally and illegally (Usaini, 2012, p.4). The internet has turned to the citadel of crimes as cybercriminals have turned it to an avenue where they make their living. In the view of Emenike cited in Usaini (2012, p.5):

> The dark side of the internet involves not only fraud and theft, pervasive pornography, and pedophile rings, but also drug trafficking and criminal organizations that are more intent upon exploitation than the disruption that is the focus ofhacking community.

There is growing evidence that organ- zed crime groups are exploiting the new opportunities offered by the internet.

In the face of economic hardships in Nigeria, cybercrime has become an increasingly attractive option, offering substantial illegal earnings mostly for the teeming population of unemployed youths and some adults alike. In most cases, parents even go to the extent of sponsoring their own children to engage in the crime. These and various other reasons have necessitated the Cyber Security Experts Association of Nigeria (CSEAN) to envisage an upsurge in "insider threats" driven by an increase in the malicious use of Artificial Intelligence in future (Adeuyi, 2024).

Awe (2004, p. 1) argues that:

> The Internet creates unlimited opportunities for commercial, social and educational activities. But as we can see with cyber-crime the net introduces its own peculiar risks. What is the menace cybercrime poses to society? The convenience associated with IT and the Internet is now being exploited to serve criminal purposes.

The United Nations (UN) defines cybercrime as any illegal behaviour directed by means of electronic operations that targets the security of computer systems and data processed by them; and any illegal behaviour committed by means of or in relation to computer system or network (Rivera, 2014; Ogbonna & Fayoyin, 2025). Essentially, Matyek and Ejiga and Mwansat (2024) see cybercrime as any crime that is committed on an internet enabled computer which includes smartphones.

2.2 Newspaper Coverage

According to Ndaliman and Monday cited in Ogbonna (2014, p.75), communication scholars assert that the print media remains highly significant and continues to exert a profound influence on our daily lives. They argue that newspapers, in particular, not only retain their relevance but also play a crucial role in shaping public opinion on various societal matters. Bittner (2005) and Ndaliman and Monday cited in Ogbonna (2014, p.75) have presented arguments highlighting the significance of print media as a crucial component of mass communication (Onyejelem et al., 2025). They posit that print media maintains a prominent position in modern societies by delivering well-researched content that stimulates individuals to engage in creative thinking and elicit positive responses (Akintayo et al. 2027).

In the view of Dominick, cited in Apuke and Umar (2020), newspapers are widely favoured in modern societies due to a multitude of factors. Ndaliman and Monday cited in Ogbonna (2014, p.75), identifies one of them as newspapers ability to prioritize the coverage of significant issues, which is evident through their strategic placement, attention-grabbing headlines, and extensive coverage. Additionally, Ndaliman and Monday (2013, ibid) have substantiated the significance of print media in fostering the advancement and maturation of any given society, emphasising that the absence of a newspaper impedes progress.

According to McQuail (2005, p.162), newspapers are believed to have both objective effects on society and a social purpose. He further stated that these effects encompass the dissemination of information, the expression of diverse voices and perspectives, the facilitation of public opinion formation on various issues, and the promotion of debate. However, most of these reasons are not tenable in present-day society because in Dominick's (cited in Apuke and Omar 2020, p.4) view traditional newspapers are passing through their most difficult times due to the emergence of the Internet (Obiora & Ogbonna, 2004).

2.3 Empirical Review

Afolabi and Dogi (2023) examined intelligence, financial crimes commission and the war against cyber crime among youths in the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria. The study derived its data from primary and secondary sources through administering one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires. The study found a significant concern among the public regarding the political consequences of cyber crime on Nigeria's national security. It also noted that a well -executed intelligence operation will enhance the efficiency of cyber crime investigation by aiding the identification and apprehension of cyber criminals. The study thus recommended that government should in liaison with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission develop strategies to reduce or possible curb cyber crimes in Nigeria (Ogbonna et al. 2019).

Ayodele, Oyedeji and Badmos (2022) investigated the perception young adults in Nigeria hold about internet fraud as an innovative means to economic survival rather than as a criminal enterprise. A qualitative approach was adopted using 15 participants who were selected through the purposive snowball sampling technique with an in-depth interview in the gathering of data. The study found that youths are engaged in internet fraud mainly to support themselves financially. This study also found that the accumulation of wealth and "clients" are the major basis for hierarchy. The study therefore recommends the need for value reorientation for youths as well as the creation of jobs.

Matyek, Ejiga and Mwansat (2024) assessed the reportage of the top ten cyber crime hubs in the world by the Global Technology Council, aimed at assessing the reportage of cyber crime prosecution by selected business news blogs in Nigeria. The main objective of this study were to determine the frequency of coverage, text format, sources of cyber crime and the cyber crime prosecution theme in Nairametrics, *BusinessDay*, *Business Post* and *Prime Business*. The study was anchored on the Deterrence Theory while the code sheet for online content was used to assess 50 articles on NairaMatrics, BusinessDay, Business Post, and Prime Business in relation cyber crime prosecution in Nigeria. The revealed that the reportage of cyber crime is low, the major text format of reportage was the news, the main source of cyber articles were by government agencies and the main theme was cyber security, while the investigated theme of cyber security was under reported (Okoiwu et al. 2001). The study therefore recommended that the selected business news blogs increase their reportage of cyber crime prosecution with non news text formats to promote the deterrence function of the mass media in curbing cyber crime in Nigeria (Garba & Msaughter, 2023).

Eke (2024) studied the awareness and perception of internet fraud epidemics among Nigerian youths. With a population of 3,599,589 and sample size of 384, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study found that the level of awareness of the epidemic of internet fraud was very high and that there were more people associated with the internet fraud among young people (Garba & Msughter, 2023). The study recommended that because of the high level of awareness of the epidemic of internet fraud, a massive awareness campaign should be undertaken to educate youths about the knowledge on the consequences of internet fraud.

Guanah, Nwammou and Obi (2020) examined framing of cybercrime (Yahoo-Yahoo Business) by *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers. The studied adopted the content analysis research design and the framing theory as its theoretical framework. The study found that the newspapers had 68 stories on *Yahoo-Yahoo Boys* for the period under study, and framed the perpetrators of this crime as 'fraudsters'. The dominant themes used by the newspapers were 'arrest and parade'. 'Arraignment', and 'conviction'. The study recommend that newspapers should frame their stories to continue to condemn the *Yahoo Yahoo Business*

in all its ramifications, and that their reports should lead to the eradication of the problem and the ultimate development of the Nigerian nation.

2.4 Theoretical Review

The study adopted Technological Determinism Theory (TDT), which was introduced by Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian communication theorist and media researcher, in his works The Gutenberg Galaxy and Other Writings, as noted by West and Turner (2021). In 1962, McLuhan published two books: The Making of Typographic Man and Understanding Media-Extension of Man. The concept of the "global village," coined by McLuhan in 1962, suggests that advancements in media technology lead to a shrinking world, resembling a traditional village, facilitating swift knowledge dissemination (Littlejohn, 2017). Additionally, in 1964, McLuhan introduced the phrase "the medium is the message" to emphasize the impact of technology on communication (Little John, 2017; Kuchi & Msughter, 2023).

The Technological Determinism Theory fundamentally disregards content in favor of the technological medium, marking a significant aspect in media studies. According to West and Turner (2021), the shift between technological ages (tribal, literate, print, and electronics) influences how individuals function in society. Consequently, TDT asserts that a society's technological progress shapes its social frameworks, cultural beliefs, and historical narrative, suggesting that technological advancements steer social development in an inevitable manner. According to scholars in the field of communication such as McQuail (2010), the technological determinism theory encompasses two principal concepts. The first is the notion that the progression of technology itself adheres to a foreseeable and traceable trajectory, irrespective of political or cultural factors (Taiwo et al., 2024).

The second concept suggests that technology plays a pivotal role in structuring societies in a manner that facilitates its technological advancement. As declared by Eneome, Ezekwelu, and Emechebe citing McQuail (2010), proponents of hyper globalism argue that the rapid pace of globalization is inexorable, largely due to technological advancements, thus supporting the Technological Determinism Theory (TDT). TDT posits that technology exerts a profound influence on the lives of individuals. The prevailing belief in contemporary discourse and popular perception is that the internet is reshaping both the economy and society.

Karl Marx argued that the onset of the industrial revolution, driven by technological advancements, had a favorable influence on interpersonal connections, societal structures, and production methods. The impact of Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) reaches various areas such as business the economic domain. Therefore, the theory of technological determinism is relevant for analyzing cybercrime and internet fraud. The advancement of technology has certainly transformed the landscape of business activities (Eneome et al., 2023).

Aromolaran cited in Usaini (2012, p.3), posits that the core of the technological development is more pronounced in the realm of electronic communication with the use of computers, the internet and the satellite technology which has shrunk the world at an incredible speed. This study illustrates the influence of technology, specifically social media platforms such as Twitter, on cybercrime and internet fraud. In contrast to mainstream media channels controlled by the elite, social media platforms enable decentralized communication and grassroots activism. This decentralization enabled all kinds of fraudulent acts across the globe affecting businesses and the economy.

In general, the application of technological determinism theory provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending the intricate interplay between technology, culture, and politics in the context of Twitter memes and political communication in Nigeria.

By examining the diverse dynamics of digital media through this theoretical perspective, researchers can reveal deeper insights into the transformative potential and socio-economic consequences of cybercrime culture and internet fraud in the Nigerian society.

Proponents of agenda-setting theory were Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972-1973, and the thrust of the theory in the words of Cohen, and Esimokha (2014), is that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but stunningly successful in telling people what to think about"

Agenda-setting has been widely discussed by scholars in the field of mass communication (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Severin and Tankard, 1992). According to Roberts and Bachen (1981), the term "media agenda-setting" refers to the capacity of mass media to shape public awareness of issues, rather than their specific knowledge about those issues. Infante et al. (1990) approach agenda setting from the perspective of the mass media. They argue that the mass media plays a crucial role in determining which issues and individuals are considered important by the way they are publicised. As a result, these issues and individuals gain significance due to the attention they receive from the media.

The theory describes the influence that the mass media can have in determining not only the issues that members of the society talk about, but also how they talk about them (Udeze and Okechukwu; cited in Josiah, 2020). Agenda-setting theory shows the importance placed upon a particular issue by the media. Cohen (1963, p.13), described the concept thus: The press,

> May not be successful most of the times in telling people
> what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its
> readers what to think about (p.13).

Bryant and Thompson (2002) argue that the control over the flow of news information by media professionals is an important function popularly referred to as gatekeeping. As indicated, journalists, editors, and broadcasters are responsible for curating and disseminating news to the public daily. However, due to limitations in time and space, they are compelled to restrict the volume of information that reaches news consumers.

Previous research on media systems dependencies indicated that television has a significant impact during times of public crises, such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks (Carey, 2002; Juric and Sylvester, 2007). A significant limitation of many of these studies is their reliance on university students from a single country, which hinders the ability to make generalisations and comparisons.

According to Ball-Rokeach (1985), dependency can be defined as the connection between individuals' goals and the degree to which these goals rely on the resources provided by the media system. According to Rokeach's study conducted in 1976, a high degree of media dependency is associated with the likelihood of media messages having cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects.

III. Research Methods

This study used the quantitative content analysis with two national newspapers -*The Punch* and *Nation* selected in a purposive manner. The two newspapers were selected based on their geographical spread and readership and they also reported the issue of cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria. Content analysis was used as the research design to draw inferences on the frequency, prominence, message source, story type/position, arrests, convictions and prosecution of offenders of cybercrime and internet frauds in Nigeria. Content analysis is defined by Onabajo (2015; p.79 thus:

> As a methodology by which the researcher seeks to determine the manifest content of written, spoken, or published communications by systematic, objective, and quantitative analysis…Since any written communication (and this includes novels, plays, and televi- sion scripts as well as personal letters, suicide notes, magazines and newspaper accounts) is produced by a communicator, the intention of the communicator may be the object of our research. Or we may be interested in the audience, or receiver of the commun- ication, and may attempt to determine something about it.

In the words of Sobowale (1983, p.17) unlike experimentation, observation and survey which have human behaviour as the focal point of study, content analysis focuses on the manifest content of communication. So, the content analysis was considered appropriate for this study because it allowed the researchers to explain the relationships and to analyse the coded text quantitatively, as well as provide insight into complex human thoughts.

The estimated population of newspapers published in Nigeria from which the two samples were drawn is put at three hundred and ten (Nigerian Press Commission, cited in Ogbonna, 2024). The two newspapers selected were published in English and also registered with the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN). Other features the selected newspapers possessed are: being national in outlook; daily publication, including weekend publication; have wide readership within Nigeria; have corporate reputation and their ownership is mainly private pattern (Okoro, Ukonu, Eze and Odoemelam, 2014, p.99).

The sampling frame for this study was between January 1st - December 31st , 2023- one year. The rationale for the choice of this period was based on the increasing rate of cybercrime and internet fraud as reported by newspapers in the country within this period. In order not to miss out any edition of the newspaper which reported issue of cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria, the researchers adopted the census sampling technique. This technique provides a true measurement of the population (no sampling error) from which a benchmark data may be obtained from future studies (Irele, 2023). On the whole, a total 365 newspapers were content analysed for *The Punch* and *Nation* newspapers respectively.

Newspapers as institutions that contribute their voices in debates and controversies on issues in the polity, and in doing so have various stories/sections.Thus the categories of newspapers content analysed include:

Story Type: The story type refers to stories used in reporting issues in cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria. The indicators to story types include: News; Opinion; Editorial; Cartoon; Features and Commentaries; News Analysis; Letters-to-the-editor; Crime Page/ Column; Webposts; and Interview.

Story Prominence: This refers to the number of paragraphs that reported stories on conspiracy theories. The story depth indicators include: 1-5 paragraphs; 6-10; 11-15; 16-20; and 21 and Above. These intervals are represented in all stories on cybercrime and internet frauds

Message Source: The message source refers to the sender of the message or the person from whom the reporter/ editor got the information from. The queues or indicators for message source include: Religious leaders/clergy; Scientists/experts/researchers; Government officials/agents, United Nations Organisation.

Arrests: This refers to comprehending cybercrime and internet fraud offenders. The categories in this group include: All offenders Arrested; Some offenders Arrested; No offender Arrested.

Prosecution: Prosecution of offenders deals with the following categories: Offenders under investigation; Offenders Not Prosecuted; Offenders Prosecuted.

Conviction: Here refers to the appropriate punishment meted out to the cybercrime and internet fraud offender thus: Jailed; fined, Cautioned and Discharged; Discharged and Acquitted.

The researchers adopted the Cohen Kappa, Patil (2023) formula of measuring reliability formular:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of objects assigned the same category by both judges (raters) X 100}}{\text{Total Number of Objects}}$$

To ensure reliability of the coding instrument, the Cohen Kappa inter-coder reliability formula that was adopted obtained 80% agreement between the researchers who independently worked on 40 editions each of (*The Punch* and *Nation*) newspapers for the pre-test to extract relevant information from the selected stories on the issue. After the coding process was concluded and coder sheets were compared it showed little differences. Thus, the overall agreement was rated high. The data gathered by the researchers on their content analysis was analysed using the simple percentage. The data was presented on a frequency and percentage table. This involved a comprehensive, concise and simpler data analysis.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. Frequency of story types in the newspapers

Variable	**Newspaper**				**Total**	
	The Punch		***Nation***			
Story Type	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Straight News	53	91.4	40	93	93	92.1
Feature	5	8.6	3	7	8	7.9
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

The table above featuring story type shows that the highest number of story types for the coverage of the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud for *The Punch* newspaper from January to December 2023 is Straight News story with a frequency of 53 and a percentage of 91.4%, followed by the Feature story with 5 or 8.6%, while the Editorials, Opinion, Commentary, Interview and Letter to Editor has no story reported on it. In the case of the *Nation* newspaper the Straight News genre also dominated with a frequency of 40 representing 93%, followed in similar manner with the Features while the lowest number of story type are Editorials, Opinion, Commentary, Interview and Letter to Editor with no recorded frequency. Between the two newspapers, Straight News has a frequency of 93 stories representing 92.1%, while Features has only 8 representing 7.9%.

Table 2: Frequency of the prominence (story position) attached to the newspaper reports.

Story Position						
Front page	10	17.2	9	20.9	19	18.8
Inside page	48	82.8	34	79.1	82	81.2
Back page	-	-	-	-	-	
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

Table above featuring story position shows that the highest number of story in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria in *The Punch* newspaper from January to December 2023 is the Inside Page with a frequency of 48 representing 82.8%%, followed by the Front page with 10 stories representing 17.2%, while the the Back Page has no story published on the issue. For the *Nation* newspaper the highest number of story used in the coverage of the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud by the Nation newspaper within the period is the Inside Page with a frequency of 34 or a percentage of 79.1% , followed by the Front Page with 9 stories representing 20.9%, while the the Back Page has no story on the issue. In all, the Inside pages dominated stories on this issue with 82 stories representing 81.2% while Feature stories on the issue amounted to 19 representing 18.8%.

Table 3: Frequency of the prominence (number of paragraphs) attached to the newspaper reports.

No. of Paragraphs	**The Punch**		**Nation**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
1-5	2	3.4	2	4.7	4	4
6-10	15	25.9	19	44.2	34	33.7
11-15	27	46.6	11	25.6	38	37.6
16-20	8	13.8	8	11.6	16	15.8
21 & Above	6	10.3	3	6.9	9	8.9
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

The table on the story paragraphs shows that the highest number of paragraphs used in the coverage of the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud by *The Punch* newspaper is stories with 11-15 paragraphs with a frequency of 27 representing 46.6%, followed by stories with 6-10 Paragraphs with a frequency 15 representing 25.9%; next are stories with 16-20 and 21 and above Paragraphs with a frequency of 8 and 6 representing 13.8% and 10.3% respectively; while the least is 1-5 Paragraph stories with 2 and or 3.4%. In the case of the Nation newspaper, variable shows the story with the highest number Paragraphs is those between 6-10 with a frequency of 19 representing 44.2%, next is stories with 11-15 and 16-20 Paragraphs representing 25.6% and 11.6% respectively; while stories with the least number of Paragraphs are those with 21 1-5 with a frequency of 2 representing 4.7%. The combination of the two newspapers show that stories with 11-15 and 6-10 Paragraphs have the highest frequency with 38 and 34 representing 37.6% and 33.7% respectively, followed by stories with 16-20 and 21 and above Paragraphs with 15.8 and 8.9%, while 1-5 Paragraphs stories have frequency of 4 representing just 4% of the entire stories on the issue.

Table 4: Frequency of the message sources in the newspapers reports

Message Source	**The Punch**		**Nation**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Govt. officials/EFCC agents	58	100	43	100	101	100
Religious leaders/Clergy	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scientists/Experts/Researchers	-	-	-	-	-	-

International Organisations	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

On the variable of Message Sources shows that the highest number in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud is Government Officials / EFCC Agents with the frequency of 58 representing 100% of the entire reports on the issue. Thus, other message sources did record any story in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in the newspaper reports in Nigeria. Similar trend occurred in the Nation newspaper where Government Officials / EFCC Agents featured in all the stories reported on the issue with a frequency of 43 representing 100% of the entire reports.

Table 5: Frequency of the status of Arrests in the newspapers reports

	The Punch		**Nation**		**Total**	
Arrests	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
All offenders arrested	39	67.2	27	62.8	66	65.3
Some offenders arrested	10	17.3	9	20.9	19	18.8
No offenders arrested	9	15.5	7	16.3	16	15.9
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

The variable on the status of arrests above shows that the highest number of arrests in the coverage of the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud by *The Punch* newspaper analysed shows that 'All the Offenders Arrested' amounted to a frequency of 39 representing 67.2% of the reports; followed by Some Offenders Arrested with 10 of such reports representing 17.3%, while 9 stories reported that No Offender was Arrested representing 15.5% on the issue. Similarly, in the Nation newspaper reports showed that stories on All Offenders Arrested has a frequency of 27 representing 62.8%, followed by the reports on the 'Some Offenders Arrested' with a frequency of 19 representing 18.8%; while stories on No Offender Arrested has a frequency of 7 representing 16.3% of the entire stories in the Nation newspaper. This, therefore, shows that more than half, 66, of the offenders reported by *The Punch* and Nation newspapers were arrested, while 19 and 16 of the offenders were either arrested or not arrested representing 18.8% and 15.9% of the reports on the issue respectively.

Table 6: Frequency of the status of Prosecution in the newspapers reports

Prosecution	**The Punch**		**Nation**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Offenders under Prosecution	19	32.8	21	48.8	40	39.6
Offenders Not Prosecuted	27	46.6	8	18.6	35	34.7
Offenders Prosecuted	12	20.6	14	32.6	26	25.7
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

The table above shows the number of prosecution status in *The Punch* and Nation newspapers reports in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria. This issue shows that majority of the reports 27 representing 46.6% showed that the offenders were were Not Prosecuted, followed by 19 of the reports representing 32.8% which were Under Prosecution, while 12 of the offenders representing 20.6% were Prosecuted. In the case of the Nation newspaper, 21 of the offenders representing 48.8% were Under Prosecution, followed by 14 stories on the offenders being Prosecuted, while 8 of the stories on the status of the prosecution representing 18.6% shows that offenders were Not Prosecuted. This thus shows that more than three quarter of offenders were either Under Prosecution or Not Prosecuted, while just a quarter of the offenders were Prosecuted.

Table 7: Frequency of the status of Conviction in the newspapers reports

Conviction	**The Punch**		**Nation**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Jailed	11	19	7	16.3	18	17.8
Fined	10	17.2	12	27.9	22	21.8
Cautioned and Discharged	22	37.9	15	34.9	37	36.6
Discharged and Acquitted	15	25.9	9	20.9	24	23.8
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

On the aspect of conviction of the accused based on *The Punch* newspaper reports, show that 22 of the offenders with a frequency of 22 representing 37.9% were Cautioned and Discharged, this is followed by 15 of the accused representing 25.9% that were Discharged and Acquitted, eleven of the offenders were Jailed for various terms, while 10 offenders representing 17.2% were Fined. Comparatively, the Nation newspaper shows that 15 of the accused were Cautioned and Discharged representing 34.9%, followed by accused that were Fined with a frequency of 12 representing of 34.9%, the least of the stories is on the Jailed offenders with 7 representing 16.3% .

Table 7: Frequency of the sex of Accused in the newspapers reports

Sex of Offenders	**The Punch**		**Nation**		**Total**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Male	57	98.3	43	**100**	100	99
Female	1	1.7	-	-	1	1
Total	**58**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**101**	**100**

On the variable of the sex of accused offenders in the newspapers coverage in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria shows that the highest number of sex of Male with a frequency of 57 representing 98.3%, while the female offenders pan to a frequency of 1 representing 1.7%. Conversely, Nation newspaper shows a similar trend with the Male as the offenders with a frequency of 43 representing 100%,while there was non Female offender as reported in the newspapers.

4.2 Discussions and Recommendations

On the issue of coverage of cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria, study found that out of 721 newspapers content analysed, only 121 stories reported the issue which is an average of 5.9% publications per issue within the period under review. Olayiwola cited in Okwuchukwu (2014) observed that the media indeed provide news and are involved in setting agenda for political, social, economic and cultural discourse. The question then becomes how well or adequate based on the frequency did the media give coverage to the issue of cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria. This study revealed that just 1 out every 10 editions of newspapers carried the story. And this finding is supported in another related study by Usaini and Akinsunlola (2012), Matyek, Ejiga and Mwansat (2024) which found that the print media gave inadequate attention to issue of cybercime. Also, Guanah, Nwanmuo & Obi (2020) study showed how The Guardian and Vanguard newspapers framed stories related to cybercrime during the period under review- which was low in proportion to the total number of articles explored.

Research Question One, which required response on the message sources in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in newspaper coverage in Nigeria. The newspaper reports show that the Government Officials / EFCC Agents featured prominently in all the stories reported on the issue with a frequency of 43 representing 100% of the entire reports. Okwuchukwu (2014) similarly observed that message sources in Nigeria are usually dominated by the ruling class, mostly government officials, politicians, business executives,

top civil servants and other influential members in the society. This study finding on the source of information on the issue of cybercrime and Internet fraud in Nigeria, is kowtowed by that of Matyek (2024), which see the government dominance as source of message as a positive development which is common all over the world as government has a dominant role to play in the area of cyberspace with the private sector and are therefore directly involved in securing the internet ecosystem of their countries.

Research Question Two, seeks to find out the prominence attached to the newspaper reports in the fight against cybercrime and internet fraud in Nigeria. For the two newspapers, the Inside pages dominated stories on this issue with 82 stories representing 81.2% while Feature stories on the issue amounted to 19 representing 18.8%. The finding of the study is in tandem with that of Usaini and Akinsunlola (2012, p.14), that the media presents cybercrime stories as least important knowing fully well that it is a threat to the Nigerian and international society. In the aspect of the story prominence, Usaini (2012) collaborates this study as it observed that the newspaper failed to place importance on the issue of internet-related crimes within the period analysed. This study finding is supported by that of Emeafor and Emeafor (n:d) which found that the The Guardian and Vanguard newspapers did not give adequate attention in the coverage of internet related crimes. Thus, in the words of Ibrahim and Wodi 92017), the interest of media organization determines what to be emphasised and what not to.

Third Research Question, aims to determine whether those accused of cybercrime and internet fraud were being prosecuted based on newspaper reports in Nigeria.In answer to Research Question Four, which inquires into whether offenders of cybercrime and internet fraud were convicted based on the newspaper reports in Nigeria. In the aspect of newspaper report on the prosecution of offenders, this study is supported by that of Matyek (2024) which observed poor coverage of cybercrime prosecution reported by four business blogs that were reviewed. Also, Matyek study supports this very one as the dominant sub-theme of his finding based on the prosecution of offender is majorly on “arrest”. Although it is a good thing that cybercrime and internet fraud offenders are arrested, but it will be better if they are prosecuted by the courts to serve as a deterrent to others. Lastly, in answer to Research Question Five, which seeks to determine whether the accused offenders of cybercrime and internet fraud were arrested based on the newspaper reports.

V. Conclusion

Cybercrime and internet fraud level have really gone up and this study may have shown directly of indirectly a relationship between non persecution and conviction of offenders to the glaring instances of cybercriminals and internet fraudsters in Nigeria. Which give them the opportunity continue to carry out their criminal activities at hands. It is therefore recommended that newspapers should give adequate coverage to cybercrime and internet fraud reportage in Nigeria by dwelling mostly on the negative aspect of it than on the life style of those in it. There is also need for editors of newspapers to make stories on cybercrime and internet fraud to be more prominent to create more awareness on the issue especially for those who are likey to fall victim locally.

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