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(JIRP) Use of Digital Platforms to Commit Nefarious Activities  
Globally. A Critical Literature Review.



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## **Use of Digital Platforms to Commit Nefarious Activities Globally. A Critical Literature Review.**

**Dr. Richard Daguatha**

Egerton University, School of Gender Studies

Corresponding author's email: [journals@carijournals.org](mailto:journals@carijournals.org)

### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Social media use among youth has been associated with influences on personal security. Factors such as victim predisposition to cyber-attacks, presence of vulnerabilities in network, lack of specific legal framework to deal with cybercrime and inadequate capacity of law enforcement to deal with online crimes has led to cases of breach to personal security. The overall objective of this study was to examine use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally.

**Methodology:** The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

**Findings:** This study concluded that about 84% of youth respondents had opinion that Facebook was most insecure. Fake jobs were listed as the most prevalent crime in social media by youth respondents at 35.90% of all the social media crimes listings in this research. It was followed by online romance scams at 16.24%, hacking at 13.68%, cyber bullying at 12.82%, cyberstalking at 11.11% and identity theft at 10.28%, based on the number of times they were listed by youth respondents. The youth respondents felt that social media platform that had the highest number of crimes was Facebook at 79.49%, followed by Email at 5.98%, Instagram at 5.13% and both WhatsApp and YouTube at 4.27%.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** This study recommended that it would be necessary for tracking of social media criminals and victims to be improved, there should be awareness creation to the youth to come out and identify possible accounts, interactions and persons likely to be suspects. Victims should not fear reporting to law enforcement agencies. Public and private sector partnerships and cooperation in tracking of suspects of social media crimes should be improved.

**Keywords:** *Use, Digital Platforms, Commit, Nefarious Activities, Globally.*

## INTRODUCTION

Criminals and various terrorist organizations use social media to propagate and recruit new members into their groups (Darden, 2019). Structural and leadership challenges among Indian law enforcement officers have been reported. Most of the police forces are colonial and therefore resistant to making necessary changes that come with technology, lack of trained personnel and equipment to facilitate in investigation is equally a challenge (Hu & Lovrich, 2019). Nigerian law enforcement officers face public interference during investigation on social media through circulation of false information, few or lack of training among law enforcers has posed a great challenge in social media investigation and prosecution (Peters & Ojedokun, 2019)

Different social media forms have specific privacy settings that the users put in place to minimize cases of victimization. Personal information can be restricted to an individual or few trusted friends (van Schaik et al., 2018), however cases have been reported where an account has been hacked even with the existing privacy mechanisms and password changed so it may not be safe as perceived. A framework has been developed to handle privacy concerns called reputation mechanism which interprets the semantics then provides positive and negative results which can be recommended to a new user (Almarabeh, 2019).

Users should install up to date antivirus software to prevent malicious programs, email address used in social media site should be different from workplace emails (Soomro & Hussain, 2019). To prevent cyber stalking also utilise the available security settings on social media sites to reduce the chances of being targeted. When using a smart phone ensure that the GPS is switched off that may show the offender your exact location (Almarabeh, 2019).

Cyber criminals are more intelligent than the physical criminals before committing a crime they take time to study their targets including their interests, work places and homes. Innocent victims post on social media that they have travelled to the village so the offender will be aware of the absentee guardian taking advantage of the situation to commit crimes like burglary (Soomro & Hussain, 2019). Social media laws should be made to cater for individuals who have lost their lives so that they families can be allowed to access their accounts then log out or deactivate instead of the accounts remaining active in the case where the individual did not share the password details (Kalule, 2018). Despite the attempts to address challenges, the threats of social media to personal security remains a problem. The reviewed literature provides appropriate measures but do not address the challenges with respect to all dimensions of personal security. The previous research also fail to address peculiarities of the problem with regard to youth, gender and local perspectives.

The youth are at risk of social media crimes that include cyber bullying, study carried out showed that Facebook had the highest percentage of cyber bullying followed by twitter most of the cases happen to females (Abaido, 2020). The cases often go unreported due to fear and social stigma this results to depression, anger, anxiety, psychological and emotional issues and suicidal thoughts (Abaido, 2020). Study carried out on university students in Malaysia cyber bullying caused them

emotional and psychological stress then led to drop in academic performance, most of the victims were females more than males (Ruangnapakul et al., 2019).

Most of the victims choose not to reveal the experience to anyone for lack of assistance or when the damage has already been done, cyber bullying also decreased with an increase in age (Ruangnapakul et al., 2019). Social media crimes are becoming increasingly more common with issues such as data breaches more prominent. Researchers have found fundamental flaws in security protocols like the OpenSSL Heartbleed Bug and the successful site attacks by hacker groups. New threats and challenges are also emerging continually with emerging technologies like IoT, Big Data. The cybercrime incidences of spear phishing are also on the increase and involve the installation of harmful malware on the computer or device and stealing valuable and sensitive information

Social media can be defined as digital platforms that involve interaction among several users by sending messages or calling in a simpler and faster way that only requires internet connection and a smart phone or a computer (Jeesmitha & Com, 2019). In the past communication was slower as it was done through letters, telephone calls or newsletters. Improvement of technology has led to improved communication globally, social media involves interaction through creation of accounts where users exchange ideas ,goals and keep track of each other (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017).

Early form of social media dates back to 1997 referred to as Six degrees founded by Andrew Weinreich based in New York, it had millions of users who were able to create online profiles interact with others however, it was limited by internet connectivity which was not common among people at that time (Jeesmitha & Com, 2019). In early 2000s other social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Myspace gained popularity. Facebook and Twitter which are most popular platforms had already spread to most countries by 2006. Today, there are many social media sites depending on individual preference (Jeesmitha & Com, 2019).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social media users have increased over the years this is due to a wide range of social media forms as social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp; media sharing networks e.g. Instagram, YouTube and Emails; discussion forums e.g. Reddit, Quora and blogging and publishing networks. Social media use among youth has been associated with influences on personal security. Factors such as victim predisposition to cyber-attacks, presence of vulnerabilities in network, lack of specific legal framework to deal with cybercrime and inadequate capacity of law enforcement to deal with online crimes has led to cases of breach to personal security. Previous research on influence of social media use largely focused general security but have not specifically addressed nefarious activities (Munyua, 2013; Kwanya, Kogos, Kibe, Ogolla, & Onsare, 2021; Okuku, Renaud, & Valeriano, 2015). Whereas there has been focus on various devices such as mobile phones and social media crimes perpetrated in them, there has not been substantive focus on personal security.

The problem is that relationship between each form of social media and personal security has not been established. Despite this, there is growing use of social media with more than 61% using Snapchat, Instagram and Tiktok and 33% have experienced harassment and 83.5% have been subjected to the problem of fake news (USIU Africa, 2020). Personal security aspects such as protection from physical violence, protection from cybercrime and other crimes, prevention of domestic violence, protection from exploitation e.g. child labor and job scams have not been studied in relation to various forms of social media. Previous research has not determined relationship between forms of social media and how each form influences personal security. This relationship has not been established in literature across gender, age and socio-economic status. It has been related to cases of cyber bullying where criminals use false communication about an individual this results to cases of anxiety, depression and even suicide. Impersonation has been commonly witnessed on social media as criminals masquerade as influential leaders to dupe their victims. This study will therefore examine use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally.

### **Objective of the Study**

The overall objective of this study was to examine use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will benefit youth, youth organizations, government and academicians. It will provide information to the youths, social media management and criminal justice practitioners. It will show how social media nefarious activities can be improved so as to enhance security improvement and so that people can feel safe online without being victims of online criminal activities. The research findings will be useful to youth organizations and the national and county government in giving insights that help in prevention of social media crimes and implementation of policies to ensure online safety, further research can be conducted by academicians interested in the same field of study.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

This study will benefit from victim precipitation theory proposed by siegel (2006) and space transition theory proposed by Jaishankar (2008).

### **Space Transition Theory**

Jaishankar proposed a new theory of cybercrime in 2008. Space transition theory explains criminal behaviour both in actual space and cyber space (Jaihankar, 2008). Criminals are likely to commit crime in virtual space due to flexible identity, impersonation and lack of deterrence factor. Criminal behaviour in digital space may likely to be transferred to actual space. This theory states that criminals are likely to meet in the virtual space due to their similarities in goals then agree to participate in crimes as a group, the platform provides an easy way for escape due to the temporal nature of cyber space. Cybercrimes may result from the conflict of norms from physical space and

cyberspace. This theory gives an explanation to what leads to cybercrime and the nature of behaviour of offenders in the cyber space. In this study, social media sites provide avenues for criminals to commit crimes as identity is flexible due to the fact that they can create profiles using fake names and even put fake photographs which can be easily accessed online. When a crime is committed the victim may not have the details of the offender. Cybercrimes laws have not been fully implemented and this poses a challenge to the victims who have to endure the wrath of the perpetrators for fear of being exposed to the whole world. Black mail is a common characteristic of online criminals they demand monetary gains or damage the victim's reputation

### **Victim Precipitation Theory**

The theory was first introduced in the twentieth century by Marvin Wolfgang and perfected thereafter, Siegel (2006) attributes to individual interests and behaviour that likely subject them to be suitable targets. The theory states that victims through their actions predispose themselves to be suitable targets to perpetrators. The theory relates to this study for instance on social media, posting of personal information provides crucial information to the perpetrators. Posting photographs and status updates suggesting the location will also give a clue to the cyber criminals. Posting online travel information may give a clue to the attackers who will be aware that the home is left without a guardian and there will be easy access (Petherick, 2017). Offenders form false accounts to frustrate their victims without being recognized. Active precipitation attributes to the fact that the victim is aware of the offender women who send half naked photographs to the social media sites may have contributed to any criminal activity directed towards them, the cyber bullies will end up branding them as prostitutes. Passive precipitation occurs when the victim is not attacked directly for example a group directed to ruin the reputation of an opponent so that they lose in elections (Petherick, 2017)

### **Empirical Review**

Wamalwa (2022), conducted a study to analyze Kenya's foreign policy towards Ethiopia from 1963 to 2020. This study had three objectives: This study adopted an exploratory research design and purposive, snowball and stratified random sampling techniques were employed. Interview schedules research instruments were used to obtain data. A thematic approach was used in analyzing qualitative data and the statistical package for social sciences was employed in the analysis of quantitative data. This enabled a contemporary analysis of the available academic material and interstate reports to determine Kenya's strategic advances towards Ethiopia. The findings showed that Kenya and Ethiopia have had cordial diplomatic relations over time though with some traces of tension. The study however presented a conceptual gap as it focused on Kenya's foreign policy towards Ethiopia from 1963 to 2020 our study will however look at use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally.

Aktsa (2021), conducted a study on the connection between social media and election violence in Kenya. The target population comprised of voting residents of Nairobi City County, Official Officer of NCIC, Official of CA, and Officer from Police Headquarters, leaders of political parties,

political parties' youth leaders and religious leaders. The study was guided by Human Needs theory and the Social Identity theory and adopted a descriptive survey research design. Cluster sampling and purposive sampling method was used to select target areas and obtain respondents from the study population respectively. The study found that there is a link between the social media activities and political violence in Kenya that mostly takes place before, during and after election. The study presented a geographical gap as it focused on Kenya, while our study will focus on use of social media to commit crimes globally.

Ibrahim (2021), conducted a study that examined Kenya-Britain military diplomacy and trends in acquisition of military equipment. The study used the historical research design to trace the nature of cooperation and trends influencing the acquisition of military equipment between the two states. The study also made use of comparative case study to provide new empirical evidence on nature, trends and factors influencing trade diplomacy among the two states. The study utilized a sample size of 70 respondents. The conclusion that emerged from this study was that general volumes of trade imports in military equipment from Britain to Kenya and military diplomacy between the two countries had declined over time. This trend has been influenced mostly by economic and political sanctions levelled on Kenya in the advent of multi-party democracy in the early 1990s as well as the Look-East policy adopted by Kenya to cushion it from the stringent measures on limited funding from the West. The study however presented a methodological gap as it utilized historical research design while our study will utilize desktop review approach.

Kakalukha (2021), conducted a study that evaluated participative and representative role of women influenced the foreign policy. The study sought to assess the influence women in executive and legislative positions had on Kenya's foreign policy drafting, formulation and implementation between the year 1963 to 2017. Descriptive research design was used with the aid of self-administered open-ended questionnaire from women leaders and interview-guided questionnaires from target informants. The study concluded that ,women in executive and legislative leadership positions had not effectively taken part in foreign policy matters because of the harsh environment they still operated in, but if well trained and given a fair opportunity with less opposition from the society and their male colleagues, they had great potentials to contribute more in matters foreign policy and in return would lead to a peaceful state and peaceful co-existence, with recommendations of offering adequate training to women leaders on foreign policy matters as well as inclusion of more women in Defense and Foreign Relations Committee. The study presented a conceptual gap as it focused on participative and representative role of women influenced the foreign policy while our study will focus on examine use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally.

Sitienei (2021), conducted a study to evaluate the discontinuities in Kenya-China foreign aid relations between 1963 to 2015. This study adopted the qualitative approach in the analysis of both primary and secondary data consulted. Sampling was done based on a purposive technique and snow balling to reach out the informants who were sourced for primary data. The data from the two sources were corroborated for authenticity and validity. Data analysis was done through

critical textual analysis, evaluation and comparison of collected and existing information. The study used realism and rational choice theories. The two theories were used in the interpretation of established primary and secondary data. The study found that there has been changing trends (discontinuities and continuities) on Kenya-China foreign aid relations dictated by internal and external political developments under different regimes. During the first regime, Kenya-China partnership was not as enhanced as compared to later regimes. The study also generally adds to existing literature on international relations and diplomacy and relations between Kenya and China in particular. The study was done in Isiolo County presenting a geographical gap while our study will be a global critical literature review.

Momanyi (2021), conducted a study to establish the relations between Kenya and Somalia from 1963-2014. The study employed descriptive and explorative research designs where interviews were used as the main source of primary data and as well as secondary sources of data. It was also established that between 1990 to 1995, the policy of free movement of people and goods between Kenya and Somalia existed but this changed between 1998 to 2006 when there were terror activities in Kenya and Tanzania. These created mistrust and tension between Kenya and Somalia thus complicating the relationship. The study also indicated that the emergence of Al-shabaab and the war of terror have reconfigured the relations between Kenya and Somalia since cases of insecurity in Kenya have increased leading to vetting of the Somali people seeking asylum or working in Kenya twice and also the country want the Somali refugees to go back to their country. This has really strained the relations between the two countries. The study is significant for policy makers and in particular those in the foreign relations docket as it will help inform policy formulation relating to how relations between the two states may be crafted. The study presented a contextual gap as it focused on relations between Kenya and Somalia from 1963-2014 while our study will focus on use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally.

Chebii (2014) conducted a study to analyze the role of media in conflict management, with reference to 2007/08 Post Election Violence in Kenya and Uasin Gishu County as a case area. A descriptive research design and random stratified sampling method with a sample size of 373 respondents was used. The study found out that media played both conflict escalation and de-escalation roles during 2007/08 Post-Election Violence. Some of the negative media roles include encouraging hate speech, running parallel tallying centers, misrepresentation of information, and incitement. Some positive roles include conducting civic education, preaching peace, fair coverage of political campaigns, and fair coverage of contentious issues during peace negotiations. The study found that media significantly influenced people based on age factor; highly influenced people based on gender factor; and moderately influenced people based on status and residence factors. However, media has low influence on people based on religious factor. The study recommends stringent measures for negative journalism while highlighting the merits of peace journalism. Some of the stringent measures recommended by the study include the adoption of a common approach in conflict reporting, the designing and enforcement of stringent regulations towards the control of vernacular FM stations, training of journalists on conflict reporting, the



development of a standard conflict reporting procedure, media to be encouraged to report accurate and verified official electoral body results, and conflict reports to cut across all listeners without targeting particular groups. The study presented a methodology gap as it utilized descriptive research design while our study will utilize desktop review approach.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject on use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to use of digital platforms to commit nefarious activities globally which was split into top key words. After an in- depth search into the top key words (use, digital platforms, commit, nefarious activities, globally), the researcher arrived at 7 articles that were suitable for analysis. This were findings from:

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## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

This study concluded that about 84% of youth respondents had opinion that Facebook was most insecure. Fake jobs were listed as the most prevalent crime in social media by youth respondents at 35.90% of all the social media crimes listings in this research. It was followed by online romance scams at 16.24%, hacking at 13.68%, cyber bullying at 12.82%, cyberstalking at 11.11% and identity theft at 10.28%, based on the number of times they were listed by youth respondents. The youth respondents felt that social media platform that had the highest number of crimes was Facebook at 79.49%, followed by Email at 5.98%, Instagram at 5.13% and both WhatsApp and YouTube at 4.27%. In Facebook, fake jobs were listed as most common at 29.91%, online romance scams were 13.68%, hacking was 10.26%, cyber bullying was 9.40%, identity theft was 8.55% and cyberstalking was 7.69%. About 30% of female youth respondents had opinion that fake jobs

dominated social media crimes, followed by hacking and online romance scam at 20%, cyberstalking at 13%, cyber bully 10% and identity theft at 7%.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that for tracking of social media criminals and victims to be improved, there should be awareness creation to the youth to come out and identify possible accounts, interactions and persons likely to be suspects. Victims should not fear reporting to law enforcement agencies. Public and private sector partnerships and cooperation in tracking of suspects of social media crimes should be improved. There should be more cooperation between law enforcement agencies and social media service providers even across national borders to identify criminals. Mechanisms should be put in place to identify, monitor and deactivate fake social media accounts. There should cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the society and police-public initiatives that aim to address social media crimes should be put in place.

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