ASSESSING INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY YOUTHS AND ITS IMPACT ON CRIME IN EKITI STATE NIGERIA: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Without any scintilla of doubt, technological invention which ushered in the use of internet and social media have transformed all aspects of human life in the 21st century. This has led to enhanced connectivity which allows easy communication while performing other activities. The accessibility nature of the internet has made it easier for young people of different backgrounds to find new interests. However, despite their advantages of the internet and social media, they also post risks to the safety and security of Nigeria. It plays an awkward role in information struggle, brainwashing the youths into crime, goals falsehood and spreading uncontrollable dangers. This study assesses internet and social media usage by youths and its impact on crime in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study derives its sources from observations and secondary sources which cover journals, textbooks, internet materials, and so on. The study revealed that most of the university undergraduates use internet and social media effectively and utilize it to perpetrate crime of different kinds in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It was further revealed that social media monitoring and open source intelligence tools can be used in real-time monitoring of social media discussions to discover dangers to the state and its security in real-time. The study concluded that the internet and social media are effective means of mobilizing youths for crime and that it plays a huge role in state security. It is recommended that there is a need to engage the youths in gainful employment. The state and the federal government should endeavor to provide lasting solutions to problems of crime, by introducing futuristic and practical strategies that will help curb dissatisfaction, perceived marginalization, and discrimination among youths. Youth development strategies must include value re-orientation, value-based education, and further re-orientation programs. This involves the full support of family members, the public, and the government.

Keywords: Internet, Social Media Usage, Youth, Impact, Crime.

Introduction
All over the world, youth's unique contribution to security and peacebuilding results from their previous knowledge and practical understanding of bias and violence that goes beyond the traditional war setting and includes various aspects of exclusion and unfairness, from crime to gender-based violence. In 2016, about 408 million youths across the world (aged 15–28 years) lived in societies dominated by conflict or organized violence practices is about 1 in 5 youths across the world (Smith, 2021). This acknowledgment of youths as a constructive factor across the globe in settling conflicts and establishing lasting peace has achieved substantial momentum since the passage of resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) by the United Nations Security Council in 2015. The historic resolution signified a major change in recognizing the significant role the youths play in the sustenance of peace and security, as well as the need of enhancing their effective involvement in making decisions at different levels (Smith, 2021).

The acknowledgment and respect of Africa's dynamic adolescents and their impact on security, harmony, and conflict goes well beyond just words. The responsibilities of youths in the continent's development plan gathered momentum with the Africa Union (AU) Constitutive Act, which recognised the young as key partners to enhance unity, integrity, and cohesion. Youths in the peace and security industry continuously participate in multiple and cross-cutting themes that have a significant effect on peace and security, such as gender equality and gender-based violence, racial divisions and discrepancies, susceptibilities and social welfare, urbanisation and migration, misuse of drugs, armed robbery, and transnational organised crime, terrorism, climate change, land degradation, and desertification and the preservation of natural resources (African Union, 2020).

In Eastern Africa, prolonged domestic political chaos, extreme violence in the case of civil wars, climate change-induced threats, as well as the rising activities of terrorists, have caused immense internal displacements and forced migration. In Northern Africa, the possibilities for democratic consolidation, harmony, and safety continue to be hampered by significant obstacles related to the limited accessibility to subsidised socio-economic and political chances for many citizens, internal political strife, and the emergence of various aspects of drastic and extremist philosophies that fuel multinational violence. Momentous events and calls for legal, constitutional, institutional, and political reform spurred a wave of public protests and uprisings known as Arab Spring. (African Union, 2020).

Southern African nations have distinctive socioeconomic, political, government, and security conditions compared to other areas on the continent. The region comprises six of Africa's ten best-governed nations and has significantly better human development levels. Although there is occasional bloodshed due to political changes and socioeconomic disputes, there is no significant civil war or armed revolt that would need foreign peacekeeping operations. In the western part of Africa, the landscape of peace and security has transformed significantly over the past 20 years. In the 1990s, there were numerous civil wars, terrorist insurgencies, sporadic separatist agitations, election violence, and power-transition-related violence. The present

years have experienced an upsurge in international insurrection and terrorist activity in the Sahel area (African Union, 2020). For example, in 2011, the youths of certain countries in Northern Africa and the Arabian part of the world rewrote history by agitating for the welfare of the youths through employment, which eventually led to a revolution that toppled Government authorities in Tunisia, Ghana, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, etc., a phenomenon commonly known as Arab Spring (Gidado, 2012).

It is impossible to overstate the importance of youths to the successful execution of security and social development interventions in Nigeria. This is due to the extensive involvement of Nigerian youth in self-help programs in different regions of Nigeria. Their intervention fields include trade, business, Home Economics, small and medium-sized businesses, farming, anti-corruption, community policing, drug-free clubs, etc. (Ibrahim, 2018). Youth are the cornerstone for enhancing peace and harmony in a nation. They make things happen and may even alter the historical evolution and development of a country. Youth conflicts in Nigeria result from complaints about political incompetency amongst Government officials, cultural differences, and religious differences. For instance, the larger percentage of abductions in the South-South and Southeast geo-political zones of Nigeria, are caused by the deprivation of livelihood necessities and adequate recognition of their involvement in the Government. Also, the most important resources in the nation are located in these territories (Ukeje, 2012).

In Ekiti State, successive administrations have emphasised the need for young participation in security as a method of reducing crime levels. It could be observed that issue such as unemployment is significant factor that plays a vital role in crime rate. If adolescents are empowered, society's crime rate will drop dramatically. There is a saying that an idle hand is the devil's instrument. The next phase is to foster juvenile growth through experiences and interactions that aid in their social, ethical, psychological, physical, and cognitive development (Emmanuel, 2020).

The upsurge in internet and social media and its use by law enforcement agencies and security organisations are unfolding against a background of war, instability, and the recurrence of terrorism in problematic parts of the globe (Akhgar, 2016). As crimes and insurgent operations of today entail the application of technology, law enforcement authorities must modify their tactics to handle these actions (Umar et al., 2021). The quick advancement of technology has altered the nature of this duty in several aspects. More so, intelligence and security services, as well as the police, depend on IT that aids the collection of Information.

Internet and social media are related to Open Source Information, which are acquired from publicly accessible, unclassified sources, such as foreign newspapers, government publications, publicly available data, maps, and scholarly sites, as well as blogs, media sites, applications, and web-based groups (Agidigbi, 2022). With the growth of the Internet, a great amount of information is now accessible with a mouse click. The internet stores large numbers of important personal data for institutions, people, governments, etc. People often send and receive information online, which is saved as digital large datasets or in the cloud (Agidigbi, 2022).

This has resulted in new conceptions of how personal information may be utilized for protection and security objectives. The internet usage of Open Source Information, such as the monitoring of various social media, sites, websites, and applications, is expanding rapidly in a variety of fields. Several governmental and commercial research institutions and think tanks have been formed for the specific purpose of studying, coordinating, or developing innovative techniques for collecting internet and social media information and the acquisition of such to improve security. Every human culture is concerned about security, regardless of its degree of civilization. Recognising the vital significance of safety in human social development is a prerequisite for national development. Radda (2008) claimed that it is the basic duty of every country to defend the lives and property of its inhabitants from any form of crime. He boldly asserts, citing contract theorists, that failing to perform this duty renders the state unconstitutional; hence, people have no responsibility to obey the state's demands.

Security is a condition of happiness, a sense of safety, and protection against external damage and exposure to variety of crimes. The security of Nigeria has faced consistent crimes in form of attacks by violent gangs and criminal syndicates. However, while youths are at the vanguard of rebellion and the repetition of several crimes, they are also an essential component for bringing about constructive change in society. When youths understand their rights, they are enabled to participate at all levels in civil society, public service, and political processes. The youths must be aware of the avenues via which they may execute their civic and political obligations and participate in life-altering decision-making processes (UNDP, 2014). If Nigerians are to be protected and safe, youths have pertinent role to play. e.

Youths are the sustainable vanguard of the nation and tomorrow's leaders. They are thus the future of the country. Any nation that underestimates the capacity of its youths in the quest for national security will soon become history. There is thus the need for sustainable understanding and appropriation of the youth's capacity if Nigeria is to ever be secured and develop.

Statement of the Problem
The desire of citizens to share useful information with security authorities is one of the many obstacles associated with countering intelligence collection. Internet and Social Media information may augment the capability of law enforcement by offering more access to actionable intelligence to inform and assist the decision-making process. The absence of citizen participation in state security management and their unwillingness to offer sensitive information to law enforcement authorities continue to contribute to the ineffective deployment of important security aspects. State security requires a strategy such as tracking conversations and information shared on social media, organising efficient methods to confront adversaries' propaganda and interference, enhancing the efficiency of government agencies and institutions, and bolstering a state's geopolitical standing and international credibility.

Also, the use of social media as a new platform to communicate raises grave security issues that cannot be ignored by the government and security authorities. Adolescents utilize social media to disseminate scary messages, hateful messages, and misleading information

concerning the condition of national security. Therefore, law enforcement agencies confront formidable obstacles in their efforts to trace, regulate, and restrict the use and abuse of social media about state security. Internet communications offer significant dangers and adverse effects on national security. To defend Nigeria's security and economy, it is only right that research is conducted on how the government may use and monitor online social networking platforms if they pose a danger to national security. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to assess the link between open-source intelligence, youths, and insecurity in Ekiti State.

Objectives of the Study
The study assesses internet and social media usage by youths and its impact on crime in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to: assess how the internet and social media contributes to crime; examine the extent to which youths are involved in crime; and evaluate the role of youth in open-source intelligence

Methodology
The study derives its sources from observations and secondary sources. Examples of secondary data employed include journals, internet materials, textbooks, unpublished articles, newspapers, and magazines while the analysis descriptive. The study was conducted in Ado – Ekiti, the state capital where there are thousands of students of Federal Polytechnic, Crown Polytechnic, Ekiti State University students and all category of youths

Conceptual Definitions
Internet
The Internet technology is the foundation of social media engagement. It is a world - wide network which provide all forms of information and communication facilities. Social media cannot be examined without first considering the Internet, for its relevance is derives from the Internet. The Internet has been variedly defined. Aja, Chukwu and Odoh (2019) see the Internet as the network of computer networks, an information superhighway. It could simply be regarded as the connectivity of all computers across the globe. Layefa, Oluwasola and Adu (2019), note that the Internet as a communication technology has opened up an array of amazing possibilities.

Social media
Okolo, Ugonna, Nebo, and Obikeze (2017) define social media as the collection of online communications channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media. In a similar vein, Layefa (2020) sees social media also as a websites or online tools that help interactions between user by providing opportunities to share information, opinion and interest. Stressing the reach capacity, social media is a communication mechanism that allows users to communicate with thousands, and perhaps billions, of individuals all over the world (Khan cited in Layefa 2020). Layefa, William, Adu (2019) state that the relative speed, ease with which information processing, sharing, and distribution has been enabled by the advent of the internet and its various social media platforms have greatly influenced all spheres of human endeavours.

Social media according to Layefa (2020) are not limited to but include the following Internet enabled platforms for social interactions:

i.   **Facebook**
Facebook is one of the social media platforms enabled through the Internet. It is a social networking sites. It appears to be the most employed social media platforms since its debut in 2004. Facebook facilitates social networking which has been described as a tool and a utility for connecting with others (Stelzner, 2009:4 as cited in Ajayi, A., Adesote, S. 2015). You can create a Facebook page for any form of information you intend passing to all your contacts.

ii. **Twitter**
Twitter, as an Internet enabled social medium is a micro network blogging platform. Twitter micro blogging site has emerged as an important source of real-time information on the Web. Millions of users with varying backgrounds and levels of expertise post about topics that interest them. The democratization of content authoring has contributed tremendously follow their collective tweets (Naveen, Saptarshi, Fabricio, Niloy & Krishna P., 2012)

iii. **WhatsApp**
WhatsApp is a communication application, also used as a social media platform. It uses by people is very high as a result of the space for discourse as compared to other platforms. Its other components such as voice notes, calls, individual/group chat, image and video placement altogether endear it to all and sundry. Beyond all these, the data expended is low with a high level of connectivity.

iv. **Instagram**
Instagram is also one of the social media platforms. However, it is a platform for picture or images with virtually less text. Many people especially media celebrities make use of it.

v.   **Blogs**
Blog is a content generation content. It enables people to generate their content and make such content available to people. News information, events as they happen in the society, advertisements, etc, are regular features of blogs. Linda Ikeji's blog is a good example. Others blogs exist both by individual and groups. One main problem with blogs is that the narratives may not be true altogether.

vi. **Youtube**
Youtube is video interactive platform. Individuals can create videos as well as distribute such. The visual component of youtube makes it very attractive. Besides, it gives room for money making opportunity. For the moment people subscribe to it, the chances of making profit become high (Layefa, 2020).

However, data, reports, budgets, hearings, telephone directories, press conferences, websites, and speeches originate from an official source, are also available to the public and may be freely utilised.

Youth

Youth refers to the age or period that occurs between childhood and maturity. The precise definition of a youth age range differs, since the word youth is chronologically defined as a phase that can be attributed to certain age ranges, and is associated with certain behaviours, such as engaging in unpaid labour or having sexual encounters. A youth's degree of reliance refers to the way he/she depends on the family to make decisions. The youthful stage of a person is determined by his or her cultural norms or traditions in some regions in Nigeria (Furlong, 2013). The United Nations defines the youth as people within the age bracket of 15 and 24 and bases all of its statistics on this age range; the UN cites education as the basis for these figures. Additionally, the United Nations acknowledges that the changes without prejudice to other age ranges indicated by member states, such as 18–30. Nigerian youths must be within the age bracket of 18 to 29 (Akande, in Agidigbi, 2022).

However, the African youth charter describes the youth as those between the ages of 15 and 35 (The United Nations, 2021). Different chronologies are used to define youth, and state members treat youth in line with their unique civilization. Nigeria is the most populated nation in Africa and has one of the greatest youth populations in the world, with over 212,404,718 individuals. In Nigeria, life expectancy is low due to the high rate of HIV/AIDS-related deaths. Consequently, the median age is 17.9 years (Furlong in Agidigbi, 2022)..

Parents in Nigeria are extremely worried about the well-being of their young children to prevent them from making errors. Youth is a highly delicate period of life; thus, parents must supervise their children to ensure they are productive and prepared for the next phase of life. Due to the population of youths in the nation, the following concerns parents the most: drug abuse (40 percent), teenage pregnancies, Internet fraud or cybercrime, alcohol abuse, and sexting (Agberotimi, 2021).

Empirical Review

There are diverse kinds of literature with narrative reports on the state of security in Nigeria. The literature focuses majorly on the socio-economic state of Nigerian populations (Agbaje, 2020; Nwokolo, 2020). While some researchers observed that the security issues in the country are results of the inability of the government, security officials opined that the security architecture is overstretched (Oyewole, 2020; Thomas and Aghedo, 2014), apart other administrative flaws (Abang, 2014).

Indeed, the consensus on Nigeria's security threat evaluates the failure of the state to mobilise security paraphernalia to avert insecurity or accomplish an already-escalated conflict. Though, what Nigeria's security experts tend to neglect is the responsibility of the government toward its citizens, whose participation will serve as a requirement to seek human security through cooperative efforts (Ishaya, 2021). According to the United Nations (2013), youth is best defined as a transitional phase from the infant stage to the level of maturity which has an effect mentally, physically, and emotionally on the life of a child. Therefore, youth is a more flexible category than other established age groups. Yet, age is the simplest method to identify

this group, especially in education and work, because 'youth' is often used to refer to those people in the age bracket of leaving school and obtaining their first job.

The sociology of youth development differentiated between youth and youthful age further. The phrase youthful age is a time in a person's life when he or she is energetic and committed to the growth of his or her society. This is because not all young people are devoted to improving their society. Thus, playing a significant part in the successful execution of security and social development interventions in one's community or country indicates that he or she is youthful. Otolorin (2017) examined the drivers of human insecurity in Nigeria and their influence on economic development using time series data from 1994 to 2016. Based on two types of data employed in the research, mixed approaches were applied. On the time series data, the Autoregressive Distributed Lagged model was utilized as the estimate strategy, while descriptive statistics were used to examine the survey data. The research revealed that unemployment, poverty, ethnic-religious violence, terrorism, corruption, lack of specialized skills/sources of income, and unsolved agitations were the primary causes of insecurity in Nigeria. In addition, the research indicated that security expenditures hurt GDP in both the short- and long-term owing to a lack of accountability and transparency.

Furthermore, the study revealed that corruption had no substantial effect on economic development, but the unemployment rate and inflation rate, with a one-year lag, had drastic effects on economic growth. Nonetheless, the analysis of the surveyed data revealed that unemployment and a lack of special skills and education are major contributors to the country's heightened level of insecurity; consequently, 97 percent of respondents agreed that creating jobs and skill acquisition will efficiently decrease insecurity in the country (Gabriel) (2017).

Olaniyi and Ikechukwu in Agidigbi (2022) examined the effects of corruption, and bad governance on the Niger Delta, Boko Haram, and the assault by the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria. Using fully modified ordinary least squares (FMOLS) technique on time series data for the variables of interest, the study discovered that Niger-Delta militants, Boko-haram terrorists, and herdsmen attacks in Nigeria are significantly attributable to the country's deteriorating economic hardship, joblessness, inequality, corrupt practices, and a state of governance. By the relative deprivation hypothesis, the research concluded that numerous deprivations in the nation led to war and conflicts in the form of Niger-Delta militancy, Boko haram terrorism, and herdsmen assaults. Thus, violence and security crime is a consequence of governance issues relating to the socio-economic existence of the country's citizens.

Discussion
The findings of the study revealed the effectiveness of the internet as the contemporary means of social media communication particularly among youths. This is in agreement with the study of Asogwa (2020) whose results proved that social media communication like WhatsApp, Gmail, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Yahoo Mail are significantly associated with state security. The results revealed that most of the respondents agreed that a great deal of information can be gleaned from a person's Facebook page, which is in agreement with the studies of Jamin et. al. (2019) that other descriptive methods are stored in hidden trackers and

present on social media. The results further revealed that information shared on public online platforms can be exploited for intelligence reasons which is in agreement with the work of Rilwan and Abubakar (2018) that by automatically monitoring, capturing, processing, and analysing data via social media programming interfaces (APIs), data mining techniques, and natural language processing and visualisation, information disseminated on social media systems can be extracted and used as open-source intelligence.

The study also showed that law enforcement agencies can acquire public information on social media without a permit which is in agreement with the study of Kideuk (2017) that three-quarters of over 500 domestic law enforcement organizations reported that they use social media to seek crime tips and the remaining use social media to monitor public mood and collect information for inquiries on investigations. The observation further showed that information gotten from social media is reliable, which is in agreement with Jiaxi (2021) that the reliability and assessment of social media information are realized and that the credibility of social media information is close to the definite condition. The results further revealed that internet and social media monitoring tools can be used to track discussions on social media and detect threats to state security in real-time which is in agreement with Akilu et al. (2018) that understanding the material that individuals posted is crucial for law enforcement agencies to protect the community and react appropriately to potential crises before they spiral out of hand.

Tracking social media information makes it smooth and fast to act on vital state security details that would be invisible using traditional facilities which are in agreement with Kideuk in Agidigbi (2022) that domestic law enforcement agencies have acknowledged using social media to seek crime tips and to observe the public reaction and collect significant information for investigations.

Internet and social media are critical to understanding how extremists of any background function. This is because open source information is beneficial in planning counterterrorism. Governments can utilize their resources to remain updated on criminals' tactics and abilities. It is also in agreement with Charania (2016) that Social media allow analysts to monitor crises and track terrorist groups and that analysts can utilize social media to learn about terrorist organizations' strategies and targets, their research interests, and the terror network as a whole.

An interesting finding of the study is that internet censorship and monitoring enhance state security with an average mean of less than the cut-off mark. This disagrees with the findings of Warren, (2015) that at the sub-national level censorship of access to social media is connected with reduced insurgencies. However, this is also in agreement with Shapiro & Siegel (2015) that non-censorship of digital technologies also may enhance loyal groups cooperating with government forces. Observation showed that youths in Ekiti State are the ones mostly involved in crimes via the use of internet and social media. This is in agreement with the works of Reza et al. (2001) that crime by youth is one of the most visible methods of violence and crime in society. Globally, magazines, newspapers, social media, and the broadcast media report on everyday violence by gangs in schools, or by youth on the streets.

One could also agree that many youths no longer want to work but prefer to engage in illicit activities online to get rich. This is also in agreement with Ogunobi (2020) that youths in Nigeria have taken possession of the constant change in the internet and technology for internet fraud and monetary gain.

Furthermore, it could be deduced that the "get-the-rich-quick" syndrome of youths exposes them to crime, thereby contributing to insecurity and Peer pressure pushing youths into various crimes. This is in consonance with Salami (2013) that Nigerian youths want to get wealthy quickly within a short period. Globally, "the get rich quick" syndrome has changed the mindset of youths, especially in Ekiti to cut corners to make more money. This is also in consonance with youth delinquency. This could be one of the reasons for increase in crime rate and cybercriminals. Recently, Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) arrested 30 suspected fraudsters in an operation in Ado – Ekiti (www.efcc.gov.ng). It could be deduced that youths are the prevalent users of social media hence they put more information online. This is in agreement with Maddeden et al. (2005) that present years have seen a rapid increment in the exposure of youths to social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter.

Without any iota of doubt, one can maintain that youths are most susceptible to misinformation on internet and social media and those youths are prone to sharing supposedly secret messages on social media. This is in concord with UNICEF (2018) that the quick spread of misinformation) online has become a pressing issue publicly in the 21st century and affects people who have access to online networking. As active digital users, misinformation is an essential aspect of youth's lives. The use of social media enhanced effective communication and promoted user-generated content and communications among users. Also, it could be argued that youths are technological savvy hence they provide a lot of open-source information on social media which agrees with Mallan et al. (2010) that the apparent love of ICTs of youths has resulted in them being tagged the 'tech-savvy generation' and other cyber-related epithets.

Conclusion

This study evaluates the impact of internet and social media on youth involvement in crime in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Youths in Ekiti have been under the spotlight for so many reasons including their involvement in different forms of crime. It can be established that recently, there is increase in crime rate in Ekiti and they are mostly perpetrated by youths. It can be concluded that the internet and social media are major means of communication by which youths carry out their nefarious activities in terms of recruitment, mobilization and identification of targeted victims and so on. So, it has a significant impact on the security firmament and image of the state. It can also be affirmed that youths are enormously involved in crime and insecurity in Ekiti State. The immediate implication of this is that youths and stakeholders in security units fight to obtain the connection essential for them to cooperate towards ensuring peace and crime - free society. This condition may explain partially the reason why both sides either truly do not see one other or do not know how to interact freely with each other, or why the connection they have fostered so far remains essentially poor. Based on this study's results, the following is recommended:

i.   It is necessary to engage the youths in gainful employment and empowerment.
ii. The state and federal governments should endeavor to provide lasting solutions to problems of crime and insecurity by introducing futuristic and practical strategies that will help curb dissatisfaction, perceived marginalization, and discrimination of youth.
iii. Strategies to enhance youth development must necessarily include value re-orientation, value-based education, and further re-orientation programs, and this entails the necessary backing of the family, society, and the government.
iv. Government should allocate resources to the implementation of Internet technologies to improve state and national security.
v.   Violence prevention programs should be adopted by the government in affected areas, with programs to improve the social welfare and betterment of the youths.

Data availability
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