

RE-IMAGINING YOUTH AND YAHOO PLUS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF RELIGIOUS IMPACT ON SOCIAL LIFE IN NIGERIA

Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi ¹✉ , Damilare Samuel Alao ²✉ , Christiana Shade Ade-Johnson ³✉ , Ayodele Joshua Akinyosoye ⁴✉ , Samson Adedapo Bello ⁵✉ , Felix Olajide Talabi ⁶✉ 

¹ Department of Religions and Peace Studies, Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria

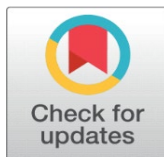
² Department of Religions and Peace Studies, Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria

³ Department of Mass Communication, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

⁴ Faculty of Education, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria

⁵ Department of Mass Communication, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria

⁶ Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria



Received 19 January 2026

Accepted 03 April 2026

Published 21 April 2026

Corresponding Author

Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi,
moyinoluwa.talabi@lasu.edu.ng

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i5s.2026.7306](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i5s.2026.7306)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2026 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.

ABSTRACT

The rise of Yahoo Plus, which is a form of internet fraud blended with ritual practices, has emerged as a pressing social reality influencing Nigerian youth culture. Alongside this trend is the growing wave of atheism, as many young people increasingly question the relevance of organised religion in addressing socio-economic struggles. This study examines the intricate intersection of youth culture, religion, law, and deviance, highlighting how constitutional freedoms, religious narratives, and State institutions influence social life in the context of cybercrime and evolving belief systems. The central concern is the disconnection between the moral ideals of Nigeria's dominant religions and the lived realities of young people grappling with poverty, unemployment, and marginalisation. While religion has historically provided moral guidance, its perceived inadequacy in addressing present-day challenges has resulted in normalised fraudulent practices like Yahoo Plus and fuelled skepticism toward faith. However, Nigeria's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion (Section 38), and the Cybercrimes Act of 2015 criminalises online fraud. Nevertheless, weak enforcement and corruption undermine these provisions. Adopting an anthropological approach, the study draws on ethnographic insights, observations of youth practices, and analysis of cultural, legal, and religious discourses, supplemented by secondary data. Findings show that Yahoo Plus thrives not only on economic desperation but also on religious syncretism, while disillusionment with religious institutions drives youth toward atheism or alternative spiritualities. The study concludes by recommending reforms in religious engagement, empowerment initiatives, and stronger legal enforcement, underscoring the need to reimagine the relationship between faith, law, and youth culture in Nigeria.

Keywords: Law, Re-imagining Youth, Religious Impact, Social Life in Nigeria, Yahoo Plus



1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed the rise of Yahoo Plus, a disturbing evolution of cybercrime that intertwines internet fraud with ritual practices. Unlike conventional forms of digital fraud, Yahoo Plus reflects a deeper entanglement

between technology, culture, and spirituality, as perpetrators often resort to ritual sacrifices, charms, or occult practices in their quest for wealth and social recognition. This phenomenon has not only transformed the contours of Nigerian youth culture but has also brought to the fore pressing questions about morality, religion, and governance in contemporary society, illustrating how desperation, materialism, and systemic failures intersect to normalise deviant practices among young people, turning cybercrime into both a survival strategy and a cultural identity marker.

The broader sociocultural implications of Yahoo Plus cannot be ignored. On one hand, the practice reveals the fragility of Nigeria's moral fabric, where the pursuit of wealth increasingly eclipses communal values of honesty, integrity, and hard work. On the other hand, it sheds light on the crisis of religion in Nigeria, where faith institutions that once shaped ethical behaviour now struggle with credibility. As [Olawale \(2021\)](#) notes, disillusionment with organised religion is rising among young Nigerians, many of whom perceive churches and mosques as complicit in corruption, commercialisation, and moral compromise. This disillusionment has opened pathways for the growth of atheism and skepticism, signalling a generational shift in moral consciousness. Some youths, however, do not reject religion outright but instead syncretise religious rituals with fraud, blending traditional practices, prayers, or charms into criminal activities, creating a paradoxical relationship between faith and deviance which underscores how religion itself is being reinterpreted in the youth context.

At the same time, these developments must be understood within the broader legal and institutional frameworks of the Nigerian state. The Constitution guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion under Section 38, thereby affirming the right of citizens to hold diverse beliefs and spiritual orientations. Furthermore, the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc.) The Act of 2015 explicitly criminalises internet fraud, identity theft, and related offences [Federal Republic of Nigeria. \(2015\)](#). Yet, the persistence of Yahoo Plus reflects the disconnect between constitutional ideals and the lived realities of enforcement. Weak institutions, selective prosecution, and corruption have significantly undermined the rule of law, creating an environment in which deviant practices thrive with minimal consequences. This gap between normative frameworks and practical realities has, in turn, deepened public skepticism toward both state authority and religious leadership.

Thus, the rise of Yahoo Plus represents more than just a criminal trend; it is a cultural and moral phenomenon that exposes the contradictions of Nigerian society. It reveals how socioeconomic hardship, institutional weakness, and shifting moral values converge to normalise deviance while eroding the authority of law and religion. This paper, therefore, investigates these dynamics, analysing how law, faith, and youth culture interact in Nigeria's contemporary landscape of deviance. By examining the interconnections among governance failures, religious transformations, and youth subcultures, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the forces driving Yahoo Plus and its implications for the future of morality, justice, and social order in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on Nigerian youth culture frequently highlight the role of economic deprivation in fostering deviance. Nigeria, despite its resource wealth, has long struggled with uneven development, unemployment, and deepening poverty levels, particularly among its youthful population, which constitutes more than half of the nation's demographic. This socio-economic exclusion has created a fertile ground for deviant practices as survival strategies. As [Umejesi \(2022\)](#) rightly observes, chronic unemployment and poverty compel many young people to explore illicit alternatives, with internet fraud emerging as one of the most accessible and lucrative avenues. For these youths, the pursuit of cybercrime is not merely a moral lapse but a pragmatic choice in the face of structural neglect and systemic disenfranchisement. Thus, fraud becomes normalised and reframed as ingenuity in the struggle for survival within an inequitable global economy.

Equally significant is the cultural rationalisation of internet fraud as an act of resistance against social and global inequality. [Akinrinade \(2020\)](#) highlights how many Nigerian youths perceive their participation in cybercrime not as outright criminality but as a form of payback against exploitative Western economies and local elites who profit from systemic corruption. In this sense, Yahoo practices acquire a paradoxical moral legitimacy: while illegal, they are interpreted by perpetrators as levelling the playing field in a world that has historically marginalised Africa. Such interpretations reveal the dynamic ways youth redefine deviance, not as rebellion without cause, but as a politically charged response to structural injustices and global exclusion. This ideological justification complicates the legal and

moral discourses around cybercrime, positioning it as both a symptom of poverty and a symbolic protest against broader inequities.

Religion further complicates this landscape, as its traditional role as a moral anchor in Nigerian society is undergoing significant transformation. While Christianity and Islam remain dominant faiths, disillusionment has grown due to clerical corruption, the commercialisation of worship, and the inability of religious leaders to address pressing social realities. As [Olawale \(2021\)](#) notes, this disillusionment has contributed to the rise of atheism, secularism, and alternative spiritualities among Nigerian youths, signalling a shift in moral consciousness. Paradoxically, however, cybercriminals themselves often draw on religion and traditional spirituality to reinforce their practices. [Ayobade \(2019\)](#) captures this contradiction in his description of “religious syncretism in deviance,” where perpetrators blend fraud with spiritual rituals, invoking charms, prayers, or traditional sacrifices for protection and success. Such fusion demonstrates the malleability of religious belief in contemporary Nigeria, where faith is simultaneously a site of moral decline and a tool for legitimising deviant behaviour.

From a legal standpoint, the Nigerian state has attempted to respond to cybercrime through legislative measures such as the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc.) Act of 2015. This law seeks to criminalise internet fraud, identity theft, and other forms of digital exploitation, aligning Nigeria with global standards of cybercrime regulation [Federal Republic of Nigeria. \(2015\)](#). However, as [Okoli, A. \(2021\)](#) observes, the implementation of these frameworks remains undermined by corruption, weak institutional structures, and selective prosecution. In practice, enforcement is often directed at low-level offenders while politically connected perpetrators escape justice, reinforcing perceptions of legal hypocrisy. For many youths, this selective justice delegitimises the law, leading them to perceive it as either ineffective or complicit in sustaining systemic inequalities. Consequently, fraudulent practices become further normalised, sustained by both social disillusionment and the failure of the state to enact credible accountability.

Nigerian youth culture reflects a complex interplay of socio-economic hardship, ideological resistance, religious transformation, and legal fragility. Economic deprivation fuels cybercrime as a survival strategy, while global and local inequalities provide a framework for its justification. Religion, once a stabilising force, is both eroded by disillusionment and appropriated to sustain deviance. Legal responses, though present, are weakened by corruption and selective enforcement, leaving young people skeptical of the justice system. This convergence of forces underscores the multidimensional nature of youth deviance in Nigeria, revealing that internet fraud is not merely a crime but a social phenomenon shaped by history, culture, and systemic dysfunction.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a comprehensive anthropological approach, integrating ethnographic insights with secondary data analysis to explore the complex intersections of cybercrime, religion, and emerging atheism in Nigeria's youth culture. Through field observations, the research captures the nuances of youth practices, cultural expressions, and religious discourses that shape their worldviews and behaviours. Immersing themselves in the natural settings of their participants aids the researchers to gain firsthand knowledge of the lived experiences, values, and belief systems that underpin the prevalence of Yahoo Plus and other forms of cybercrime. According to [Ademola-Adeyemi \(2020\)](#), ethnographic research provides a unique lens through which to examine the cultural contexts of deviant behaviour, revealing the intricate ways in which societal norms and values are reproduced and contested.

The secondary data analysis component of this study complements the ethnographic insights by drawing on a wide range of scholarly works, policy documents, and legal texts. This enables the researchers to situate their findings within the broader sociolegal and academic discourse on cybercrime in Nigeria. Therefore, analysing existing literature and policy frameworks, the study identifies gaps in current approaches to addressing cybercrime and highlights the need for more nuanced interventions that account for the complex interplay of cultural, religious, and economic factors. As noted by [Okpewho \(2022\)](#), interdisciplinary research that combines qualitative and quantitative data is essential for developing a holistic understanding of complex social phenomena like cybercrime, which cannot be adequately addressed through a single methodological approach.

4. RESULTS

The prevalence of Yahoo Plus, a form of cybercrime involving spiritual and ritualistic elements, is deeply intertwined with Nigeria's structural economic challenges. At the heart of this issue lies the scarcity of gainful employment opportunities, which leaves many young people disenchanted with the conventional pathways to success. [Akinrinade \(2020\)](#) notes that the lack of social mobility and limited access to resources pushes these individuals toward illegitimate means of survival, where fraud becomes an attractive option. This desperation stems from the harsh economic realities faced by many Nigerians, particularly the youth, who find themselves caught between high aspirations and limited means to achieve them. In this context, fraud becomes valorised within youth subcultures, where perpetrators flaunt their wealth and material success as markers of achievement. The display of luxury cars, designer clothing, and other status symbols serves as a testament to the perceived success of these individuals, further reinforcing the appeal of Yahoo Plus among young people. As noted by [Smith \(2019\)](#), this phenomenon is not merely about financial gain but also about the social status and respect that come with it. The glorification of Yahoo Plus perpetrators in some communities underscores the extent to which economic hardship can distort societal values and norms. According to [Okoli \(2021\)](#), the normalisation of such illicit activities reflects a broader societal issue, where the pursuit of wealth and materialism often overshadows ethical considerations.

The struggle to reconcile spiritual beliefs with economic realities has led to a notable shift in how Nigerian youth perceive and interact with religion. Many have begun to adopt a more pragmatic approach, blending traditional religious practices with modern-day needs, particularly in the realm of internet fraud, popularly known as "Yahoo Plus." [Ayobade \(2019\)](#) notes that some youths have incorporated ritual practices, such as sacrifices or charms, into their fraudulent activities, believing these spiritual reinforcements will guarantee financial success. This syncretic approach underscores the desperation and creativity of Nigerian youth in navigating the complexities of poverty, unemployment, and spiritual hunger. On the other hand, a growing number of Nigerian youths are turning away from religion altogether, embracing atheism as a response to the perceived failures of religious institutions. [Ogunlade \(2020\)](#) observes that the increasing visibility of atheism among Nigerian youths is largely driven by disillusionment with clerical hypocrisy, unmet promises, and the failure of religious leaders to address pressing social issues. This trend reflects a broader crisis of trust in religious authority, as young people begin to question the moral and spiritual legitimacy of institutions that once held sway over their lives. The rise of atheism in Nigeria also highlights the growing influence of globalised ideas and the internet, which have exposed young people to alternative worldviews and philosophies.

The fragility of traditional religious authority in contemporary Nigeria is further exacerbated by the country's socio-economic challenges. As poverty, unemployment, and inequality persist, many young people are forced to rely on their own ingenuity and resourcefulness to survive. In this context, religion becomes a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. While some youths use religion as a tool for personal gain, others reject it altogether, seeking more rational and secular solutions to their problems. According to [Okoli \(2021\)](#), this shift away from traditional religious authority has significant implications for Nigerian society, including the potential for increased social cohesion and more inclusive forms of governance. However, it also raises important questions about the role of religion in shaping moral values and social norms in a rapidly changing world. The enforcement of cybercrime laws in Nigeria is often marred by corruption and inefficiency, leading to a disproportionate application of justice. High-profile perpetrators, often with influential connections, frequently escape punishment, while low-level offenders bear the brunt of the law. [Okeke \(2021\)](#) notes that this selective enforcement perpetuates perceptions of inequality, undermining the public's trust in the state's ability to uphold justice. The lack of accountability for those with power and influence reinforces the notion that the legal system is designed to serve the interests of the elite, rather than the broader society.

This situation has far-reaching consequences, extending beyond the realm of cybercrime to erode faith in the justice system as a whole. When individuals perceive that justice is not blind, but rather influenced by social status and connections, it emboldens deviant practices and encourages others to engage in similar behaviour. According to [Nwafor \(2022\)](#), the Nigerian justice system's failure to hold high-profile perpetrators accountable perpetuates a culture of impunity, further exacerbating the problem of cybercrime. Similarly, [Obidimma \(2023\)](#) highlights the need for judicial reform to address the issue of selective enforcement and ensure that justice is applied fairly and impartially.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The prevalence of Yahoo Plus, a form of cybercrime that often incorporates spiritual and ritualistic elements, is deeply rooted in Nigeria's socioeconomic landscape. Economic desperation plays a significant role in driving young people towards this illicit activity. With limited access to legitimate employment opportunities and a pervasive sense of poverty, many youths view Yahoo Plus as a means of survival. Okoli (2022) opines that the lack of economic prospects has led to a normalisation of cybercrime among Nigerian youth, with many perpetrators viewing it as a viable way to achieve financial stability. This economic desperation is further compounded by cultural acceptance, as Yahoo Plus becomes glorified in some communities, with perpetrators flaunting their wealth and material success. Furthermore, cultural acceptance of Yahoo Plus is closely tied to the societal values that prioritise wealth and materialism over ethical considerations. In many Nigerian communities, the display of wealth, regardless of its source, is often seen as a marker of success. This cultural narrative perpetuates the notion that the ends justify the means, leading many young people to engage in Yahoo Plus without moral qualms. As noted by Nwosu (2023), the cultural valorisation of wealth and status has contributed significantly to the proliferation of cybercrime in Nigeria, as young people seek to emulate the lifestyles of successful perpetrators. The role of social media in glorifying Yahoo Plus perpetrators cannot be overstated, as platforms like Instagram and Facebook provide a stage for these individuals to flaunt their ill-got gains.

The incorporation of religious and spiritual practices into Yahoo Plus is another critical factor that sustains this deviant behaviour. Many perpetrators believe that spiritual reinforcement is necessary for success in their illicit activities, leading them to engage in ritual practices and seek guidance from spiritual leaders. According to Ogunde (2022), the syncretic nature of Yahoo Plus reflects the broader religious landscape in Nigeria, where traditional beliefs are often blended with modern practices. This spiritual dimension adds a layer of complexity to the phenomenon, as perpetrators seek to justify their actions through religious means. The failure of religious institutions to provide clear guidance on the ethical implications of such practices has contributed to the persistence of Yahoo Plus. The rise of atheism among Nigerian youth is a significant consequence of the failure of religious institutions to address modern socioeconomic realities. As more young people become disillusioned with the perceived hypocrisy and inefficacy of religious leaders, they are turning away from religion altogether. According to Adetayo (2023), the growing trend of atheism in Nigeria reflects a broader crisis of faith, as young people seek more rational and secular solutions to their problems. This shift away from traditional religious authority has significant implications for societal values and norms, as the moral framework that once guided behaviour is increasingly challenged.

The legal framework against cybercrime in Nigeria is robust on paper, but its implementation is often hampered by corruption and inefficiency. According to Obi (2022), the Cybercrimes Act of 2015 provides a comprehensive legal framework for addressing cybercrime, but the lack of effective enforcement has created an enabling environment for Yahoo Plus perpetrators. The selective application of justice, where high-profile perpetrators escape punishment while low-level offenders face harsh penalties, further erodes trust in the legal system. Thus, creating an environment of impunity that emboldens deviant practices and perpetuates the cycle of fraud and corruption.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intersection of Yahoo Plus, atheism, and Nigerian youth culture reflects deep-rooted systemic issues. Religion, while still influential, is increasingly perceived as inadequate in addressing material struggles, driving some youth toward syncretism or disbelief. Law, though constitutionally and legislatively sound, suffers from weak enforcement. Youth culture, shaped by economic marginalisation, normalises deviance as a survival and identity strategy. To address these challenges, religious institutions must reimagine their engagement with youth, moving beyond moral platitudes to provide practical empowerment initiatives. State institutions must strengthen enforcement of cybercrime laws while tackling corruption to restore credibility. Finally, broader socioeconomic reforms such as job creation and poverty alleviation are necessary to reduce the structural conditions that fuel deviance. A holistic rethinking of the relationship between faith, law, and youth culture is imperative for Nigeria's moral and social renewal.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Ademola-Adeyemi, I. (2020). Ethnographic Research in Criminology: Understanding the Cultural Contexts of Deviant Behaviour. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, 13(1), 1–15.
- Adetayo, O. (2023). The Rise of Atheism Among Nigerian Youth: A Critical Analysis. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 41(1), 34–48.
- Akinrinade, A. (2020). Cybercrime and Youth Culture in Nigeria: A Socio-Economic Critique. *Journal of African Studies*, 18(2), 55–72.
- Akinrinade, B. (2020). Youth Unemployment and Cybercrime in Nigeria: A Sociological Analysis. *Journal of African Studies*, 19(2), 45–63.
- Ayobade, S. (2019). The Ritualisation of Internet Fraud in Nigeria: A Sociological Analysis. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 31(2), 143–156.
- Ayobade, T. (2019). Religious Syncretism and Deviance: The Case of Ritual Practices in Nigerian cyber fraud. *African Anthropological Review*, 12(3), 89–104.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2015). *Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc) Act*. Government Press.
- Nwafor, I. E. (2022). Cybercrime Investigation and Prosecution in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 15(2), 123–145.
- Nwosu, I. (2023). Cultural Valorisation of Wealth and the Proliferation of cybercrime in Nigeria. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, 16(1), 56–71.
- Obi, E. (2022). Legal Frameworks for Combating Cybercrime in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. *Journal of Law and Digital Economy*, 4(2), 89–104.
- Obidimma, E. O. C. (2023). Legal and Institutional Framework for Cybercrime Investigation and Prosecution in Nigeria. *International Journal of Comparative Law and Legal Philosophy*, 5(1), 1–15.
- Ogunde, A. (2022). Religious Syncretism and Cybercrime in Nigeria: A Sociological Perspective. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 34(2), 157–172.
- Ogunlade, D. (2020). Youth, Religion, and Disillusionment in Nigeria: The Rise of atheism. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 35(4), 421–436.
- Ogunlade, J. (2020). The Rise of Atheism Among Nigerian Youths: A Critical Examination. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 38(1), 57–72.
- Okeke, C. (2021). Law, Corruption, and Cybercrime in Nigeria: Challenges of Enforcement. *Nigerian Journal of Law and Society*, 14(1), 101–118.
- Okoli, A. (2021). The Crisis of Religious Authority in Nigeria: Implications for Social Cohesion and Governance. *Nigerian Journal of Sociology*, 12(1), 16–30.
- Okoli, A. (2021). The Sociology of Cybercrime in Nigeria: Understanding the Yahoo Plus Phenomenon. *Nigerian Journal of Sociology*, 12(1), 1–15.
- Okoli, A. (2022). Economic Desperation and the Normalisation of Cybercrime Among Nigerian Youth. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 25(4), 512–526.
- Okpewho, P. (2022). Interdisciplinary Approaches to Studying Cybercrime in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Information Technology and Criminology*, 6(2), 123–138.
- Olawale, M. (2021). Faith Under Pressure: Religion and Youth Skepticism in Nigeria. *International Journal of African Studies*, 27(1), 65–83.
- Oyewole, O. (2021). A Review of the Cybercrimes Act 2015: Legal and Human Rights Implications. *Journal of Law and Digital Economy*, 3(1), 1–12.
- Umejesi, I. (2022). Deviance and Inequality: Youth, Fraud, and Survival in West Africa. *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 20(1), 1–20.

Uzochukwu, M. (2023). Selective Enforcement of Cybercrime Laws in Nigeria: Implications for justice and Equity. *Nigerian Journal of Sociology*, 14(1), 17-31.