

Incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Engaging in inhuman ritual activities for wealth creation, popularly known as Yahoo-Plus, is at unimaginable levels in Nigerian societies, particularly in Delta state now. There are widespread incidences of missing female university undergraduates and other girls of school age. It is quite disheartening that the younger generations are caught in the evil and mindless acts of killing for money rituals. This study examined the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria. The study was a quantitative type and descriptive survey design was adopted. A total of 800 in-school adolescents at both secondary and tertiary institutional levels were purposively selected as samples for the study. An inventory entitled 'Incidence of Yahoo-Plus Activities Inventory' was designed to collect data. The results revealed that students at both secondary and tertiary institutions attested that Yahoo-Plus activities were prevalent due to youngsters' desire to get rich quickly, rather than waiting or toiling.

Keywords: Incidence, Yahoo-Plus, in-school, adolescents, Delta state, Nigeria.

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1. Introduction

Crime-related activities perpetrated through the cyberspace have continued to take centre stage amongst youngsters in recent times. Earlier than now, cybercrimes like financial fraud through the Internet was more prevalent among youths, regardless of educational level. However, in recent times, it has graduated into a new phenomenon which involves incorporating spiritual elements with Internet surfing to boost cybercrime success rates (Tade, 2013). Certain perpetrators even go steps further by killing their close female friends or lovers, and ultimately removing essential organs from the bodies of their victims after the horrendous killing for ritual purposes. This incidence has attracted the attention of governments at all levels, but little has been done to stem the unwholesome trend amongst young adults, particularly, those in secondary and tertiary institutions (Tade, 2013).

Internet and cyber frauds have peaked in the past decade to the extent that almost all the security outfits engage perpetrators at different times. As the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) goes on their trail, so does the Special Anti-Robbery Squad generally referred to as the SARS. Yet, the perpetrators keep devising different tactics in carrying out the heinous crime against unsuspecting female victims in particular, who are in most cases their girlfriends. Spiritualism was introduced into the crime when it appeared that neither their computer dexterity/expertise nor ordinary Internet negotiations could not make them achieve much. Also, the continuous clampdowns on Internet fraudsters by the EFCC, SARS, etc., as well as in-group conflicts among Yahoo guys over which group had the highest status and recognition in the society, reduced victimisation against supposed victims, delayed or little success at the long run and the media campaigns were reported factors that led to the introduction of spiritual elements into the crime (Tade, 2013). This may have been one of the indices that motivated the study of Ajayi, Ekundayo and Osalusi (2010, 2017) on activities of cultists in Nigerian tertiary institutions. According to the researchers, student-cultists disrupt institutional activities by their illegal camping, arbitrary use of force against perceived enemies and killings in some case, but not for ritual purposes or the Yahoo-Plus as it is experienced lately.

From the point of view of sexual escapades through which Yahoo-Plus perpetrators deceive their targets and victims, Rashid and Mwale (2016) averred that in-school adolescents, though are highly versatile in sexual and reproductive health education in modern times, yet, such knowledge does not translate to a refusal to experiment amongst themselves. According to Rashid and Mwale (2016), a good number of schooling youths have enough sexual knowledge but still undertake risks associated to sex escapades, which make them vulnerable to ritual killings by the so-called lovers. This may not be unconnected with cultural and personal factors which seem to contradict the whole purpose of sex and sexuality education amongst youngsters, which has ultimately become a tool in the hands of youngsters who engage in ritual killings through initial sexual intercourse with their victims, who may have fallen prey to promise of love or relationship affairs or stealing of female underwear.

A typical example is the incidence that went viral on the social media about a young married lady as well as a 15-year-old girl both of whom were reportedly vomiting money in Delta state after their panties got stolen within a period of three weeks by suspected ritualists, also known as Yahoo-Plus guys (Opa, December 24, 2018; <https://newsdey.com>; cprime.com.ng). In another instance, a maid was reported to have allegedly packed in her luggage used underwears (undies) of her boss and daughters' while travelling for the festive period in December 2018. These and many other instances have permeated the Nigerian societies, particularly Delta state in recent times.

Therefore, from the aforementioned and many other indices, in the view of the current researchers, continuous enlightenment of both male and female tertiary and secondary school students, particularly in Delta state, Nigeria, could assist in helping to tame the menace of Yahoo-Plus activities which has resulted to needless killings of innocent school girls by perpetrators of Yahoo-plus activities in the state educational institutions, either secondary schools or tertiary institutions.

2. Problem statement

In recent times, there have been a series of atrocities with regard to killings for ritual purposes, particularly, for money making or wealth creation. Earlier on, different groups, such as ‘badoo’ and ‘yahoo yahoo’ have evolved, with activities ranging from killing and wiping victims’ blood with white handkerchiefs to deliberately causing accidents as well as kidnapping people and ultimately killing them for wealth and power. Lately, the trend has evolved in what is now called ‘Yahoo-Plus’, which involves kidnapping and killing with essential body organs of victims horrendously removed, while remains dumped on pits or buried. These wicked acts have been lately reported amongst adolescents of school ages in Delta state, Nigeria. Many young female school leavers as well as female undergraduates and elementary school children of ages 7–17 have been victims at various times, with perpetrators either unknown or allowed to work the streets untouched. It has gotten to a stage whereby the Delta state government declared war on yahoo yahoo boys, yet, the menace has continued unabated across the state.

Ajayi et al. (2010, 2017) examined the menace of secret cults in the Nigerian tertiary institutions and found that some of the effects of cultism in tertiary institutions included loss of lives and properties, disruption of academic activities on campuses and unsafe university environments due to activities of cultists who were also students. Such activities range from rituals, illegal meetings at odd hours in the night, as well as intimidation of innocent students who were perceived to have crossed their boundaries with cult members. During those periods, killing for wealth creation, etc., was not common in tertiary institutions, unlike in recent times. According to Ajayi et al. (2010), the major causes of cultism in tertiary institutions were the influence of peer group; parental background; societal decadence; erosion of education standards; militarisation of the Nigerian polity; lack of recreational facilities; the quest for power and protection among others. However, ritual killings for the purpose of wealth have fast replaced the menace of cultism in schools; even unregistered members of schools visit academic premises in search of females to lure out for ritual purposes.

Also, Tade (2013) carried out a study on a spiritual dimension to cybercrime in Nigeria: the ‘Yahoo-Plus’s phenomenon, and reported that ‘Yahoo boys’ resort to spiritual help in carrying out their enterprise due to incessant arrests by the law enforcement agents. According to the researcher, such spiritual strategy ranged from the use of authoritative and instructional commands on their targets through certain diabolic powers which compelled their victims to do their biddings. According to Tade (2013), spiritual aspect of the Yahoo-Plus revolves around the use of materials easily found around or others, not necessarily human sacrifice as it is done by the perpetrators in recent times. It has skyrocketed to an extent that females cannot spread their inner wears outside anymore due to the activities of Yahoo-Plus boys.

3. Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to examine the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among youths in Delta state, Nigeria. It is in the view of the researchers that the recommendations proffered would be adequate enough to halt the growing menace of Yahoo-Plus activities in Delta state, and by extension, Nigeria.

4. Research questions

These research questions were raised to provide a guide in this study:

1. To what extent is the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta state, Nigeria?
2. What are the dispositions of in-school adolescents towards the activities of Yahoo-Plus perpetrators?

5. Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were generated in the null form and tested in this study:

3. There is no significant difference in the perception of in-school adolescents about Yahoo-Plus activities in Delta state, Nigeria, based on the level of education.
4. There is no significant difference in the perception of in-school adolescents about Yahoo-Plus activities in Delta state, Nigeria, based on gender.
5. There is no significant difference in the perception of in-school adolescents about Yahoo-Plus activities in Delta state, Nigeria, based on awareness of activities of perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus.

6. Methodology

This is a quantitative study and it adopted survey design. Survey was considered more appropriate for this study; it entails dealing with a large population from which small units were eventually selected for the study. The population for the study consists of all in-school adolescents at both secondary and tertiary institutional levels in Delta state, Nigeria. A total of 800 participants were purposively selected from the three senatorial districts in the state, i.e., Delta north, south and central, 400 participants from Delta North senatorial district and 200 participants from each of Delta South and Central. This was so because Delta central had more concentration of tertiary and secondary schools, the reason being that it houses essential multinational companies and other industries. Thus, it has more universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education than the other two senatorial districts that have less concentration of schools.

Purposive sampling was adopted in order to be able to obtain adequate information from direct sources. A self-designed inventory was used for data collection. The inventory was entitled 'Incidence of Yahoo-Plus Activities Inventory'; the researchers decided to design the instrument in order to be able to carefully and adequately address the menace without any iota of bias. The inventory was divided into two sections (A and B); while section A focused on respondents' biodata, section B comprised items on the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta state, Nigeria. The instrument was designed on a Four-point Likert type format having a continuum of 4–1 scoring. Section B of the instrument also consisted of 20 items. A total of 80 was the highest obtainable score, while 20 was the lowest score obtainable, while the midpoint was 40. The instrument was subjected to a Cronbach's alpha method of determining the reliability coefficients of research instruments and it yielded a coefficient of 0.85, thus, making it reliable for use in this study. Participants were allowed freedom of choice as to be part of the study in order to avoid a situation of coercing the student-participants, which may ultimately impact negatively on their responses to the items in the inventory. Therefore, participation was based on free will. Data gathered were analysed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The biodata section was analysed with the use of descriptive statistical tools of percentage, means and standard deviation to provide answers to the research questions, while the hypotheses formulated were tested with the independent samples t-test statistical tool as well as one-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

7. Results

7.1. Demographic data

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by the level of education, gender and awareness of activities of Yahoo-Plus boys

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Level of education		
Secondary School	303	37.8
Tertiary Institution	497	62.1
Gender		
Male	409	51.1
Female	391	48.9
Awareness of activities of Yahoo-Plus boys		
Very Much Awareness	414	51.7
Little Awareness	370	46.3
No Awareness	16	2.0

Table 1 shows that there were more participants from tertiary institutions that participated in the study than those in secondary schools. Male participants were more than their female colleagues at both levels of education; while almost all the participants had awareness about the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities plaguing and bedevilling educational institutions in Delta state, Nigeria, in recent times, because of which many females in their promising primes have been gruesomely murdered.

Research Questions: To what extent is the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria? and what are the dispositions of in-school adolescents towards the activities of Yahoo-Plus perpetrators?

Table 2. Mean and rank order of in-school adolescents' views on the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities

S/No	As far as I know, Yahoo-Plus activities:	Mean	Rank
1	Are carried out in connivance with certain members of the school community	3.54	1st
18	May make parents withdraw their children from schools	3.52	2nd
20	Are carried out by lazy students who do not want to toil at all in life	3.48	3rd
11	Are bad signals for the younger generation	3.44	4th
13	Are amoral/wicked ways of becoming wealthy	3.41	5th
2	Are fast cutting short the lives of promising young girls	3.40	6th
9	Could discourage due diligence to school works amongst students	3.39	7th
12	Give the society a bad reputation before others	3.36	8th
8	Are sometimes carried out by student-cultists	3.35	9th
4	Are perpetrated with impunity in our schools	3.28	10th
5	Involves dealing in essential human parts for money rituals	3.28	10th
14	Are fast replacing online financial frauds	3.28	10th
19	Give no regard for the age or educational level of victims	3.25	13th
3	Affect all educational institutions	3.19	14th
7	Is another name for money rituals	3.18	15th
6	Is believed to multiply wealth for perpetrators	3.15	16th
17	Are products of youth unemployment	3.00	17th
16	Have been going on for a long time unattended to by security agents	2.82	18th
10	Take place only in tertiary institutions	2.59	19th
15	Are staged by non-members of the school communities	2.03	20th

The results in Table 2 revealed that all the items on the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria, had high mean scores above 2.00; hence, the menace of Yahoo-Plus activities is prevalent in Delta state educational institutions. Specifically, items 1, 18, 11, 13 and 2 ranked top in terms of in-school adolescents’ awareness/knowledge of the activities of money ritualists popularly called Yahoo-Plus boys in their various educational institutions and the likely consequences of the recurrence on the state’s education sector. However, items 10 and 15 ranked last, 19th and 20th, implying that in-school adolescents disagreed that non-members of their various schools perpetrate the acts and that its perpetration cut across educational institutions, and not only tertiary institutions as contained in both items 10 and 15 which were ranked 19th and 20th, respectively, by the respondents. Interestingly, all the items had a mean score of above two points. This invariably implies that the items had strong mean scores, thus, presenting incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents as a prevailing menace that requires immediate actions in Delta state, and ultimately Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria, based on the level of education.

Table 3. Results of independent samples t-test on the basis of level of education

Level of education	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-val	Crit. t-val	p-value
Secondary School	303	63.7492	5.61719	798	4.136	1.96	0.042
Tertiary Institution	497	64.0342	4.73542				

*Significant $p < 0.05$.

The results of the independent samples *t*-test in Table 3 show that the *t*-value (4.136) was greater than the critical *t*-value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria, based on the level of education was rejected; $t (df = 798) = 4.136, p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria, based on gender.

Table 4. Results of independent samples t-test on the basis of gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	409	63.3032	4.65801	798	2.555	1.96	0.000
Female	391	64.5780	5.42770				

*Significant; $p < 0.05$.

The results of the independent samples *t*-test in Table 4 revealed that the *t*-value (2.555) was greater than the critical *t*-value (1.96). Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria, based on gender was rejected; $t (df = 798) = 2.555, p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria, based on awareness of the activities of perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus activities.

Table 5. ANOVA results showing in-school adolescents’ perceptions based on awareness of the activities of perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus activities

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio
Between Groups	216.773	2	108.386		
Within Groups	20499.876	797	25.659	4.224	3.00
Total	20666.649	799			

*Significant; $p < 0.05$.

The results in Table 5 indicated that the calculated F -ratio was 4.224, while the critical F -ratio was 3.00 and $p < 0.05$. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta State, Nigeria, based on awareness of the activities of perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus activities was rejected, $F (df = 2, 799) = 4.224$, $p < 0.05$. In order to discover the source of the significant difference observed in the ANOVA results of Table 5, further examination of awareness of activities of those perpetrating Yahoo-Plus difference was carried out using the Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) as *post-hoc* test (Table 6).

Table 6. DMRT comparing the incidence of Yahoo-Plus means of awareness of activities of perpetrators

Duncan’s grouping	Mean	N	Group	Awareness of activities of Yahoo-Plus perpetrators
A	63.4378	370	1	Little Awareness
A	64.2778	414	1	Very Much Aware
B	66.1250	26	2	No Awareness

The DMRT results in Table 6 determined which of the awareness of Yahoo-Plus activities mean led to the significant difference noted in the ANOVA results of Table 5. The DMRT results indicated that the mean of group 2 (66.1250) differed from the means of group 1 (63.4378) and (64.2778) which did not differ much. Hence, the significant difference observed in the ANOVA results of Table 5 was due to the fact that means of group 2 (no awareness) differed from those of groups 1 (little awareness and very much aware).

8. Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study showed that the menace of ritual killings for wealth creation, popularly known as Yahoo-Plus, is prevalent and known to in-school adolescents in secondary and tertiary educational institutions in Delta state, Nigeria. In-school adolescents affirmed that the incidence of Yahoo-Plus, whereby unsuspecting female (and males in some instances) school teens and adolescents fall victim of gruesome killings, with essential human parts removed from their bodies, are largely carried out with the knowledge of a member (student or staff) of the school community, either secondary or tertiary institution. Furthermore, respondents were of the view that the continuous and unabated incidences of Yahoo-Plus activities in schools may soon force parents to withdraw their children from schools; and that perpetrators of the act are mostly lazy students who do not wish to toil at all in life, but get rich quickly, regardless of the pattern it takes or whoever has to be sacrificed for such to be accomplished. The study further found that this act is a bad omen for the younger and unborn generations; it is an amorous way of seeking to become wealthy; as well as the fact that it is fast cutting short the lives of promising young school girls. This finding provides further confirmation to the viral reports of the young female adolescent in her 300L who was on the verge of graduating with a first-class grade but was gruesomely murdered with her very sensitive body parts (eyes, heart, breast, etc.) cut off by her assailants, who were reportedly supported by a member of the institution’s security personnel (Adurokiya, 2018). This supports the study of Tade (2013) who submitted that perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus may have opted for the new style due to the incessant harassments by

security agents. However, Tade's (2013) study covered the introduction of spiritual activities into yahoo fraud but the spiritual element is in contrast to what obtains in contemporary times in which perpetrators now kidnap and kill; scavenge for female underwears or panties in their quest for wealth creation (Opa, 2018; <https://newsday.com>; cprime.com.ng). Moreover, findings showed that respondents sharply refuted claims that the incidence of Yahoo-Plus occurs only in tertiary institutions. This, according to the respondents is not true because, in some instances, even nursery and primary school children have been kidnapped and used for money rituals. A rampant style is the rape of female children by older adults (Akasike, 2017). From the findings of this study, it is clear that the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities is rampant amongst in-school adolescents and young schooling adults. It is also clear that in-school adolescents are not favourably disposed to the act as a means of creating wealth or living large. This is because respondents viewed this strategy as unwholesome, unhealthy, amorous and wicked, although they attested that those with lacklustre attitudes towards schooling, the lazy students as well as those with the get-rich-quick idea are often caught in such inhuman acts.

In testing the null hypotheses, the findings showed that there was a significant difference in the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities among in-school adolescents in Delta state based on the level of education. This may have probably resulted from the experience of higher levels of schooling by those in the tertiary institutions above those in the secondary schools. It is a basic fact that in-school adolescents at tertiary levels of education would have better knowledge and experience of the incidences of Yahoo-Plus activities, though it is sometimes reported also in secondary and even primary schools. This implies that the level of education has statistical significance on respondents' views to the items in the inventory.

The findings also revealed that there was a significant difference in in-school adolescents' perceptions based on gender. This may have resulted due to the fact that there were more male respondents than females in the schools and institutions visited for data collection. It may have also been due to the nature of the study; because Yahoo-Plus incidences are mostly carried out by males; this could have informed the significance obtained on the basis of gender. Furthermore, the findings indicated that there was a significant difference in respondents' views based on awareness of the activities of perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus. A post-hoc test was carried out using the DMRT to determine the item with the significance, which revealed 'no awareness at all' as the group with the significance. It thus implies that the groups with very much awareness and little awareness had a similar outlook to issues relating to Yahoo-Plus activities in their various schools/institutions than the group of very few respondents who claimed not to have any awareness of the incidence of Yahoo-Plus activities in schools in Delta state, Nigeria. The implication of these is that a great responsibility and challenge have been thrown at counselling practitioners in order to help in further sensitisation of students at all levels of education on the activities of ritualists in their environments; and ultimately, it is a clarion call on the security agencies to rise up to the challenge in order to nip the evil tide in the bud before it assumes an unimaginable status, particularly in Delta state.

Based on these findings, it was concluded that the incidence of Yahoo-Plus ritual activities is prominent in Delta educational institutions and there is the urgent need to take drastic and immediate steps in order to stem the tide.

9. Recommendations

The following suggestions are recommended based on the findings of this study:

- i. Periodic training in assertive skills to all students of educational institutions, particularly female students by the counselling arm or units of each institution. This will largely assist in addressing the menace of ritual killings, called Yahoo-Plus and rid the system off the recurring scourge.
- ii. There is the need to extend the campaign against Yahoo-Plus activities in the educational institutions and not limit it only to tertiary institutions. There is the need for school administrators to keep an eye on all staff members in order to be able to track down moles within the school systems who are working in tandem with ritual killers.
- iii. It is expedient to constantly remind female students on the need to give due diligence to their academic tasks rather than looking for cheap financial largesse from unknown persons, majority of whom are Yahoo-Plus boys, who are only awaiting the right time to strike them.
- iv. Future studies may focus on elementary schools to ascertain how prevalent the menace of Yahoo-Plus is in the different educational institutions apart from the duo of secondary schools and tertiary institutions that have been in the news for a while on the activities of perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus.
- v. Strict punitive measures and legal actions should be taken when incidences of Yahoo-Plus are reported in order to give victims the required justice.
- vi. Future studies may also pay attention to other sectors like health or ministries as well as the private sectors in order to determine if perpetrators of Yahoo-Plus also make attempts at kidnapping their staff/workers for wealth creation purposes or it is only an educational-institution-based menace.

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