

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 6 | Issue 4

2023

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Cyberspace Internet and Urban Criminality among the Youths of Bamenda Town - North West Cameroon; 1990 - 2016

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ABSTRACT

The dawn of the 21st century was characterized by mammoth technological advancement with its accompanied globalization which has resulted in paradigmatic alteration in matters of information sharing and security issues. The Cyberspace and Internet were essential developments in this era of technological detonation which created a virtual world and transcends nation-states' boundaries. It rapid spread to all parts of the world made the world to become a global community. This paper calls Cyberspace internet a virtual computer world that constitutes many worldwide computer networks that employ Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP protocol) to facilitate communication and information sharing.

The rapid developments in technology and the internet has developed unorthodox exploit of these technologies, occasioned a variety of illegal activities and alarming incidence of crimes. This paper calls all these unorthodox exploit of the technological advancements like; cyber terrorism, juvenile felony, scamming, and a host of other urban criminality. Undoubtedly technological advancements ushered a lot of opportunities and improvements in our lifestyles, but it has equally resulted in myriad white collar burglary that has undermined these developments in African frail economies. The Bamenda urban milieu wretchedly serves as a crux where these global community dynamics have been grossly abused by unemployed youths. This paper attempts to investigate the technological advancements and it's bearing on crime waves among youths of Bamenda town. Based on evidence gathered from primary and secondary sources, using qualitative and quantitative methods, it winds up that Technological advancements have influenced the increasing crime waves among the youths of Bamenda town, and difficulties of combating urban criminalities are not only centered on technological sophistication but largely on the lack of will on the part of the stakeholders.

Keywords: *Cyberspace, Internet, Urban Criminality, Youths, Bamenda, Cameroon.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Advancements in technology have been a steering wheel for fast developments in diverse domains in today's burgeoning world. The dawn of the 21st century has been characterized by mammoth technological innovation with its accompanied globalization resulting in paradigmatic alteration in matters of information sharing and security concerns. This technological advancement has not only brought enormous improvements in our lifestyles and society at large, but it has also equally brought in a lot of dynamism in the fashionable crime waves, especially among the Youths. It has drawn many people into committing crimes resulting in the unprecedented increase in crime waves among the youths of Bamenda town. The Cyberspace and Internet were essential developments in this era of technological detonation which created a virtual world and transcends nation-states' boundaries. Its rapid spread to all parts of the world made the world become a global community. The term '**Cyberspace**' was coined by William Gibson in his book **Neuromancer**, where he defined cyberspace as "the virtual computer world which is used to form a global computer network to facilitate online communication"³. In other words, it is a world of information through the internet. Hatice Necla Keles and Ahu Ergen equally defined cyberspace as: "a global platform that consists of the network containing the infrastructures of information technologies with Internet, communication networks, computer systems, embedded processors and controllers"⁴. Analyzing this term, it is the universal podium consisting of the network which contains the infrastructures of information technologies, the Internet, communication networks, computer systems and embedded processors. Cyberspace allows users to share information, interact, swap ideas, play games, engage in discussions or social forums, conduct business, and create intuitive media, among many other activities⁵. The Internet is a worldwide network set up by connecting all the networks of computers and servers all over the world which allows the computers to communicate with each other using internet protocols. In other words, it is a universal network of networks. The sunup of the internet ushered in the explosion in cyber criminality. Examining the impacts of the developments in technology which was intended to make our lives better, it has equally given opportunities for some youths of Bamenda town to carry out anonymous acts of criminality right in the comfort of their homes, leading to an unparalleled rise in crime waves in Bamenda town. Earlier, major incidents of crimes involved corporeal attacks and injury, but with the recent technological advancements, a lot of cybercrimes are committed without the

³William Ford Gibson, 1984, *Neuromancer Cyberspace, novel*. <https://www.shmoop.com>. Access, 06th April 2022

⁴Hatice Necla Keles, Ahu Ergen (2020). What's happening in cyber space? An interdisciplinary approach. *Science, Society and Culture*. <https://www.Peterlang.com>. Access, 06th April 2022

⁵William Ford Gibson, 1984, *Neuromancer Cyberspace, novel*. <https://www.shmoop.com>. Access, 06th April 2022

involvement of violence which deprives the victim of his property and privacy. Cybercrime can be referred to as any criminal act carried out with the aid of computer systems, networks, and or other related electronic devices to cause harm to others⁶. These crimes are generally committed by criminals, non-professionals, business rivals, computer programmers, and individuals having knowledge of the internet with malicious intentions. Cybercrimes are usually anonymous in character and often go undetected and unreported. Characteristics of cybercrime are, it is silent in nature, global in character, the non-existence of physical evidence creates a high negative impact, is highly potential, and is easy to penetrate⁷. Such crimes include; Identity theft, cyber terrorism, sexual pestering, cyberbullying, Denial of service attacks, and Masquerading, just to name a few. With this contemporary technological drift, anyone with just a click of the mouse can wreak pandemonium from anywhere across the globe and at any time. On the other hand, these advancements in technologies have also been applied to criminal justice, as security officers use these technologies to control crimes and gain efficiency in their fight against crimes.⁸

Paradoxically, despite the sophisticated technology being used by crime fighters and security agents, especially in the more developed countries to control and fight against crimes in societies, crime waves especially among the youths have been on a sturdy increase. The usage of these new technologies by security agents and criminals alike embodies a serious challenge to crime fighters. It triggers a crime race and raises more complicated socio-politico and economic concerns on the adverse use and abuse of the technologies⁹. However, this situation is not an inimitable fashion only with the Developed countries; it is equally a phenomenon among the youths of Bamenda town in the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon.

The questions which have arisen are (a) What are the causes of urban criminality among the youths of Bamenda town? (b) Why is there a continuous rise in versatile crimes among the youths despite the sophisticated technological developments? (c) how has cyberspace internet enhanced crime waves among the youths of Bamenda town?

This paper attempts at providing answers to these questions by providing clues on the developments in technology and its bearing on increasing crime waves among the youths of Bamenda town. It analyses why and how crimes in the form of armed burglary, ruthless killings,

⁶ Deeksha Sharma and Manik Dhingra, Technology, Crime and its Changing Patterns. *Law Audience Journal*, Greater Noida, Lloyd Law College, 2018, vol 1, no 2.

⁷ Sharma and Dhingra, Technology, Crime and its Changing Patterns, p10

⁸ Maryke Silalahi Nuth, Taking advantage of new technologies: For and against crime. *Norwegian Research Center for Computers and Law*, Norway, University of Oslo, 2008, Vol 24, no 5.

⁹ Nuth, Taking advantage of New technologies. 47.

drug abuse, legal defiance, cyberbullying, acts of terrorism, just to name a few, are on a dramatic rise among the youths, the changing crime pattern, and how technological advancements have enhanced acts of criminality among the youths of Bamenda town, and the use of technology in criminal investigation and analysis.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Issues of criminality and global security concerns have attracted international attention in both Developed and Less Developed countries. This is because research on issues of global crime and security serves as a broad-based compass crucial for developments as it provides clues on internal and external policy formulation, investments, and budgeting which are key elements in strategic planning in the global drive towards sustainable development¹⁰. Values of security, the role and respect of Law notably the universal human rights and dignity are capital concerns in any attempt to define and classify developments¹¹.

It is a cliché to say the strength and pride of every nation is its youths. Although the age ranges of the youthful population can differ from one country or region to the other, the fact that the youths form the nucleus of the workforce in almost every society of the world poses an essential constituent of development which remains a truism across the broad band of the human interactions. In this regard, the youths in any society, depending on the training and education accorded to them in the development process, can either be perfect assets for development in society or intriguing liabilities. This is evidenced in the youths' ability and willingness to participate in the development process as regards aspects of peace in the society in which they belong. This all depends on variables like availability of jobs, states sensitivity to the youths' changing needs, and provision of various programs through and within which the youths are integrated into the governing process, prioritizing their needs in the course of defining and designing states policies, without which results in youths becoming liabilities to the society or states.

But the poor conception and application of youths programs, disregard for youths' ambitions and innate abilities through the creation of less competitive structures that could galvanize and bring them into the governing framework, unwillingness of states governments to create conducive environments for investment, lack of transparency, corruption, compounded by

¹⁰ Ngam, C.C and Takor, N.K., Juvenile Criminality and Ecological Response in the Bamenda Grassfields: A Post-Colonial Transcript. *East African Scholars Multidisciplinary Bulletin*, Kenya, East African Scholars Publisher, 2019, Vol 2, no 2

¹¹ Ngam, and Takor, Juvenile Criminality and Ecological Response in the Bamenda Grassfields, 27.

inefficient management and poor accountability of both soft and hard resources¹² which goes a long way to aggravate the frustration of the youths, plunging them into committing wanton acts of crimes.

It is sad to say the youths who form the nucleus of the workforce of almost every society are involved in the bulk if not all the crimes committed in almost the entire human interactions. They are the leading actors in the new crime exposition (crimes involving the use of innovative technologies) which is a serious threat to world peace, undermining development efforts and social cohesion of states. Although laws differ from one system to the other, the issues securing the respect of human dignity enshrined in the basic text of the 1948 Universal Declaration of human rights have a lot of concurring aspects¹³. As such, any activity or comportment from individuals or groups of persons that threatens public peace and the security of persons and properties is considered a crime across cultures. In this light, practices like cyber criminality, drug abuse, burglary, murder, and terrorism are generally considered as part of the world's criminality.

Despite the strategies deployed by national and international actors to curb crime by educating and training its youths on the values of peace, the respect for human dignity and the environment, along with the penalties that are melted on the crime perpetrator, which is aimed at ensuring moral rectitude, most states expect to have a crime-free state, but contrarily, the crime wave is alarmingly rising. Notwithstanding, there is a need for states to eradicate the root causes of individual, organized, and collective crimes that remain of the essence to any nation that has a drive for sustainable development.

III. CAUSES OF URBAN CRIMINALITY AMONG THE YOUTHS IN BAMENDA

Towns paper orates that the spurt in criminality among the youths in Bamenda town in this study locus is caused by a series of factors (a) unemployment and poverty, State paralysis, (b) ignorance of the short and long term implications/repercussions of criminality, (c) media influence, (d) peer pressure, (e) poor parental training and orientation, (f) the phenomenon of street and homeless children, (g) drug and alcohol abuse, (h) youths' insatiable and gluttonous desire to taste and fashion without an accompanied change in their production capacity. It critically inserts the anatomy of crime in Bamenda town, carefully situating the technological boom which has ushered a surge in criminality in the niche.

¹² Soft Resources here refers to the human resources and power management while hard resources collectively refers to the assembly of natural resources that formed the basis for the community's wealth

¹³ Ngam, and Takor., *Juvenile Criminality and Ecological Response in the Bamenda Grassfields*, 30

a) Unemployment

The high rates of unemployment among the youths are one of the main causes of urban criminality among the youths of Bamenda town. The government of Cameroon has not created a suitable atmosphere to encourage the employment of the youth. The ‘Matricule syndrome’ in the country which makes it that the future of the citizens could only be guaranteed after obtaining a service number to work with the government frustrates the youths the more as there is this much scramble now to obtain a service number. As such, any employment threshold to the government is often scrambled over, and most often, about 90% of such opportunities are secured mostly through bribery and corruption by those who have the financial means or the common norm of “connections” and “Godfather”. With this, those youths who don’t have the financial means or the “connection” or “Godfather” feel relegated. This is compounded by the limping private sector which makes it difficult for the youths to fully engage in entrepreneurial activities. As a result of the high rates of unemployment, it has gone a long way to discourage the youths from continuing their education in the country because they don’t see any future in pursuing education as upon graduation they still remain jobless. Youth’s morale was dampened by the inability of the state to provide jobs, or sustain an enabling environment to create jobs and stinging financial hardship. A few other youths in Bamenda town who are morally conscious after obtaining a First Degree or Master’s Degree from the Universities and other Higher Institutes of learning in the country, get themselves engaged in diminutive activities like “Call Box” vendors, Taxi drivers¹⁴, Bike riders, Security guards, just to survive. And some other youths who can’t find their feet standing turn to engage themselves in criminal acts like theft, violence, banditry, burglary, and cybercrimes.

b) The Global Economic crisis and its impacts on Criminality

By 1987, Cameroon like most African countries was faced with an impeding socio-economic malaise. The Socio-economic malaise was not only a Cameroon issue. It was part of the general malaise that gripped almost all of Africa. But the situation in Cameroon was particularly worrisome as there was a high rate of corruption, and embezzlement, and almost all giant institutions in the country were state own or subvented. As such, so many companies that supplied jobs and served as a means of survival for many youths collapsed. In the Grassfields in particular, so many para-public enterprises that supplied sources of livelihood declined. For

¹⁴ George Tamukong of Nkwen confirmed to us that upon graduation from the University of Yaoundé I with a Bachelor’s Degree, he could not get a job, so the only thing he could easily lay hands on in order to survive was becoming a commercial driver. He admitted that he has been a taxi driver in Bamenda town since 2010 and through that he has been able to establish himself, make his own family and to take care of his children. Interview conducted on 20th of January 2022 in Bamenda

instance, the Wum Development Agency (WADA), The Santa Coffee farm, and the North West Development Authority (MEDINO) were radically forced by the prevailing circumstances to surrender to these fading fortunes. Even the structures that barely escaped complete collapse like the North West Cooperative Society Limited (NWCA Ltd) and The Upper Noun Valley Development Authority (UNVDA) were forced by circumstances to downsize their workforce. Another sore that brought about manic depression among the youths which had a direct effect on criminality was the collapse of some financial institutions that were pillars of development and youths survival like FONADER, and the Meridian Bank, as well the drastic rise of interest rates of loans for those who dared to survive through lending money from the surviving limping financial houses¹⁵. In addition, entrance examination into professional schools was almost inexistence. The general economic hardship led to many youths dropping out of schools and other businesses. There was a general increase in various forms of crime waves like armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, and reckless killings, among the youths of Bamenda town which hampered the security needed to enhance a smooth atmosphere conducive to any substantial investments crucial for development.

c) Devaluation of the CFA Franc

The devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 further worsens the already bad economic situation in Cameroon. There was a mass reduction of the number of civil servants with a drastic salary cut, and retrenchment in many other sectors of the economy. About 80,000 Cameroonians lost their jobs, and even those who were not retrenched were barely managing to survive as they had a lot of responsibilities to grapple with. The loss of jobs almost everywhere which resulted from the general socio-economic crisis between 1987 and 1993, and the devaluation of the CFA Franc in 1994 made life very unbearable to so many youths in the Bamenda town. This deplorable situation destroyed the hopes of youths in the Cameroon state and its administration, and as such they had to resort to abusive behaviours and illegal activities ranging from robbery, drug abuse, prostitution, rape, pick pocketing, gambling, reckless assassinations, varied forms of assaults, abuse of power and denial of justice at various levels by the state officials.

d) Poor parental training and orientation

Parents have a major role in the upbringing of the children, and parental failure towards their responsibilities over the children at any point may results to these children engaging themselves in varied acts of criminalities in their localities, thereby becoming more of liabilities than assets to the family and the society at large. Without proper parental orientation, youths lack the

¹⁵ Ngam and Takor., *Juvenile Criminality and Ecological Response in the Bamenda Grassfields*, 37

resources both materially and morally to make good decisions and choices in life. Research shows that some of the youths in Bamenda town get involved in criminal acts blamed on the poor parental training and orientation from parents. Some of the parents due to high poverty level are not able to provide the basic needs of their children¹⁶. Some of the children are not able to acquire even the basic level of education, nor training in technical skills, and as such they now resort to stealing and other acts of criminality for survival. Moreover, some over protective parents ignored giving proper training and discipline to their children when they commit minor¹⁷ crimes at home. They see it as inconsequential or trivial, but as the children are growing up, such acts are continuously building firmly in them. In youth and adulthood, they turn to full-blown criminals which is a result of poor parental training. When parents become too permissive and lenient, it encourages the youths to get involved in undesirable behaviors. Youths need fair and firm discipline from childhood and consistent guidance and supervision from their parents. When parents play an active role in the lives of their children from infancy to youthful age, it reduces the probability of violence and other youthful criminal acts. Another aspect of poor parenting is domestic violence exhibited by some parents. Most often, children who grow up exposed to domestic violence and abuses are most likely to become violent as they grow up because they see violence as the best option for solving problems. Such tendencies often make such youths become bullies and engage themselves in other acts of criminality.

e) The phenomenon of homeless and street children

Homeless and street children pose a serious social challenge to knob in the community of Bamenda town. There has been a steady increase in the number of homeless children on the streets of Bamenda town in recent times. The proliferation of homeless or street children most often has a bearing on poor parenting, broken marriages, and shattered homes. Living in a socio-economically challenged situation, the children may start developing feelings that the only option to survive their situation is to join a gang or engage in violence and other criminal acts. One can easily spot these homeless children around major junctions and streets of Bamenda town like the City chemist roundabout, hospital roundabout, Mobile Nkwen, and Behind the Stadium. These street children are exposed to varied illicit acts as they associate with their peers on the streets, thereby becoming potential ardent criminals as they grow older. Avid criminals

¹⁶ In an interview with Armstrong Fru Ambe, he affirmed that he was forced to joined his friends who were actually thieves in order to make ends meet because his parents were so poor and could not afford for his upkeep and that of his siblings. He further disclosed that even his sisters equally got engage into sexual promiscuity and prostitution in order to have money to be able to afford for their basic needs. Interview was conducted on the 15th March 2022 in Bamenda.

¹⁷ By minor crimes here, we are talking of crimes committed by children at home, like stealing from their parents, violent acts against other children, lies telling and falsehood.

often used these children in some of their felonious operations of arm robbery, for instance, they send the children into a house probably through a window or an outlet to pick up some properties from the house under operation. The phenomenon of homeless or street children is a serious mayhem to the community because it's not easy getting these children out of the street. Due to the disproportionate freedom, enjoyed by these children, with a vicious frame of mind, they don't see any reason for leaving the streets or being accommodated¹⁸. As such, looking at the dangers of such occurrences in the future, then one can anticipate burgeoning rising crime waves among the youths of Bamenda town.

f) Ignorance of the short and long-term implications or repercussions of criminality

The majority of the youths of Bamenda town get involved in criminal acts out of ignorance of the short and long-term repercussions of such acts of misdemeanor. Most often they are carried over by the pleasure derived and what they think they will gain from such acts, but they lose sight of the implications or the misfortune that may befall them in the long run. For instance, some of the youths in the course of carrying out their criminal activities, may fall into the hands of the crime fighters or law enforcement officers and may end up spending some years of their lives in jail or even a life sentence depending on the degree of the crime committed. Some of them due to excessive drug abuse may end up having health implications, and some end up in madness as a result of excessive intake of drugs like marijuana, and cocaine.

g) Media influence

The media influences youths in varied ways and can cause them to engage in acts of criminality. The media here include television, the internet, music, movies, magazine, and social media like Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram. Through the Media, the youths of Bamenda town are exposed to violent video games, which equally influence their thoughts of violence and their engagements in acts of criminality. The increased rate of crimes among the youths of Bamenda town recently has a bearing on the rapid technological advancements and accompanied media influence.

h) Peer pressure

Peer pressure is another major cause of urban criminality among the youths of Bamenda town. This is because these youths are more likely to engage in acts of criminality when they act as a group or know that they have the support of their peers. Youths have the tendency to always

¹⁸ In an interview with Julius Njimbie, he clearly told us that it is very impossible for him to leave the street because he enjoys a great degree of freedom and no restriction on his activities. Interview was conducted on the 02nd February 2022 in Bamenda.

listen and can easily be influenced by their peers. Some of the youths who under normal circumstances would not have been engaged in acts of criminality will be empowered when they are acting in a group.

i) Drug and alcohol abuse

Youths generally find pleasure in taking alcohol and drugs as a sort of leisure and to feel good. This is a common penchant among the youths of Bamenda town. The prolonged intake of these illicit substances like cocaine, and marijuana, can lead to increased risk of violence among the youths because experience has proven that the drugs bring about feelings of boldness, depression, and anger, reduce fear and increase aggression which equally increases the likelihood of youth violence. Findings show that the rate of crime involvement among the youths of Bamenda town is closely linked to their intake of illicit drugs.

j) Youths' insatiable desire to taste and fashion

One of the underlying factors of crimes among the youths of Bamenda town is the youths' insatiable and gluttonous desire to taste and fashion without an accompanied change in their production capacity. The increase in technological developments and social media has brought in a lot of innovations and attractions to the youth. This contemporary drift in changing taste and fashion among the youths, influenced by their exposure to the media is causing insatiable desire for the taste and fashion of the youths of Bamenda town. This insatiable desire to taste and fashion is not accompanied by an increase in their production capacity to meet up with their demands. As a result, they tend to engage in lots of criminal activities like stealing, kidnapping, and demand for ransom, prostitution, just to meet up with these high standards.

IV. BRIEF HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

In the last three decades, there have been tremendous developments in the field of technology. Technology can be defined as the application of soft or hard science knowledge, materials and methods to practice arts and skills¹⁹. The pinnacle of the technological explosion witnessed the introduction of the internet, which has destroyed the state's precincts, bringing a virtual world without boundaries in terms of information sharing and even in the production cycle and exchange of goods. Today, technology runs our lives. It is seemingly becoming very difficult if not impossible to function nowadays without technological gadgets like smartphones, tablets, and computers. Understanding how we left the dark ages (a period when there were no technologies) to where we are today, it's important to understand how technology has evolved

¹⁹ Sharma, D. and Dhingra, M., Technology, Crime and its Changing Patterns. *Law Audience Journal*, Greater Noida, Lloyd Law College, 2018, vol 1, no 2.

over a very short period of time and its essence in our daily lives and activities. At each level of technological development, it has been characterized by an improvement in each new upgrade of technology, which compounds existing technologies to create something better than what was previously used. Since the 1990s, technology has evolved at the speed of lightning, and in a very short period of time, technology has detonated in the markets.

The internet started in the 1960s as a means of sharing resources and information. The early generations²⁰ of computers were very large and stationary, and it wasn't easy to make use of the information stored in any one of the computers because they could not easily share their resources the information stored in them could be shared, so one had to either travel to the site of the computer to get the information.

Another incident that incited the formation of the Internet was the Cold War. The launching of the Sputnik satellite by the Soviet Union prompted the U.S. Defense Department to consider ways information could still be circulated even after a nuclear attack²¹. This eventually led to the formation of the ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) by Lawrence G. Roberts in 1967²². The ARPANET was the network that ultimately evolved into what is now known as the Internet. The ARPANET was a great success but had some flaws, and as a result, other networks and innovations were made, and on January 1st, 1983 the Internet was officially birthed with a new communications protocol called Transfer Control Protocol/Internetwork Protocol (TCP/IP) established.

Technology has influenced every aspect of our lives, from politics, economic activities, business, health, sport and entertainment, communication, security, education, just to name a few. In as much as it has left us with positive milestone impacts on our lives, it's the same way it has equally been abused by criminals to inflict pain on their victims. With the birth of the Internet and the drastic technological boom, it equally started the boom in cybercrime. As an extension, the internet has equally facilitated communication through various social media like; Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and Messenger, just to name a few, and these media have made it even easier for criminals to carry out their colossal evil attacks on others.

²⁰ There are five generations of computers and each generation had a fundamental technological development that characterized the computers; First generation computers characterized by vacuum tubes, Second generation computers characterized by Transistors, Third generation computers characterized by Integrated Circuits, Fourth generation computers characterized by Microprocessors and Fifth generation computers characterized by Artificial intelligence.

²¹ A Brief History of the Internet. Online Library Learning Center. <https://www.usg.edu>, access, 15th January 2022.

²² Barry M. Leiner, Vinton G. Cerf, et al, 1997, brief History of the Internet. <https://www.internetsociety.org>, access, 19th January 2022.

V. TYPES OF CRIMES

Incidences of crimes in Bamenda town have been an old-aged tradition. With the passing of time, cultural variations, changing innovations, and modernism, the occurrences of these crimes in Bamenda town have become multifaceted, taking different dimensions, especially as the perpetrators are constantly taking advantage of technological advancements in committing their evil attacks on their victims. There are basically, two categories of crimes:

1. Regular or Conservative Crimes

These are crimes that are commonplace and can be easily detected and prevented. They are committed in different ways and in many places. This includes crimes like; burglary, assault, child trafficking, extortion, banditry, terrorist attack, fraud, rape, forgery, drug abuse, human trafficking, threat of life, sexual harassment, property infringement, etc. These crimes are ordinary and can be easily recognized and prevented.

2. New or Cyber Crimes

These are crimes that involve incremental and innovative use of technology. With the developments in technology and the proliferation of a variety of sophisticated technological gadgets, criminals are exploiting these new technologies negatively in their favour and abusing the very quintessence and importance of the inventions. New crimes are those illegal acts that involve the computer either as the target of the crime or as a tool used in committing the crime. When the computer is the target of the criminal act, the crime is said to be a computer-related crime. When a computer is a tool used to commit a crime, the crime is referred to as a computer-assisted crime. The criminals could have used the technologies to commit other acts of conventional crimes or to commit atrocities that harm or attack the technologies or computer systems and networks directly. Examples of such new crimes include scamming, cyber terrorism, identity theft, phishing, piracy, cyberstalking, Data diddling, hacking, cracking, masquerading, cyberbullying, information theft, malware attacks, software key loggers, and denial of service attacks. The rate of crimes nowadays has increased tremendously with the criminals being greatly facilitated in their acts by the new technologies. These new crimes can be prosecuted with the help of existing legal tools.

(A) Types of Cyber Crimes

a) Computer fraud

This is the use of computers to dishonestly misrepresent data for personal gains, thereby causing harm to some other person. In this context, the fraud can result in obtaining a benefit by altering

computer input in an unauthorized way; altering or deleting stored data; altering or stealing data output to conceal unauthorized transactions; reproducing and using other people's documents such as letterheads, passport, or certificates; unauthorized usage of other people's credit card to buy things on the online²³.

b) Hacking

Hacking or Cracking is either a successful or unsuccessful attempt by an unauthorized computer user to gain access to a computer system. His aim may be to steal sensitive information or commit other acts of criminality. Hacking is a very dangerous cybercrime for the internet because it has the effect of eroding the credibility of the internet²⁴.

c) Identity theft or Masquerading

Identity theft is the crime of impersonation. It is a form of fraud in which someone pretends to be someone else by assuming that person's identity, typically in order to access computers, resources or obtain credit and other benefits in that person's name. This can be done physically by using someone's ID card to get into a restricted area or electronically by using someone's network login ID and password.

d) Phishing

Phishing is the criminally fraudulent process of acquiring or attempting to acquire sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication. The aim of this is to enable criminals to use such sensitive information and carry out illegal transactions against their victims.

e) Cyberterrorism

Cyberterrorism can be defined as an act of terrorism committed through the use of cyberspace or computer resources. Cyberterrorism equally means the use of cyber tools to shut down vital national infrastructures such as transportation, energy, and communication and coercing the states' government to surrender²⁵. As such, a simple propaganda on the Internet, that there will be bomb attacks during the holidays can be considered cyber terrorism. Internet bomb threats, internet harassment, and technology-driven crimes, such as focused virus strikes are the next waves of cybercrimes threatening the peace and security world.

f) Scamming

²³ Aloysius Nvenakeng Tazitabong (2010). "Elements of Computer Literacy". Emengu International, P 147

²⁴ Sharma and Dhingra, Technology, Crime and its Changing Patterns, p11

²⁵ Sharma and Dhingra, Technology, Crime and its Changing Patterns, p13

This is a fraudulent business scheme that is conducted on the Internet. Scamming is a notorious crime on the Internet because; scammers can reach out to a large number of people online, they cannot easily be traced, they do not have any restrictions or laws that can limit their activities, it is very difficult to find out the truth, and scammers can use public property (e.g. cybercafés) to commit their acts.

g) Denial or Degradation of Service (DoS) Attack:

This is an attack on a computer system that puts it out of action by overloading it with data in a way that the system was never prepared to handle. A DoS attack makes the system unavailable to its intended users. A distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack is one in which a multitude of compromised systems attack a single target, thereby causing a denial of service for users of the targeted system.

h) Social Engineering:

It refers to a non-technical kind of intrusion that relies heavily on human interaction and often involves tricking other people to break normal security procedures. A person using social engineering to break into a computer network might try to gain the confidence of an authorized user and manipulate him into revealing information that compromises the network's security or that can be used to steal data or subvert the system. Social engineers often rely on the natural helpfulness of people as well as on their weaknesses.

i) Cyberstalking

This is a crime in which the attacker harasses a victim using electronic communication, such as e-mail or instant messaging (IM), or messages posted to a website or a discussion group. Cyberstalking messages differ from ordinary spam in that a cyber-stalker targets a specific victim with often threatening messages, while the spammer targets a multitude of recipients with simply annoying messages.

j) Malware attacks

Malware attacks include but are not limited to computer viruses, worms, Trojan horses, spyware, and logic bombs.

Virus: It is a computer program that can copy itself and infect a computer where it destroying files and disrupting the operation of the computer. A virus can spread from one computer to another (in some form of executable code) when its host is taken to the target computer.

Worm: It is a self-replicating malicious program that uses a computer network to send copies of itself to other computers (nodes) on the internet and it may do so without any user

intervention. Unlike a virus, it does not need to attach itself to an existing program. Worms cause harm to the network by consuming bandwidth whereas viruses corrupt or modify files on a targeted computer.

Trojan horse: It is malware that appears to perform a desirable function for the user prior to running or installing but instead facilitates unauthorized access to the user's computer system. Once a Trojan horse has been installed on a target computer system, a hacker may have access to the computer remotely and perform various operations, limited by user privileges on the target computer system and the design of the Trojan horse.

Spyware: Spyware is software that monitors a computer user's activity without their knowledge and reports it to a central location. The purpose of spyware ranges from purportedly benign (enforcing copyrights, displaying targeted advertisements) to very malicious (stealing passwords and credit card numbers). The most common way to get spyware on your computer is to install it yourself when you are tricked into installing free software.

Logic bomb: also known as slag code, is a piece of computer code that executes a malicious task such as clearing a hard drive or deleting specific files when it is triggered by a specific event. It is secretly inserted into the code of a computer's existing software, where it lies dormant until that event occurs. This event may be a specific date and time or failure to input a command at a certain time.

Software Keyloggers:

These are software that record keystrokes entered by a user, usually to secretly monitor and/or maliciously use this information. They can record instant messages, emails, passwords, and any other information you type at any time using your keyboard. Software keyloggers may also be embedded in spyware, allowing your information to be transmitted to an unknown third party over the Internet.

VI. CYBERSPACE INTERNET AND URBAN CRIMINALITY AMONG THE YOUTHS OF BAMENDA TOWN

In today's fast-changing world, every bit of information is found on the internet. Whatever information you are looking for can easily be gotten on the internet. Technology has brought a great change in the nature of crimes among the youths of Bamenda town. There is no doubt this has facilitated the acquisition of knowledge in almost every aspect of society, but on the other hand, the availability and easy accessibility of some sensitive information pose a great risk to the world at large because criminals will often exploit and use such information for unlawful

purposes beneficial to them, thereby causing harm on their victims.

Due to the technological boom, there is this increasing competition between security officials and criminals on exploiting the technological advantages, which further makes criminal investigations and control more complex and becoming an unmanageable threat to global security. The technological boom has influenced the crime waves, especially among the youths of Bamenda town in varied ways:

- Availability of every bit of information on the internet has enhanced the crime waves among the youths. Sensitive information like how to manufacture weapons, drugs, and explosives has influenced the rate of crimes among the youths of Bamenda town dramatically. At first, getting information on such particular sensitive issues wasn't very easily accessible, but with the technological explosion such sensitive information is easily shared through the internet, as such the youths of Bamenda town are able to exploit and produce locally made weapons like guns, explosives and other crude or rudimentary tools, which they used in carrying out their illegal acts which have increased the rate of urban criminality among the youths of Bamenda town.
- The anonymous nature of the crimes committed using technology gives the criminals an impetus. A person sitting in one country can commit a crime in another country, and this raises the problem of jurisdiction. At times it's even very difficult to trace the criminal and identify the area or vicinity where the criminal act has occurred. This issue is compounded by the fact that there may be no uniformity of laws between the countries. As such, what constitutes a crime in one country may not be a crime in another country. This brings in the issue of the legality and legitimacy of laws between countries. The decree of punishment pertaining to a particular crime may also differ between the countries, as such, apprehending and bringing the culprit to book becomes complex to handle. This anonymous nature of the crimes committed using technology has influenced the youths of Bamenda town to get involved in stunning criminal activities, knowing that it won't be easy for the crime fighters to easily trace them or identify the area where the crime is committed.
- Technological advancements through the use of recent telecommunication technologies and the internet have influenced some of the youths of Bamenda town to get engage in acts of urban criminality, by providing wider accessibility of contacts, easy sharing of personal information, giving them access to get personal information about their targeted victims. These criminals can easily get personal information about their

targeted victims through social media forums like Facebook, WhatsApp statuses, Instagram, and Twitter. This is possible through the “oversharing” of personal information by these individuals, which exposes their information, wealth, and position to this criminal. This has made it possible for easy accessibility and communication, creating illegal multifaceted criminal activities on a global scale, which poses a significant challenge to transnational control of crimes.

- The technologies have provided an easy means of communication, with the internet using social media channels like Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, and Telegram, which has facilitated the production, storage, retrieval, and transmission of information very rapidly. This has facilitated communication between criminals and their victims who are always ignorant of the intention of the criminals from the onset.
- Technology has facilitated online transactions such as e-banking, e-commerce, and e-shopping, thereby making it possible for some youths in Bamenda town to involve in criminal actions targeting and robbing these online services with reduced chances of detection or being caught. Many used tricks to swindle funds from MTN and Orange Mobile Money purveyor. Equally, the increase in electronic fund transfer systems has made it easier for crime accomplices in other parts of the country or world to send money to their agents in Bamenda town, which goes a long way to facilitate their transactions.
- Technological developments like personal computers²⁶ and telecommunications which can easily be available and accessed, have equally influenced the youths of Bamenda town to get involved in varied acts of urban criminalities. This has given them the opportunity to use these technological devices to commit crimes like computer fraud, data diddling or manipulation, software piracy, cyberbullying, and harassment.
- The technological boom has ushered a broad array of new schemes by which some youths in Bamenda town can contravene the laws and commit various acts of criminalities. These modern technologies have not only facilitated the commission of many regular or traditional crimes, it has equally created entirely new types of crimes as the technological devices have also become objects for some new misdemeanors which are directly directed at these technological products and services. The aim may be not only to steal the hardware devices but equally to get hold of the sensitive

²⁶ Personal computers refers to computers designed to be used by one person at a time, examples are desktops, laptops, palmtops,

information in the devices.

VII. CONCLUSION

Close scrutiny of the frequency with which laws are violated by private individuals and/ or groups of persons in some communities in Cameroon in general and the youths of Bamenda town in particular, and the security efforts in handling the criminal acts, reveals that there is the indispensable need with regards to the legality and legitimacy²⁷ of the execution of laws. The essence of all these should be the way laws are made and adhered to and how justice is equally exercised. In the contemporary milieu of globalization and diverse advancements in technologies, the simple ownership of superior weapons and a well-trained army which prior was a guaranteed state's security and sovereignty is fast disappearing due to the emergence of a borderless world fashioned with profound shreds of evidence in the violation and non-respect of the established laws by criminals. In Bamenda town, there is the serious issue of regional security which is closely fastened to the growing need of preventing, managing, and solving issues of violation of laws and delving into various acts of criminality by the youths. Despite the sophistication in the domain of technology, together with the global concern in making the world a safe zone from the plague of criminality, there is still a salient rise in crimes conducted variedly by the youths of Bamenda town. In this dispensation of innovative technological developments, it is imperative for states' laws to go hand in glove with technological advancement and contribute to global security.

²⁷ Legality will have to do with the various methods used in putting a Law into used. Legality especially in modern democracies, deals with whether a Law has been soundly rooted, debated, securitized, adopted and approved by a competent body and a legitimate elected official. Legitimacy has to do with the wider acceptability of the Law of its popularity meaning its usefulness to the communities to which there were enacted to serve.

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