

Patterns and Trends of Mobile Phone Theft in Selected Tertiary Institutions in Ibadan, South West Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined patterns and trends of mobile phone theft in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan, South West Nigeria. Routine Activity theory provided insight on this discuss and was adopted as the theoretical framework. The study used qualitative method via Key informant interviews and In-depth interviews to generate data from fifty six (56) respondents which comprised of students and staff of the University of Ibadan and Polytechnic Ibadan respectively. The study revealed that most phone theft cases occurred was at night at the hostels, when students are asleep and in the lecture rooms/theaters during tests or examinations when students have to leave their phones in their bags in front of the hall and away from their own watchful eyes. Smarts phones like, "Iphone", "Samsung", "Infinix", "Tecno Camon" are mostly targeted by culprits. Female students are more vulnerable to become victim of mobile phone theft than their male counterparts. Findings from the study revealed that victims of phone theft cope by borrowing phones from their friends and colleagues to communicate with parents and relatives. Purchasing hardcopy materials to study for tests or examinations and also going to cafes to do assignments or projects are how victims of mobile phone theft cope. Hence, it becomes imperative for school management to beef up security within the school hostels especially in the night and provide lockable cabinets where students can lockup their school bags before entering the examination hall.

Keywords: Mobile phone theft, Patterns and Trends, Smartphones, Coping strategies, Tertiary institutions.

Introduction

Mobile phone theft has become a prevalent crime since the emergence of smartphones across the globe, especially within this 21st century. According to Tim

(2019), in the United Kingdom, there was almost half a million mobile phones stolen, with over sixty thousand mobile thefts and robberies in London alone, most of them are iPhones and other smartphones. This assertion by Tim (2019) shows that mobile phone theft is a global crime epidemic and not peculiar to Nigeria. Moreover, the UK government Home Office paper titled, "Reducing Mobile Phone Theft and Improving Security" shows that victims are most likely to have their phones pick-pocked or stolen when the device is briefly left unattended. Moreover, the UK government Home Officer paper further revealed that youths and young persons aged 14-24 years of more vulnerable to phone theft and female the above age category are more victims of mobile phone theft than male.

According to Sun newspaper in United Kingdom (2014) some of these robberies of mobile phone are lethal and involved wanton violence with reports of thieves armed with axes, samurai swords, zombie knives and acid, snatching smartphones from pedestrians and unsuspecting victims. Globally, there is huge surge on smartphone theft. For instance in Peru, La Republica (2018) reported that 6,000 devices are stolen each day, while in Argentina, La Nacion (2018) reported that there are almost 5,000 thefts of mobile devices a day. The Colombian telecoms regulator CrC (2018) reported that mobile phone theft grew 79% in the first half of 2017 compared to the first half of 2016. And in Mexico, mobile theft is so prevalent to the extent that people are now carrying dummy mobiles to hand over to thieves, instead of their real phones (Tim 2019).

Smartphones also carry a lot of personal data like banking details, email, photos, private information, videos, music, mobile banking apps and the likes. Hence, the consequences of having this information stolen can be profound. Lookout's Phone Theft in America (2014) reported that 10% of victims reported loss of company data, 12% of victims had fraudulent charges made to their accounts, 9% of victims had their identity stolen. It is therefore unsurprising that the report found that a third of phone-theft victims would be willing to pay \$1,000 to retrieve stolen phone's information. And 68% percent of phone victims stated that they would be willing to put themselves in some degree of danger to retrieve a stolen device and the information on it (Tim 2019).

Nigeria is not exempted from this epidemic of phone theft, the Nigerian case is that of lack of data on actual number of mobile phone theft that is been stolen on daily basis. Nigeria lacks data not only on mobile phone theft but also on other

criminal records. In Nigeria crime statistics which mostly emanates from the Nigeria police is unreliable and inaccurate. Most victims of mobile phone theft in Nigeria will hesitate to report the matter to the police because of diverse reasons. Hence, there is no statistics on mobile phone theft in Nigeria and no study in Nigeria have been conducted to ascertain the patterns and trends of mobile phone theft in tertiary institutions in Ibadan, hence this study to cover the gap.

With the increasing number of mobile phone usage among students, phone theft has become endemic, prevalent and almost a norm in higher institutions in Nigeria. Hence, this study aims to examine the pattern and trends of mobile phone theft among students in tertiary institutions. Nwachukwu and Onyenankeya (2017) opined that college students spend considerable time on their phones daily, about 33% of the respondents who participated in their study indicated that they spend 16 hours a day on their phones. This assertion by Nwachukwu and Onyenankeya shows that mobile phone is a great companion to University students as most of them cannot stay 24hours without their mobile phone.

Losing a mobile phone means a lot to a student, this is because of the multi-dimensional importance of mobile phone to students especially in tertiary institutions not only in Nigeria but in other climes. Students use mobile phones in diverse ways which includes voice calls, sending and receiving e-mail, sending and receiving text messages, receiving short message services (sms) alerts on transactions, for mobile banking which is easy and convenient, to download and listen to music, access the social media, download academic materials and documents, to access websites for entertainment/concert information, movie viewing, to accessing weather reports, to tag their locations, update their status on diverse social media platforms, playing games, download and listen to music and access social media sites. (Mojaye 2015, Park, 2005; Cheung, 2008, Miners 2009), hence this study becomes imperative to ascertain patterns and trends of mobile theft in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan, South West Nigeria.

This is because despite the fact that mobile phone theft is prevalent in Nigeria in general and tertiary institution campuses in particular, adequate scholarly attention has not been devoted to the problem. It is against this backdrop that this study is undertaken to answer three research objectives which are (i) to examine patterns and trends of mobile phone in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan South west Nigeria, (ii) to examine the coping strategies employed by students after their

phones have been stolen (iii) to investigate how culprit of phone theft are handled in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan South West Nigeria.

Review of Literature

The first mobile phones appeared in the late 1940s, after the Second World War. They were very expensive, heavy and large, so they were generally used inside vehicles and only by a limited number of people. In 1982 Bell Laboratories in the United States created the device now known as the first-generation mobile phone (1G, analog voice) which relied on AMPS (Advanced Mobile Phone System) technology. They also reached England and Japan, where they were known as TACS (Total Access Communications System) and MCS-L1, respectively. The first generation of cell-phones did nothing except calls and that too for about 30 minutes; it was all that the battery in those days allowed (Blair et al.,1). The next few generations were fondly called “bricks” not just for their appearance but also because they could come in handy as a blunt weapon if needed. Between the ‘80s and ‘90s, devices kept evolving and getting more popular.

Second generation phones (2G) appeared in 1990. They were smaller, lighter and cheaper, and based on GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) providing digital cellular communication, which improved the quality and security of voice transmission. This technology allowed the transmission of several conversations simultaneously over a single channel, which greatly reduced the price in the contract of lines, and promoted their integration into the business world. From that moment on, and following the expansion of computer use and the Internet, work stations connected to a local network were replaced with desktops and laptops with LAN (Local Area Network) and WAN (Wide Area Network) connections. Society started to address the need for data transmission (Multimedia). And so began what is known as the third generation (3G) and the development of UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System) technology. Mobile phones began to incorporate Internet connection, allowing the transmission of files. Among the functions or services offered, photo and video cameras and games gained great importance, adapting mobiles to the home and business environments. This is when the real revolution got under way. Fourth generation (4G) devices appeared with faster voice and data transmission speeds, and they became vital social and leisure attributes.

In Nigeria it was noted by Iwhiwhu, Ruteyan and Eghwubare (2010) that the advent of GSM was revolutionary, services was introduced in Nigeria by the British Colonial Government in 1886 this is to enable the colonial administrator administer the country effectively. After the Nigeria independence, in 1960, in 1966, there were only 18,724 telephone lines for use by a population of about 40 million people (Edison, 2002). The post and Telecommunications Department split into a postal division and a telecommunication division in January, 1985. There after the later was merged with the Nigerian External Telecommunication Limited (NITEL). The main purpose of this is to bring together the running and coordination of the internal and external telecommunications services (Edison, 2002). The ministry of communication and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) approved two mobile cellular phones in September, 1997. it was noted by Ndukwe, (2003) that both the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL) Cellular network and mobile communications services limited (MTs) that was managed by NITEL covers Lagos, Enugu, and Abuja only with a capacity of 10,000 lines having one mobile switching centre (MSC) in each area, while MTS limited, operates 5,000 cellular line capacity network based in Victoria Island, Lagos. In January 2001 Nigeria joined the world's digital cellular network with the licensing of private telecommunications operations by the regulatory body, this gives room for the establishment of Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the deregulation of the Telecommunication industry which gave birth to the GSM Revolution from the year 2001 till the present, under the administration of The Former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo. Initially, there are four major global systems for mobile communication (GSM) service providers licensed in Nigeria. The providers are MTN Nigeria, Econet Wireless limited or Vmobile (previously Zain, now Airtel Nigeria), NITEL (now Mtel) and Globalcom. In 2002 Globacom was issued licensed since then several other providers (starcom, O-net, Multilink, Etisalat, Visafone zoom and so on) have emerged. In December, 2001 Nigeria had over 280,000 mobile lines in just four months of GSM operation in Nigeria. However, GSM has greatly improved the socioeconomic, security, education, and information-based sectors of the economy. Today, every nook and crannies of the country are covered by GSM, and mobile phone booths/shops/kiosks can be seen as a mean of empowering citizens of Nigeria.

This increase in the usage of mobile phones by all and sundry in Nigeria triggered a chain reaction of mobile phone theft in all parts of the country and

tertiary institutions inclusive. Mobile phone theft is a form of property, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Program; property crime is a category of crime that includes, among others crimes, burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, arson, shoplifting, and vandalism. In 2001 the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) reported that the increase in mobile phone ownership had coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of incidents of mobile phone theft recorded each year in NSW. The highest increase was between 1999 and 2000, with the number of mobile phone thefts rising from 24,274 incidents to 39,891 incidents in 2000. Ownership of mobile phones in has increased substantially as improvements in technology have made them more affordable for the average consumer. Coinciding with the spread of mobile phones is an increase in the number of phones stolen each year.

In Nigeria, according to a Guardian Newspaper report (2018), there appears to be an upsurge in mobile theft, especially Androids and iPhones, in addition to the rising importation of stolen phones into the country. Some of these phones are allegedly sold as second-hand gadgets in the various markets, phone shops and computer villages. Android phones are most sought- after by users of second - hand mobile devices, but most customers would ask for the iPhone 6. Some sell the iPhone 4 at N 10, 000. A 16 - gigabyte iPhone 5 is about N 35, 000. The difference in the price between a new phone and a stolen or second - hand phone is huge," he said. "The number of people venturing into the business of buying and reselling such phones is increasing daily , as those who come to us for second - hand phones are far more than those who buy brand new phones," he added (Guardian Newspaper report 2018).

Interestingly, any surge in mobile phone ownership would naturally result in a corresponding surge in mobile phone theft. It usually gets worse when people try to make status statement by showing off their phones, especially iPhone users. This could be tempting when it is a top - of the range model. Adekunbi Kuye, recounting her ordeal and how her stolen phone was later retrieved, said: "In February, I was robbed in front of my office. Two guys pulled out a gun and threatened me. They made away with my hard drives and my phone, a Samsung J 7 Pro, 2017 model. "A good friend, who is a private investigator, traced my phone, using my IMEI number. He got the call logs, pictures of the current user of my phone and his address. I went with a few policemen to arrest him. He was caught and taken to SARS office and my phone was retrieved" (Guardian Newspaper report 2018).

Ijeoma Emmanuel described her experience as unforgettable. “This happened in March 2018. I was on my way home from Iyana - Oba. I was using an Infinix Hot Note brand, so the phone was in my pocket. “Unknown to me, a guy was monitoring me, so immediately I entered the bus, the guy followed me and sat next to me. Then, he removed the phone from my pocket. When he succeeded, he came down at the nearest bus stop. “I did not notice until I got to my bus stop. I felt so bad because I lost a lot of contacts and vital information. I have been observant since then.”

For Michael Chukwuka, losing his phones felt like losing someone dear, as he had sleepless nights when he lost his Microsoft Lumia Windows and an Infinix X phones (Guardian Newspaper report 2018).

Lookout’s Phone Theft in America report (2018), a survey of smartphone theft victims conducted by IDG Research, examines the smartphone theft epidemic in the U.S. The report found that 1 in 10 U.S. smartphone owners are victims of phone theft and 68 percent of victims were unable to recover their device after the theft occurred. The reality is that whether your smartphone is white, black, or gold, it is now almost 30 times more valuable per ounce than a block of solid silver and almost as easy to convert discreetly into cash. Simply being a little too forgetful plays a huge role in the growing phone theft trend. Most phone theft victims, 44 percent, accidentally left their phone behind in a public setting where it was later snatched up by a thief.

It is important to note that available data on mobile phone theft only includes reported incidents. There is the possibility of under reporting of this crime, as it is likely consumers would only contact their phone provider when their phone is stolen and not report it to Police. Similarly, Ojedokun and Oduoye (2019) in their study property theft in places of worship in Osogbo city, Nigeria noted that mobile phones were amongst the properties that were stolen often in various places of worship in Osogbo. This could be explained by the fact that mobile phones are handy, portable, most times unprotected by the owner as noted by Ojedokun and Oduoye (2019) and also could be as a result of the monetary gains and values attached to mobile phones.

Similarly, the reports from Newspaper and other online medium portrays that mobile phone theft occurs mostly at night, this claim is buttressed by the report of Premium times newspaper. At least two students were injured when suspected armed robbers attacked a University of Ibadan hostel early Friday morning. At about

1am Friday, July 12 2019, some gunmen, suspected to be armed robbers, attacked the Obafemi Awolowo Hostel located in the University of Ibadan and injured no fewer than two residents of the hostel. Premium Times learned the attack took place at that a female hostel known as Awo Hall, which is the closest hostel to the Polytechnic of Ibadan. The gunmen reportedly shot sporadically, raided the hall and took away phones and money from the students (Premium Times, 2019).

Similarly, Vanguard newspaper reported on 12 August 2019 that “Invasion of the postgraduate hall of residence, Abdusalami Abubakar Hall, the University of Ibadan by robbers in the early hours of Sunday 11th August 2019 has left two students of the institution injured. Vanguard gathered that the robbers stormed the hall of residence around 2 am. A student, who resides in the hall said: “They were paired in twos, moving from one room to another, collecting phones and laptops. They knew about this hostel and they were so comfortable. They had time to operate.” “They tied up our security man (Vanguard, 2019). From these reportage from the newspapers, it becomes obvious that phone theft mostly occurs in the night when students are asleep.

Theoretical Background

Routine Activity Theory

The routine activity theory is a sub-field of crime opportunity theory that focuses on situations of crimes. It was first proposed by Marcus Felson and Lawrence E. Cohen in their explanation of crime rate change in the United States 1947 - 1974. The theory has been extensively applied and has become one of the most cited theories in criminology. The premise of routine activity theory is that crime is relatively unaffected by social causes such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment. According to Felson and Cohen, the reason for the increase is that the prosperity of contemporary society offers more opportunities for crime to occur. Routine activities theory suggests that the organization of routine activities in society create opportunities for crime. In other words, the daily routine activities of people—including where they work, the routes they travel to and from school, the groups with whom they socialize, the shops they frequent, and so forth—strongly influence when, where, and to whom crime occurs. These routines can make crime easy and low risk, or difficult and risky, because opportunities vary over time, space, and among people, so too does the likelihood of crime.

In routine activities theory, crime is likely to occur when three essential elements of crime converge in space and time: a motivated offender, an attractive target, and the absence of capable guardianship. Motivated offenders are individuals who are not only capable of committing criminal activity, but are willing to do so. Suitable targets can be a person or object that are seen by offenders as vulnerable or particularly attractive. Guardianship can be a person or an object that is effective in deterring offense to occur and sometimes crime is stopped by simple presence of guardianship in space and time. The factors that render a particular target attractive are situational and crime specific. If there is an unprotected target and there are sufficient rewards, a motivated offender will commit a crime.

In terms of suitable targets, the choice is influenced by the offender's perception of the target's vulnerability; the more suitable and accessible the target, the more likely that a crime will occur. The presence of capable guardians is also held to deter individuals from offending. Guardianship can be the physical presence of a person who is able to act in a protective manner or in the form of more passive mechanical devices such as video surveillance or security systems. These physical security measures help limit an offender's access to suitable targets. The essential aspect of routine activities theory is the interaction of motivation, opportunity and targets. In this way, the presence of guardians will deter most offenders, rendering even attractive targets off limits. Therefore, the presence of opportunity coupled with a lack of guardianship increases criminal motivations and the likelihood of an offence taking place.

Research methodology

The study that informed this article was an empirical one and was conducted in 2019. Both primary and secondary data were gathered. Secondary data were gathered through scholarly journals, books, newspaper reports, reliable internet sources and other official documents. The research adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey and exploratory design. The cross-sectional design takes a snap shot of a population at a certain time, allowing conclusion about phenomena across a wide population to be drawn. The descriptive design gave room for in-depth and intensive analysis of the phenomenon under study. This is informed by the need to adequately examine the patterns and trends of mobile phone theft in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan. The research was conducted in University of Ibadan and Polytechnic Ibadan.

The study captured the views of both students and staff (especially students who are victims of mobile theft and staff who are security officers, hall wardens and hall supervisors). The choice of study location is based on prevalence of mobile phone theft in the above selected institutions. The study collected its data through qualitative method via key-informant interviews and in-depth interviews respectively. Non-probabilistic sampling techniques was used in collecting data via convenience/accidental and snow balling sampling technique was used to select victims of mobile phone theft for the in-depth interviews (IDI) whereby 50 respondents were interviewed across the two institutions and efforts were made to interview respondents across various study levels, sex, age, religion and ethnic group. Purposive sampling was also used for the Key Informant Interview of 6 respondents who were school security officers, hall wardens and hall supervisors. The interviews were conducted and data collected via digital audio recording. Thereafter, a verbatim transcription of the audio records were carried out, that was followed by thematic coding of the respondents responses. All the interviews were conducted in English language which did not necessitate need for translation. The thematic response of the respondents formed the basis of the analysis which is presented below. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, ethnographic summaries and content analysis. Throughout the conduct of this study, the authors adhered strictly to the social research ethics. In the conduct of this research, the participant's rights and integrity were respected. Participation was voluntary and respondents were also not exposed to any form of harm. Moreover, they were informed of their right to withdraw participation whenever they deemed fit.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we present and discuss findings from data gathered from field work. The qualitative findings were presented as below. Based on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, a total of fifty (56) interviews were conducted in the course of the fieldwork, comprising of twenty five (25) In-depth interviews amongst University of Ibadan students and twenty (25) IDIs amongst Polytechnic Ibadan students. Six (6) Key Informant interviews (KIIs) were also conducted amongst security officers in University of Ibadan and Polytechnic Ibadan. The key informant interviews were conducted respectively from each of the institutions. Most of the respondents fell within ages brackets of 18-25 years, an age range where

people are still in school. Amongst the 56 respondents, twenty six (26) were female while thirty (30) respondents were male. The ethnic group of the respondents shows that forty seven (47) respondents are Yoruba; eight (8) were Igbo while only one (1) was Hausa. Amongst the twenty five respondents from Polytechnic Ibadan, ten (10) are in Ordinary National Diploma II (OND 2), ten (10) respondents are in Ordinary National Diploma I (OND I) while five (5) respondent is in Higher National Diploma I (HND 1). Amongst the University of Ibadan respondents, two (2) are in 500level, five (5) are in 400level, six (6) are in 300level, four (4) are in 200level, while the remaining eight (8) are in 100level. All the Key informants comprised of security officers and hall wardens in the two aforementioned institutions.

Patterns of Mobile Phone theft among Higher Institution Students

This section examined patterns of mobile phone theft among higher institution students. This sections covers periods of time, where and when phone theft is prevalent, the sex that is susceptible to theft, types of phones that are susceptible to being stolen and circumstances surrounding phone theft amongst other things. One of the respondents that was interviewed had this to say about the patterns of phone theft:

On the 17th of August 2021, my roommate and I woke up to discover our phones had been stolen because we were charging it and it was no longer there, they broke into the room, tore the net and took the phones. This would be my second time of experiencing phone theft, but the first wasn't on campus. It was stolen in the midnight between 1-3:30am. I was in my room in the hostel when the mobile phone was been stolen. I wasn't careless but the charger I have blinks when charging so I think that was what attracted the thief. Till now my phone wasn't recovered and the person wasn't caught. (IDI/Polytechnic Ibadan student/Female/20years/Yoruba/OND.II/)

Another victim of phone theft had this to say to further buttress the above claim by the previous respondent:

My group members and I always have a night class close to examinations in one of our classes, so I was there with two of my group members. After our first session of discussion I was pressed and wanted to go to the toilet so I told one of the members to watch my phone because I was charging it and the other member was already asleep. When I got back the person I told to watch my phone was half asleep and when I went to the charging point the phone was nowhere to be found only the charger was

there. Well I plugged my phone in a class which is public place, which made it an easy target, so I guess I was careless. (IDI/The Polytechnic Ibadan students/Male/25years/Yoruba/ND II)

From the above assertions, it becomes obvious that mobile phones are mostly stolen in the night when students are asleep in their various hostels. The culprits are aided by the lack of adequate securities both in the school hostels and in the off-campus hostels. The above findings is in tandem with the reportage of Vanguard Newspaper (2019 August 12) and Premium Times (2019 July 12) when they reported that robbers invaded university of Ibadan hostels and catered away with their phones and laptops in the early hours of the day. Most phones were been stolen through windows because the thieves can easily tear the nets and gain access into the room, it becomes very easy for the thieves because there were no adequate measures to safeguards the hostels and the rooms, most of the victims' room had no burglary proofs or iron bars which would have made it a bit difficult for the thieves to gain access into their room. Moreover, this lack of guardian (weak guardian and lack of security agents) coupled with porous school hostels (which lacks burglary proofs) provides suitable targets for culprits of mobile phone theft as proposed by RAT.

Another victim of phone theft had this to say:

It was during examinations, and my examination venue was Central Bank Building. We were told to put our bags at the back of the hall, after the exam everyone rushed to pick up their bags and by the time I got to mine I discovered that my two phones which were in my purse which also contained my ID cards and money were gone. (IDI/University of Ibadan student/Female/24years/Yoruba/300level).

Central Banking Building is a lecture theatre in the University of Ibadan and during examinations, students are not allowed to come into the examination hall with their school bags, wallets, mobile phones or purse as a strategy to checkmate examination malpractice in the institution. From the above examination of the respondent, he was a victim of phone theft during the examination period because she left her phone unattended to during examination. This findings differs from the pattern of mobile phone theft that was documented by Guardian Newspaper (2018); Tim (2019) when they opined that some of these robbers of mobile phone are lethal and involved wanton violence as mobile phones are snatched at gun points and that culprits of mobile phone theft are heavily armed with axe and zombie

knives. Regrettably, when students drop their school bags, wallets, mobile phones and purse outside the examination hall, there is no capable guardian or security to secure these properties which gives motivated offenders a suitable target to engage in theft mostly because of the monetary gain that will accrue to them by selling such stolen phones. This finding is in tandem with the theoretical framework.

The views of security personnel of both institutions corroborate the narratives of the students. One of them had this to say:

From my experience they steal the phones of bigger brands than those of smaller brands. Yes, because they steal more in the hostel and during examinations as we have a lot of reports during this period, students put their phones in their bags and another student comes and steals the bag and the phone. Both the male and female sex are susceptible to phone theft victimization, but the female are more victims than their male counterparts. (KII/Polytechnic Ibadan security officer/Female/53years/Yoruba/20 years of service)

Another security officer had this to say about pattern of phone theft in the Polytechnic Ibadan:

Cases of phone theft are reported often especially during the examination period. Expensive brands are the types stolen often, the likes of "iPhone", "Samsung" "Infinix", and, "Tecno Camon" are the ones that are stolen more. They steal on the sports fields, in the hostel and during the exam period. Thefts are not common in the religious places because they have fear of god in the church and mosque. The males steal more but the victims are usually both males and females. (KII/Patrol supervisor, Polytechnic Ibadan/Male/42years/Yoruba/15years of Service).

From the above assertions from the respondents, "bigger brands" which are expensive are more susceptible to been stolen than less expensive phones. The respondents also opined that phone theft is more prevalent during exam periods (this is because during examinations, students are not allowed to go into the examination halls with their bags, handbags and wallets which most times contains their phones and other values, although students have been warned not to come to the examination halls with their phones but some have continued to come to the exam hall with their phones and bags and they are always asked to keep their phones outside the hall) while they are inside the exam hall writing examination and there is no security or a watchful eye to keep watch on their bags and other belongings outside the hall and that has resulted to phone theft and loss of mobile phones

amongst other valuables. These findings support the submissions of Ikoh (2011) that in the process of crime perpetration, offenders often either seek out attractive targets with low security or seize the opportunities to commit crime while engaging in routine non-criminal activities. The above assertions also opined that phone theft is prevalent amongst males and females but the female gender is more vulnerable to phone theft. The assertions above further revealed that phones are been stolen in the sports field, and one particular assertion went ahead to name some phone brands that are more vulnerable to been stolen, which includes “Iphone”, “Samsung”, “Infinix”, “Tecno Camon” amongst others because they were new, expensive and the thieves could make more money from them when being sold. The finding is further collaborated with the assertions of Tim (2019) when he opined that Iphones and other smart phones are mostly stolen than any type of phone.

This response by another respondent further buttresses the above assertion.

Mobile phone theft on campus has become very rampant, it is the number one form of theft on campus due to the fact that mobile phones are easily converted to cash. In my experience, in 30 days you have 26 days that students come around to report phone theft. Therefore it occurs often. There is no location that we can point to and say this is where they steal phones more. But the thing to note is that as technology improves so does phone theft, in the past phones were not common, but now phones are everywhere in surplus. Therefore they steal phones wherever the opportunity arises. They do not usually target any particular sex. However when it comes to phone snatching females are usually targeted more because they are more vulnerable. (KII/Principal security officer University of Ibadan/Male/50years/Yoruba/30 years of service)

Another respondent had this to say:

Investigations have proven that mobile phone theft can take place anywhere; it depends on how you display it. Phone theft depends on the availability of the phone and not the sex of the victim. (KII/Officer in charge of operations, University of Ibadan / Male/50years/Yoruba/32 years of service)

This was the response of another respondent, which contradicts previous assertion by one of the respondents who opined that it is expensive phones that are been stolen:

It is often reported during examination period where students put their phones in their bags and bring it to the examination hall. All brands of mobile phones are susceptible to theft, even the small phones that are sold at 3500 naira. The issue of phone theft

has nothing to do with the brand as people are hungry and are looking for a means of sustenance. Therefore as long as the phone can be sold even at the rate of 500 just to put food on their table then it can be stolen. Yes, during examination time in the large lecture theaters, which are the “hotspots” for phone theft, students use the opportunity to steal. The incidence of phone theft is always rare only when there is exam. Another hotspot is when students are walking alone at night. For example the social science has a tract road close to the sports field and cases of phone theft have been reported to have happened there. Females are mostly the victims of mobile phone theft because they are weak in nature and can easily be over powered, there are no many cases of male victimization. (KII/Senior security officer, University of Ibadan/Male/33years/Igbo/21 years of service).

This section reviews that females are more vulnerable to phone snatching than their male counterparts. This finding is in tandem with the assertions of UK home officer (2018) when they asserted that youths of 14-24 years are more vulnerable to phone theft especially the female of the above age category are more victims of mobile theft than male. It was further reviewed that phone theft can take place anywhere on the campus, although it is more in the hostels and classrooms during examinations. There was also a mix reactions from the respondents in this section, as some respondents opined that it is only expensive, new and higher grades of smart phones that are been stolen while others opined that any type of phone is susceptible to been stolen as people are looking for any means of sustenance. It was also observed in this session that most phones that got stolen in the hostel was at night when the owners of the phones were sleeping and the thieves broke in to steal their phones either through the window or through the doors. These findings go in line with Felson and Cohen’s Routine Activity Theory (1979) which opined that in other for a crime to occur it only took the presence of three elements which are: a suitable target, absence of a proficient guardian and a likely motivated offender.

Coping Strategies Students Employed after their Phones are Stolen

In view of the fact that the pattern and trend of mobile phone theft have been ascertained in the above section coupled with the fact that mobile phone theft is prevalent in both institutions under study, it became paramount to examine coping strategies employed by victims of mobile theft in the above tertiary institutions. One of the victims of phone theft interviewed had this to say on how she coped when her phone was stolen:

When my phone was stolen, I had to buy hard copy textbooks to read because before my phone was stolen I preferred reading e books on my phone. I also love listening to music, so I started singing to myself. I now take my phone everywhere and I now always ensure that my door is always locked before I go to bed. (IDI/University of Ibadan student/female /21years/Yoruba/400level)

Another victim of phone theft had this to say:

I borrowed my friend's phone to make calls and I had to make photocopies of PDF materials from my friends because I was using the e-copies on my phones before my phone was stolen. I always keep my phone with me and I no longer even take my phone to class anymore especially during exam period. I couldn't do anything about it, I was mostly bored. I had to borrow a friend's phone to do my assignment and go to cybercafé to do my assignments when my friends couldn't give me their phones. (IDI/The Polytechnic Ibadan students/Male/19years/Yoruba/OND I)

Because most students relied on their mobile phone for storing and reading e-copies of textbooks, journals and other academic materials. Hence, when they lose their mobile phone they cope by printing out most important e-books from their friends' phone and also making photocopies of important academic materials. Moreover, students who love listening to music via their stolen mobile phones now resort to singing to themselves as a coping strategy. Similarly, victims of phone theft also borrow their friend's mobile phone to communicate with their family and friends who are in distance. Also students who use their phones to do their assignment had to borrow their friends phone to do their assignments while some go to business centres and cybercafé to do their class assignments and term papers.

In other to avert their mobile phone from being stolen again, victims of mobile phone theft ensure that they take their new mobile phone everywhere and also ensure that their doors are always locked before going to bed. In the same vein, some students who were victims of phone theft no longer take their mobile phones to class, especially during exam period, this is a measure to avert phone theft.

How Culprits of Mobile Phone theft are Handled

If culprits of phone theft are not punished to deter other students from such act, phone theft would become a norm in the tertiary institutions. Hence, this section was concerned with how culprits of mobile phone theft are handled. The security officers in the selected tertiary institution highlighted how culprits of mobile phone

theft are handled. Their responses and opinion are presented below. One of the security officers in one of the tertiary institution had this to say:

The investigation officer handles this. A statement is usually obtained from the victim containing information about the phone and the occurrence. When an offender is caught, the case is usually sent to the student disciplinary committee, some of them are expelled or suspended and if the case is not pursued to the Student's Disciplinary Council (SDC) level, the thief is asked to repay money for the stolen phone. The parents of the offender are also contacted. (KII/Security Officer, Polytechnic Ibadan/Female/53years/Yoruba/20 years of service)

Another security officer had this to say on how culprits of mobile phone theft are been handled:

When they report, we arrest the suspect and a take comprehensive statement from the victim, and then we write a report and send it to the student disciplinary committee for the final judgement. Some of them are expelled and some they suspend for a semester or two, some are compelled to buy the phone back for the owner. We also have a cell here that we lock the offenders in after taking his/her statement, however we lock them up for only 24 hours. (KII/ Patrol Supervisor, Polytechnic Ibadan Security Officer/Male/42years/Yoruba/15years of Service)

From the assertions of the security officers, it becomes obvious investigation is been carried out whenever a victim of phone theft reports that his or her has been stolen, such investigation will lead to the apprehension of the suspects, which is later taken to the student's disciplinary council (SDC) for sentence. It is vital to note that it is the SDC that has the mandate to sanction culprits of phone theft in tertiary institutions in Ibadan, the security takes the reports, makes preliminary investigations and arrest suspects who are referred to SDC after the security officers have proved beyond every reasonable doubt that it is the student that stole the mobile phone. Although, sometimes the police are involved especially when violence is involved maybe when the culprit is not a student of that particular tertiary institution.

Such offender is made to pay money in equivalent to purchase new phone for the victim, especially when the phone has been sold, damaged or rough handled. Parents of the suspects are also contacted and briefed on the offence of their child or their ward before the final sanction from the SDC. However, some offenders may lie that their parents are sick and cannot come around, or that their parents travelled

out of the country, some even go to the extent of claiming that their parents are late just to avert such news getting to their parents. The sanctions from SDC ranges from total expulsion, suspension for few semesters, restitution (buying new brand phone that was stolen)

Another opinion from another security officer further buttresses the above assertion, here is what he had to say:

When a student reports that his/her mobile phone has been stolen, we begin to ask the student questions that will help in locating the culprit. The Nigerian law criminalizes theft, but a student who is caught is reported to the SDC, a person who is caught and is not a student of the institution is taken to the police station. (KII/ Officer in charge of investigations, The Polytechnic Ibadan security officer/Male/48 years/Yoruba/16 years of service)

Another key informant had this to say:

We take down the complaint of the victim and it is written in the report, then it is extracted from the report and sent to the chief security officer and he minutes it to the investigation officer, then we begin the investigation. Both the victim and the suspect are invited and if there is enough evidence to pin the suspect down then we write our report and send it to the universities disciplinary committee. For a student to take a fellow students phone violates the matriculation oath and he /she would be punished accordingly. However sometimes when there is no suspect we ask the victim to bring the phone pack and we send the IME number to CID Eleyele for them to track the phone. If the owner of the phone and the person that stole the phone are both students then it becomes an SDC case, but if the owner of the phone is not a student and the offender is a student and vice versa then it becomes a police case as we cannot adjudicate such cases. (KII/Principal security officer, University of Ibadan security officer/Male/50years/Yoruba/28 years of service)

Another security further throws more light on the above claim, this were his direct words:

When a theft case is reported we do preliminary investigations, we ask if there is a suspect. A good presentation of the report of the theft case would lead to further investigations, but a poor presentation is not taken up but handed to the police. After preliminary investigations, we take the person in but we cannot hold the person for more than 24 hours, so if it's an external case that is someone from outside, we hand over the case to the police, but if it is an internal case it becomes an SDC case. We

report to the authority and the authority takes further steps. (KII/Officer in charge of operations, University of Ibadan security officer/Male/50years/Yoruba/24years of service)

From the above assertion, if the suspect is a student, the matter is reported to the SDC, when such suspect is not a students, he is taken to the police station for prosecution. The security officer opined that investigation is preceded by a victim's report and it is the chief security officer who gives the investigation officer proceed order to commence investigation on the stolen mobile phone, which will involve inviting the victim and the suspect for questioning. From their interrogations if there is evidence prosecute the suspects, the report is taken to SDC which sanctions. On the contrary, when there is no enough evidence to prosecute the suspects, the case is taken to criminal investigation department (CID) of the police in Ibadan with the phones IME number for tracking.

Conclusion

The study examined patterns of mobile phone theft in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan. The tenets of RAT proved useful for understanding the patterns and trends of mobile phone theft in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan. Mobile phones are mostly stolen in the night when students are asleep in their various hostels. The culprits of mobile phone theft are mostly are aided by the lack of adequate securities both in the school hostels. Most phones were been stolen through windows because they thieves can easily tear the nets and gain access into the room, it becomes very easy for the thieves because there were no adequate measures to safeguards the hostels and the rooms, most of the victims' room had no burglary proofs or iron bars which would have made it a bit difficult for the thieves to gain access into their room. Mobile phones that were mostly stolen are the "bigger brands" which are expensive are more susceptible to been stolen than less expensive phones which includes "Iphone", "Samsung", "Infinix", "Tecno Camon" amongst others because they were new, expensive and the thieves could make more money from them when sold. Mobile phone theft are more prevalent during examination periods or towards the end of the semester.

Female students are more susceptible to be victim of mobile phone theft than their male counterparts. Victims of mobile phone theft cope by printing out e-books from their friends' phone and also making photocopies of important academic

materials. Victims of phone theft often borrow their friend's mobile phone to communicate with their family and friends who are in distance. Also students who use their phones to do their assignment had to borrow their friends phone to do their assignments. Culprits of mobile phone theft are sanctioned by the SDC after the security officers must carry out thorough investigation that the offender actually committed the offence. The punishments of mobile phone theft range from total expulsion, suspension for few semesters, restitution. Cases of mobile phone theft are taken to the police station if the culprit is not a student of the institution.

Hence the study recommends that school management should as a matter of urgency beef up security within the school hostels especially in the night. Security patrol within the hostels should be adopted especially at night which will harden targets for mobile phone stealing and further demotivate students from stealing mobile phones. The school management should provide lockable cabinets where students can lock their school bags before entering the examination hall this will also harden targets for mobile phone stealing and further demotivate students from stealing mobile phones. School hostels should be fortified with burglary proofs and iron bars this will harden targets and make it difficult for thieves to easily gain access into the hostels at night. On the other hand, students should take care of their mobile phones and other valuables by safeguarding them at every point in time.

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