



## Controlling Cybercrime (Yahoo Yahoo) using Christian Doctrine and Ethics in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the potential of utilising Christian doctrine and ethics as a framework for controlling cybercrime, specifically the prevalent phenomenon known as “Yahoo Yahoo,” within the Nigerian context. The research employs a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from theology, ethics, law and criminology. It comprehensively reviews Christian teachings, ethical principles, and legal frameworks relevant to cybercrime prevention. Additionally, qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with religious leaders, legal experts, law enforcement officials, and affected community members are conducted to gather diverse perspectives on the issue. Despite legal and technological interventions, the prevalence of cybercriminal activities continues to pose serious challenges to individuals, businesses, and the nation’s reputation. The study finds that Christian doctrine and ethics offer valuable insights and resources for addressing the root causes of cybercrime, including issues of moral integrity, social responsibility, and community accountability. By emphasising principles such as honesty, stewardship, and respect for human dignity, religious teachings can foster a culture of ethical behaviour and deter individuals from engaging in fraudulent activities. Moreover, religious communities can play a pivotal role in promoting awareness and facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

**Keywords:** Christian doctrine, ethics, cybercrime, Yahoo Yahoo, social crimes

### Introduction

It is to be noted that in today’s digital space, also known as cyberspace, insecurity is very much alarming. In relation to the issue of insecurity mentioned above, they

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are participating actively in the form of internet fraud, but in the Nigerian parlance known as *Yahoo Yahoo* (Osuntuyi, Aluko, Ireymi, 2021). This problem has set the entire community on the wrong side among other nations; it has exposed the youths to laziness, the quick syndrome, without recourse to labour. It has increased the rate of human ritual sacrifices among them. Thus, the youths are exposed to the danger of having no moral standards, and religious and ethical values are eroded. Supporting the above assertion, Bello (2017), Osuntuyi, Ireymi, and Aluko (2021) say that: cybercrime is a fast-growing tendency for crime, and this crime has continued unchecked as the cankerworm of get-rich-quick syndrome influences many youths. These youths, who are called “Yahoo boys” and “girls” can go to any length: to swindle the hard-earned income of those who fall into their traps with the internet, to the extent that they are now adding magical powers, religious rituals with internet surfing, in order to facilitate victimisation rates on the web, as affirmed (Tade, 2023).

In Nigeria, the role of religion cannot be overemphasised, as many people profess one form of religion or another, but three religions are outstanding. They are Islamic, Christian and African Traditional Religion (A.T.R). Each of these religions has its adherents. In order to give credence to the above assertion, Osuntuyi, Ireymi, & Aluko (2021) say that the role that religion plays in Nigeria is enormous, and so its effect is seen in our everyday activities. Not minding the mistakes of religion, it can still impart the proper spirit of unity, patriotism, and dignity of labour in the lives of its adherents. In Nigeria, though being a secular state, the influence and power that religion wields cannot be over-exaggerated: it has even been used most of the time to polarise the country and consistently bring sadness to the citizens. Nonetheless, despite the apparent lapses of religion, it is still capable of inculcating the spirit of national consciousness, patriotism, and dignity of labour and a sense of oneness in the lives of its adherents (Falade & Falade, 2013).

**Aims and Objectives:** The aim of this paper is to enquire about the circumstances leading to an explosion of cybercrime in Nigeria. Second, it analyses the dangers inherent in the practice of cybercrime. Third, it examines Christian doctrine and ethics' roles in curbing this menace using Christian doctrine and Ethics.

**Research Methodology:** The study adopted the qualitative method of research, wherein the researcher gathered data through interviews conducted in Nigeria. The face-to-face conversational method was used during the interviews. The researcher interviewed students, lecturers, clergies, businessmen and women, police officers, youths, and farmers and consulted some scholarly articles on the subject.

## The Lifestyles of Yahoo

The lifestyles of Yahoo boys and girls are so spectacular and ostentatious. “They live their lives squandering money and consuming much alcohol and weed. Most of them live their lives based on camouflage, indulging in certain businesses like selling cars and the rest. There is always a shutdown when they attend ceremonies such as birthdays; they spend a lot of money and don’t care how much. They attend ceremonies with expensive cars, especially the flashy ones with sparkling colours, the ones that will actually attract the attention of the people, like Mercedes GLK, which are different cars basically. Still, Benz has always been their preference; they go to clubs,” says D. Ugwu (personal communication, 19 July 2023). O. Nwofoke (personal communication, 1 August 2023) also noted that they used RX350, GLK, Formatic or 4matic Benz, Venza, Sienna new models, Toyota Avalon, GY-Gun, etc. When they attend ceremonies, they spray money like water; some do not stay at weddings, and they just come, spray cash and go. Some of them carry dreadlocks, put on earrings, paint their hair, draw tattoos on their bodies, and usually take hard drugs as well as alcohol.

The life of Yahoo boys, as they are called, brings a sharp division between the rich and the poor: since they make their money through illegitimate means and accumulate much in a short time, they spend recklessly. Lovbee G. (Personal communication, 24 September 2023) remarked that their operations are pretty devastating. C. Nnadi (personal communication, 24 September 2023) says that the activities of yahoo boys led to the escalation of prices of goods and services in the country since they buy without pricing and make house rents uncomfortable for the poor masses. J. Eze (personal communication, 20 July 2023) said, “I would want them to live in my house since they do not owe me. They pay upfront”. According to Ogunade (2024), the activities and actions of Yahoo boys in Nigeria can be summarised in three dimensions: the good, the bad, and the ugly sides. According to Emperror (2017) basically, the lifestyles of Yahoo boys are as follows; alcohols/ spirits, lavish spending on luxuries, the quest for money at all cost, womanising, heavy smoking of any kind of -Cigarette, shisha, kanaka, skunk, immoral dress sense, clubbing now and then, zero regards for tomorrow, zero regards for the family name and so on.

BBC (2022) describes Rammon Abass, aka Hushpuppi, as a notorious Instagram influencer from Nigeria, who before he was arrested in Dubai for crimes bordering on fraud, had been not just the role model of many Nigerian youths who salivate on his ostentatious lifestyle and dream of living his kind of fabulous life someday but was also the prototype of fraudsters known in our local parlance as yahoo boys. Indeed, Yahoo boys are united by a typical penchant to make fabulous wealth quickly, turn their lives

around, and belong. They live not just large but loud lifestyles; they live extravagant lives that flaunt the envy of their not-so-blessed” neighbours, friends, and relatives. They live by the day, work from home or inside their expensive cars, and always possess costly laptops and smartphones, mostly iPhones, with which they work around the clock for their clients. He also observed that they spend their ill-got wealth as fast as it comes, acquiring electronic gadgets, fast cars and cooling off with the most beautiful ladies. Ojoye (2019) observed that musical acts, DJs and nightclub hypemen and the numerous mixtapes of songs, encourage and energise youths and make them believe only the strong-willed get rich before 21 and deserve all the “life enjoyment” that there is.

They live in costly apartments free from any interference or prying eyes of the neighbours; they always have a giant standby generator, which they make use of since they do not rely on Nigeria’s electricity generation, as they mostly live nocturnal lives. The inordinate lust for wealth, fame, and power, which is driving the youth crazy nowadays, has reached an alarming stage in which silence has become complicit (Adimike, 2023). Their physical appearance is always something else.

**Table 1: Some Examples of Cybercrime / Yahoo Yahoo in Nigeria**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
(i)	Cybercriminals	Oyo & Ogun	21/10/2022
(ii)	Email phishing, credential lematul&inrousful	USA	2023
(iii)	Cale 78 Connection Cybercrime & related offer	EFCC	Sept. 2021
(iv)	Appercum	EFCC	April, 2012
(v)	29-year-old mother of 4, ATM & Candswappy	EFCC	Kwara
(vi)	Computer-related offences	Ogun	24/5/2023
(vii)	Internet fraud	Gwagwalada Abuja	24/5/2023

*Source:* Author’s compilation

### **Causes of Cybercrime / Yahoo Yahoo in Nigeria**

It is very clear to everyone that crimes are no longer limited to space but have also gone into the air, the internet. The effect is going deeper on a daily basis. Those involved are mostly youths. Thus, with the present situation of the country, Nigeria, the values of the dominant class are very alarming, thereby giving a false image of the value system that the youth tend in that direction, scamming. The dominant class here means the

politicians. Looking at their lifestyles and their value system, there is a push towards that lifestyle. They have the money, good cars, and are affluent, etc. Having been attracted to that life, the younger generations found cybercrime/Yahoo Yahoo as the fastest route to such a lifestyle. All these have weakened our value system, among other variables.

Since cybercrime has become attractive and a very alluring source of wealth to many, especially the youths in Nigeria, one question that continues to ring a bell in the minds of most Nigerians is what causes this thing. Even though it is a crime, people are desperately taking the route as a significant source of income. According to Abdulkareem (2022), despite the fact that the “get rich quick syndrome” has been extensively blamed for cybercrime in Nigeria, other factors such as unemployment, poverty, societal moral and value decadence, peer pressure, poor cyber awareness, lenient punishment for cybercrime, among others, are also factors that contributed to the unwanted growth of cybercrime.. For Duala (2023, Personal communication), unemployment is the primary cause of Yahoo Yahoo among boys and girls. The government has put into the youths’ minds that going to school and acquiring a certificate is not necessary for survival. Those who are not patient enough to calm down and learn skills jump into *Yahoo Yahoo*, and start defrauding people. For Ugwu (2023, Personal communication), some indulge in such crimes because of a lack of finances, family background, or a lack of a stable or capable family taking care of all their needs; it can also be as a result of peer pressure or family pressure with regard to finances. Hassan (2012), in Omodunbi, Odiase, Olaniya, and Esan (2016), identified the following as some of the causes of cybercrime in Nigeria:

Unemployment is one of the significant causes of cybercrime in Nigeria. It is obvious that more than 20 million graduates in the country are not gainfully employed. Since the idle mind is the devil’s workshop, it has led to an automatic increase in criminal activities for their survival.

The quest for wealth is another major cause of cybercrime in Nigeria. Most youths are notoriously very greedy; they abhor starting gradually and small, hence they strive to compete with their rich counterpart by engaging in cybercrimes.

The lack of stringent cybercrime laws also encourages the perpetrators to commit more crimes, knowing full well that the laws are weak and so can always go scot-free.

Idemili-Aronu, Ajah, Ezeanya, Omaliko and Nwonovo (2021) say that it is particularly germane in the study of cybercrime because it delves deeply into the direct and indirect, immediate and remote reasons why people engage in sustained defrauding of people. Among other things, the researcher identified these as reasons or motives for cybercrime in Nigeria. Scapegoating is also a major cause of cybercrime among the

youths in Nigeria. Scapegoating is an excuse in cybercrimes for shifting or transferring personal liability and culpability to the victims. A respondent notes that the target is Europeans who stole from our forefathers. The youths are just repatriating what they stole from us.

There is also little or no public welfare programme in Nigeria to cater to unemployed people; even the existing ones are shared among the political class, so the youths are left on their own, licking the wounds caused by not being employed. It is quite obvious that one can strongly affirm the following as contributing factors to the increase in cybercrime rate in Nigeria; Laziness, unemployment, peer pressure, bad leadership, high rate of moral decadence, poor parenting or upbringing, unwholesome desire for wealth, poverty, lack of strong cybercrime laws, quest for flashy lifestyle, recovering what has been stolen by the expatriates, influence of religious clerics and many others. On this, Ngwu (2023, Personal communication) says it is leading our youths to laziness, so most do not value hard work anymore. They do not think of anything except duping people. However, Yahoo Yahoo/cybercrime may have appeared attractive, but it has led to our country being viewed through the lens of suspicion, a retrogressive economy, stigmatisation, bankruptcy, a drop in value of many companies and personal psychosis for some of the victims.

### **The Efforts to reduce these Crimes in our society using Christian Doctrine and Ethics**

As a form of religion, Christianity dishes out these measures of control through its doctrinal and ethical suggestions. In the context of discussions, Uviekovo and Idjakpo (2022), citing Ottuh and Attufe (2014), said any phenomenon can be evaluated using ethical and religious theories or principles as a workable framework or pattern. Thus, within the context of various ethical and religious theories, *Yahoo Yahoo* as a social phenomenon can be evaluated. It can act as a control or yardstick to measure excesses. According to research, cybercrime leads to unethical behaviours and seriously impacts underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. It is good to note that cybercrime activities have taken another dimension that goes beyond the use of the computer. Some forms of magical powers, charms, spiritism, superhuman means, and ritual practices are now involved. With this new dimension, the question is which God or God supports deception, swindling, and defrauding people in any form (Uviekovo& Idjakpo, 2022). Cybercrime / Yahoo Yahoo and Yahoo Plus in Nigeria will be screened from a religious or, precisely, Christian doctrinal and ethical perspective. The Ten Commandments state what is required in the love of God and love of neighbour. The Council of Trent

teaches that the Ten Commandments are obligatory for Christians and the justified man is still bound to keep them; the second Vatican Council confirms the bishops and (all Christians) the mission of teaching all the peoples and of preaching the gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain salvation through faith, baptism and the observance of the Ten Commandments, (CCC 2068). The ways through which the Christian doctrine and ethics can be used in controlling the issues of Cybercrime / Yahoo Yahoo in Nigeria are as follows:

*(i) through the use of the pulpit, (ii) through the use of street evangelism, (iii) through the village youth campaign, (iv) through the use of secondary school moral instruction periods and (v) through the use of university inductions, orientations, matriculations and convocation, etc.*

Christian ethics holds that “we shall love the lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with our entire mind. By the conduct of the Yahoo Boys and Yahoo Plus, the verdict of this commandment has been violated since it is clear to the people that they have turned to loving money more than God, so they have taken worship of money and wealth. They are more loyal to whatever can give and sustain their money. Here, all the love and loyalty that should belong to God is given to money and wealth. The scripture says that you shall not worship God and mammon at the same time. It is right to offer sacrifice as a sign of adoration and gratitude, supplication and communion; every action done so as to cling to God in communion of holiness, and thus achieve blessedness, is a true sacrifice, Catechism of the Catholic Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2025).

It is quite obvious that the conduct of the Yahoo Boys and the Yahoo Plus is contrary to the above teaching, and so, through the use of the pulpit, the protagonists of the gospel should condemn that, since all forms of divination are rejected; and recourse to Satan or demons is not accepted by the gospel. In the same vein, the first, second and third articles of faith are denied by their conduct, which states, I believe in one God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary Para 1. Thus, the gospel preachers should struggle more to bring the gospel message to Yahoo Yahoo Boys and Girls’ doorsteps by rebuking them whenever they climb the pulpit to proclaim the gospel message.

The Christian doctrine teaches us to honour our parents. In the same vein, the fifth commandment states, “You shall not kill.” This is a call for respect for the human person and dignity. In the account of Abel’s murder by his brother Cain, scripture reveals the presence of anger and envy in man. Man has become the enemy of his

own fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his own blood be shed; for God made him in his own image. The deliberate murder of an innocent person is gravely contrary to the dignity of the human being, to the golden rule and the holiness of the creator. The law forbidding it is universally valid: it obliges each and every one, always and everywhere. The attitude and conduct of Yahoo Yahoo and Yahoo Plus are seriously clamouring for attention in this regard since they are opposed to both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> commandments. So many examples abound where they not only disrespect the lives of their parents but go as far as killing both their parents as well as those of others, especially women, young and old. According to Thiroux (2004), only God has the authority to give and take away life; human beings are only loaned their lives to be lived as well. In this context, no one has the right to take another person's life. One would rightly observe that the conduct of Yahoo Yahoo or cyber criminals negates this belief. The involvement of rituals in the act has led to the killing of individuals in order to renew the potency of their charms. Nigerians, especially cybercriminals or Yahoo Boys, need to be educated that God owns human life and that whoever touches life, touches the property of God. Much evil follows when the (Nigerian) society ignores the first commandment. Modern Christians must be especially cautious of things we can be tempted to love, e.g., money. The violation of the first commandment has also led to the violation of the sixth commandment, which states that "thou shalt not kill".

The propagators of the gospel should be strong in their stand against these obnoxious acts. They should encourage the government to do the same. They should strongly condemn these ugly developments in our times, primarily through the pulpit. The Christian doctrine preaches against committing adultery. This teaching upholds the integrity of the person. It stands against lust, fornication, prostitution, rape, and adultery. The activities of Yahoo Plus promote everything contrary to these Christian ethics. Of course, "rape wounds the respect, freedom and physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life. It is an intrinsically evil act".

Through the pulpit, the position of the seventh Decalogue is made clear as it states; You shall not steal. Through the village youth campaign as well as street evangelism, the danger of stealing and the consequences of such can be brought to the doorsteps of everyone, especially the younger generations. The contents of this act can be made explicit since this act forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbour and wronging him in any way with respect to his fruits. It commands justice and charity in caring for earthly goods and the fruits of man's labour. For the sake of the

common good, respect for the universal destination of goods and respect for the right of private property are required. In economic matters, respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtue of temperance, so as to moderate the Attachment to this world's goods; the practice of the virtue of justice, to preserve our neighbour's rights and render to him what is due; and practice solidarity, in accordance with the golden rule and in keeping with the generosity of the lord, who, though he was rich, yet for your sake became poor so that you might become rich. This forbids theft that is usurping another's property against the reasonable will of the owner.

All about cybercrime, Yahoo Yahoo or Yahoo Plus is about theft and stealing. This is opposed to Christian doctrine and ethics in all ramifications. They steal people's money by any means through the internet, and when it becomes difficult, they involve rituals, manipulations, pastors, medicine men and all sorts of nonsense. These activities are against what Christianity stands for and should be reprimanded. Such acts should be jettisoned and trashed by gospel preachers. This section of the Christian doctrine and ethics condemns ill-got wealth and stealing. According to Visma (2021) cybercrime is stealing. It is another form of robbery, theft, like armed robbery or burglary. Most of the time, perpetrators of cybercrime always want to call it decent tags like "hustle", soft life, Yahoo Yahoo, and so on, but it does not change the fact that it is stealing. Oluoma (2023) says that when you pursue wealth at the expense of your fellow human beings, you are destroying people. As the slogan goes, "Catch them young", the use of secondary school moral instruction periods can be used to inculcate gospel values and the dangerous vices which Yahoo Boys are promoting. It should be condemned in any manner because cybercrime is a form of stealing or thieving.

During the moments of induction for university and tertiary institutions, matriculations, and convocations, Christian pastors, priests, and evangelists can seize the moment to pass the message to help them understand the negative impacts of the Yahoo Yahoo lifestyles. At this moment, the effects of greed and avariciousness should be preached against. Those men of God who encourage these people by making charms and rituals for them should be discouraged. The evangelists also use family institutions to impact the role of parents in children's upbringing and to strengthen virtues enthroned by every means of evangelisation. Truth should be encouraged; lies, dishonesty, flattery, adulation and complaisance should all be discouraged using sermons, homilies, catechesis, Sunday school, etc. Values such as honesty, sincerity, diligence, hard work and trust are gradually being destroyed in the smallest and fundamental social unit known as family, thereby putrefying and influencing the larger society. These youths are untrustworthy, dishonest, and do not see the importance of

being diligent. This is our fate today in our present-day society called Nigeria. There is an unwholesome desire to trade the correct societal values for wealth.

## Conclusion

One of the most alarming challenges facing Nigerians today is cybercrime, or Yahoo Yahoo crime. As a result of the above, the practice of Yahoo Yahoo, otherwise known as cybercrime, is gaining popularity daily. The reasons are apparent: unemployment, greed, weak social values, the silence of some families and society, materialism, the silence of the men of God, peer group pressure, laziness, weak family values, etc. One cannot deny the fact that materialism, lack of stringent cybercrime laws and the scandal of the men of God, in accepting certain things for rituals which are against the law and Christian values. One therefore sees the need to promote Christian doctrine and ethical values to serve as a control, even when it is obvious that this kind of lifestyle would be complicated to stop. There is an urgent need to increase the societal, religious, Christian and family values, and promote the dignity of labour and contentment as a way forward and as a control measure. Leaders and pastors or pastoral agents should tighten their belts so that the society called Nigeria cannot sink into their hands due to the scandal of silence or compromise.

## Recommendations

- (i) It is the opinion of the researcher that individuals can assist both the church and the government in creating awareness of the dangers of this crime, and the short-term and long-term effects on the individuals, government and the church, as well as other religions. Capable individuals should assist the government in advocating for and rehabilitating the victims.
- (ii) The government should make stringent laws that can discourage the intending fans and promote jobs/, since idleness is the devil's workshop. The government should encourage Christians in their efforts to promote Christian and societal values.
- (iii) Non-governmental organisations should promote ethical values and stand against social vices.
- (iv) Christians should be repositioned towards a friendlier youth program to change the orientation and total transformation of the youths.
- (v) The pastors of souls should try to correct issues by calling a spade a spade. They should be blunt in condemning the evil practices of Yahoo Yahoo and Yahoo Plus.

- (vi) The sacrament of reconciliation should be exposed to the repentant ones. Even Christ forgave one of the thieves on his right-hand side on the cross. This will give them hope and get them reintegrated into society.
- (vii) Christianity should use every avenue available to promote the government's attention to providing employment opportunities, creating an enabling environment for both small-scale and large-scale industries to thrive, and improving the value or purchasing power of the naira. Thus, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria is very high. This has been given as one of the primary reasons for the surge of cybercrime in Nigeria. However, it is the researcher's belief that the above reasons notwithstanding, none of the highlighted reasons is a justification for Yahoo Yahoo. This is because many people are in the same society, and are making legitimate wealth without involving themselves in fraudulent acts, cybercrime, Yahoo Yahoo or Yahoo Plus.

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## Oral interview

S/N	Name	Age	Status	Place	Date	Occupation	Interviewer
1.	Iovbee Godwin	43	Male	Edo	24/9/2023	Priest (Methodist)	Researcher
2.	John C. Eze	50	Male	Orba	20/7/2023	Cleric	Researcher
3.	Nnadi Caleb	36	Male	Ero-Ulo	24/9/2023	Clergy	Researcher
4.	NwofokeOgechukwu	20	Female	Abakiliki	1/8/2023	Student	Researcher
5.	Ugwu Divine	2	Female	Nsukka	19/7/2023	Student/UNN	Researcher