

Computer Human Interaction: A Blessing or Curse for Ghanaian Youth?

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Abstract

Information and Communication Technology ICT and Traditional African Religion TAR (Voodoo/Vodou) promote the integration of socio-cultural, political and economic system of the people in Africa. However, the youth, (Sakawa Boys) merge technology with religion to commit internet fraud. Sakawa is the use of evil occult powers to commit internet fraud by possessing the mind of the foreign cyber target. These Sakawa boys manipulate vodou powers by performing certain frightening rituals for spiritual empowerment before logging into the internet. This has brought different changes to the socio-cultural and ideological bases of Ghanaians. This study reviewed literature on the causal factors, their modus operandi and the consequences of technology human interaction in Ghana. The Internet and Vodou rituals are found to be the major driving force for Sakawa boys to practice their trade. The consequences of the activities of these boys included infertility, mental illness, sickness or death for the perpetrators and the victims of their ritual sacrifices. Based on traditional ethos, this has transformed the preferences and social values of the youth in Ghana.

Keywords: Cyber-Crime, Trafficking, Internet Accessibility, Modus Operandi, Credit Card

Introduction

The youths are considered as investment, bedrock on which society develops and future leaders with the potentials to stimulate economic, social and national transformation. It is when these potentials are developed or empowered that national developmental momentum can be sustained otherwise they restrain national development (United Nations, 2007). Therefore, any country that ignores the welfare, socioeconomic values and development of the youths in technology could be jeopardizing their future and survival. The ICT promotes the socio-cultural, political and economic values of the youth through the Internet if not used fraudulently (Boateng et al., 2010). Majority of those who browse the internet are adolescents below the age of fifteen and constitute the perpetrators of internet crimes. Internet crime is on the increase in Ghana as the youth are engaged in it (Boateng et al., 2010; Magele, 2005; Oduro-Frimpong, 2014). The Ghana police service indicates that internet crime suspects are mostly the youth aged between 20-25 years (Boateng et al., 2010; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). The police lamented that apart from the Ghanaian moral and social values, the canker has serious security and economic implications and appealed to the general public to join hands to fight it. The youths who are supposed to be in school are rather engage in internet fraud locally termed *sakawa*. Cases of internet fraud pertaining to credit card, contractual and advanced fee fraud have been fairly documented (Magele, 2005; Longe et al., 2009; Boateng et al., 2010).

Sakawa, in Hausa Language means *put inside*, - also referred to as 419¹ in Nigeria- came to limelight in the 1990s before known as 'yahoo boy'. Internet fraud, *Sakawa* which initially involved the use of credit cards for online shopping was the preserve of a few highly intelligent youths. The scope of *sakawa* committed with the aid of a computer has expanded to include child pornography, identity theft, fake security software, credit card fraud, click fraud, cyber-squatting and stock schemes (Guerra, 2009; Danquah and Longe, 2011). Internet crime is committed when the perpetrator develops a scheme using the internet to deprive someone of property, estate or right by a false representation or concealing information (Amstrong, 2011). Most of them claim the ordinary Internet fraud no longer yield the desired result so they seek the help of spiritualists to use charm to hypnotize their clients. Thus, they employ the lesser spirit from the Traditional African Religion or *Vodou* to perpetrate fraud instead (Danquah and Longe, 2011).

Vodou is a syncretic religion that combines Roman Catholicism and Traditional African Religion, particularly from Dahomey (now Benin), Nigeria-Ibo in West Africa as well as Haiti, Taino Indians, New Orleans and other locations within the Caribbean. The differences in practice among various *Vodouisants* are the symbols, names for lesser being, drum beats and many others. Branches of *vodou* are referred to as lineages some of which focus more on magic rather than the religious aspect. The basic practice of *Vodouisants* is the belief in one God who does not intercede in human affairs. The lesser beings, thus ancestors and the dead assist humans in resolving social and economic problems. The lesser being is treated like an individual with feelings, emotions, with likes and dislike moods so making them upset may cause problems in society. As such, popular culture associates *Vodou* with devil worship, torture, cannibalism and

¹ It is derived from the Nigerian Criminal Code Act Part VI Section 419 chapter 38 (obtaining under false pretense ; cheating etc) Nigeria's constitution of criminal code read as section 4, subsection 1, paragraph 9 = 419

malevolent magical workings. The relationship between humans and lesser beings is a reciprocal one². Thus food and other items that appeal to them are provided through rituals in exchange for their assistance. The beliefs form a unique set of rituals that involve dolls and symbols associated with each lesser being for interaction with the community during rituals. There is no standardized Vodou dogma since shrines or temples within the same city have different mythologies and practice in different ways through various offerings, ceremonies as well as by observing certain codes and taboos. A variety of animals are killed for blood during rituals to sustain the spirits spiritually in return for blessings and spiritual and physical protection. The belief in Vodou is that everything has one high spirit which has access to Ancestors or other Spirits³. The sakawa boys are exploiting on the basis that every object has spirit and can be communicated to for anything good or bad by invoking evil vodou powers for successful internet fraud (Armstrong, 2011; Danquah and Longe, 2011).

The Sakawa boys engage in rituals with certain rules and lifestyle, swear oath of secrecy to abide by sakawa rules, otherwise they are inflicted with calamities and wounds that never heal. They are also ordered to sleep in coffins in cemeteries on specified days and to carry coffins at midnight while semi-naked, drinking human blood obtained by murdering someone or from discarded menstrual pads, abstaining from taking baths, spiritually sacrificing one's manhood which leads to either impotency or infertility (Armstrong, 2011; Asamoah and Agyapong, nd; Oduro-Frimpong, 2014). Most of them cannot own properties or any permanent fixed assets but if defies the rules and owns landed property then they can only enter the building walking backwards. The consequences of total violation of these rules include losing all the wealth, going mad or death (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011, 2014). These rituals endow Sakawa boys with spiritual power to possess the mind of foreign fraud victims to extract quick and easy money by browsing the internet.

Objectives

Sakawa is a growing threat to those who rely on the internet for business activities in Ghana (Raghavan and Parthiban, 2014; Wolf, 2013; Danquah and Longe, 2011). The incidences of fraud are increasingly reported in West African nations including Ghana (Oumarou, 2007). There is a need to investigate the prevalence of *Sakawa* and its economic impact in Ghana. The research specifically:

1. investigates the forms and perceived causes of growth of internet fraud *Sakawa* in Ghana.
2. examines the modus operandi of internet fraudsters *sakawa boys*.
3. looks at the implication of *Sakawa* on the economy and give recommendation.

Materials and Methods

² For details see <http://vodoureligion.com/2011/04/vodou-overview/> by Catherine Beyer Vodou-Overview by admin | Apr 4, 2011 | Free Vodou Classes/Voodoo Information, Haitian Vodou Updated February 21, 2017

³ see <https://www.thoughtco.com/g00/vodou-an-introduction-for-beginners-95712?i10c.referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F> Vodou: An Introduction for Beginners

This narrative study focused on articles available in English and adopted secondary data analysis approach. Data were taken from the internet, books and papers published in areas of internet fraud. Data were also collected from newspaper articles and news articles from various online news outlets. The search was done using Google scholar, Ghanaweb.com -Ghana Homepage and the Daily Guide. This study therefore summarized the data collected from these relevant articles that span from 2005 to 2016.

The data collected through multiple sources and varied interpretation was analyzed in line with the research objectives. The main themes used in the study were derived from the data after several readings and analysis. These themes were generated based on the frequency of appearance in the secondary data and information obtained from the review.

The target participants of the study were sakawa boys through the media reports and scholarly articles which included article references and other articles citing them. The studies included in the review were also based on articles explaining the forms and reasons for sakawa growth, modus operandi and rituals as well as its impact on the country.

Findings

Forms and Perceived Causes of Growth of Sakawa

The various forms of internet fraud include: First, trespass is a form of fraud which involves crossing boundaries into other people's property and/or causing damage through hacking, defacement and viruses. Second, deceptions and theft involves stealing through credit card fraud, intellectual property violation and piracy. Third, pornography deals with activities that breach laws on obscenity and decency. Fourth, Internet violence is a fraud that causes psychological harm to, or inciting physical harm against others, thereby breaching laws that protect others (Yar, 2005; Ohene, 2015). The factors perceived as reasons for the growth of sakawa include less costly internet accessibility, unemployment, drug trafficking, peer group influence and informal reparation.

Less Costly Internet Accessibility

The ICT penetration and adoption is on the increase across Ghana and access to internet through satellite connections and fiber optic cables. ICT-based businesses and services like electronic government, electronic commerce and electronic banking services have increased (Ohene, 2015). This level of growth has a corresponding increase in fraud even though it has provided some opportunities for individuals and organizations (Owen, 2014). The extreme economic hardships push the unemployed and materialistic youth who have cheap internet access to engage in *sakawa* activities. They can afford to stay in the café for whole night because it does not cost much. The frustration of these boys is stemmed by their inability to take care of themselves and their parents after university. With the expertise in IT, they reluctantly sought the aid of the Vodou Priests to defraud their clients through the internet. As required, the priest takes them through certain acts that violate basic social and cultural values of the community.

Unemployment

The youth in Ghana finds it difficult getting full-time work due to the economic recession across the world. Unemployment is the major problem of Ghanaian youth, particularly graduates

of tertiary institutions who spend years after graduation without jobs (Duah and Kwabena, 2015). The imbalance between supply and demand of labour is viewed as technological as most of them do not have the required skills and qualification to perform those jobs (Rao, 2010; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). These happen because the educational system is not designed to produce manpower with entrepreneurial skills and does not also guarantee employment for 'white collar job' they are trained for. For instance, unemployment was at 20% in 2008 and since then groups of unemployable graduates are churned out of these tertiary institutions across the country (CIA Word Bank Facebook 2010; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). Thus, high youth unemployment rate in any country is indication of massive and complex problems. The jobless educated youth with anxieties join cults which generate social and economic immorality. It is revealed that developing countries have most unemployment trend with attendant social, economic, political and psychological consequences (United Nations, 2012). For example, this unemployed youth first used the internet to manipulate businessmen interested in shady deals by sending fraudulent messages through letters, fax or Telex to targeted companies. According to the African Economic Outlook (2012), the population in the 15 -24 age groups has an unemployment rate of 25.6%, twice that of the 25 – 44 age groups and thrice that of the 45 – 64 age groups. The large numbers of youths who sell assorted dog chains to earn a living tell the magnitude of unemployment (Oduro-Frimpong, 2014; African Economic Outlook 2012). Unemployment used to be seasonal in Ghana and was associated with agriculture as most farmers spend their idle time without any work during off-season (Rao, 2010). The introduction of simple machines results in the displacement of human labour causing technological unemployment while the shortage of industrial vacancy brings about industrial unemployment (Rao, 2010). Therefore, unemployment results in most of the youths engaging in fraudulent deals. The youths have identified sakawa as panacea to these numerous problems or as life-saving engagement.

Drug Trafficking

The internet fraud is used as a conduit some people in the country to do other illegal businesses. The burning desire of the youth to get rich overnight is ever ready to engage in unimaginable activities. According to Wall (2010), the rise of the internet crime has criminalized the cyberspace. Sakawa promotes drug business as drug traffickers are alleged to increasingly take advantage of the sakawa internet operation to sell their illegal substances through encrypted emails. Some pretend to be sakawa boys but are actually drug dealers who just to divert the attention of the security agencies. These trades are thriving on peer pressure, once the youth witness their colleagues drive hybrid cars, wear quality designer clothes, get all the beautiful girls and live flamboyant lifestyles get attracted.

Peer Group Influence

These youths are lured the ability of their colleagues and former school mates to do certain things within a short period of time. Those interested are first introduced to only internet fraud and if not satisfied with the earnings then official introduction is done to the 'real sakawa where vodou is applied. Most of them are specialize in the carding part of the sakawa thus they can buy anything online with stolen credit cards no matter the security codes. These carding professionals help their colleagues to purchase items online with stolen card that are difficult to use due to

security features. They also sell stolen credit cards to those who have not had any. All of these struggles are to imitate colleagues who succeeded in defrauding and travel to places for selfies, visit places for awesome sight seeing, to go holidays for shopping outside the country. They want to live the life of their rich and famous as done by some friends. Majority of the youth are charmed by this luxurious lifestyle of their friend as indicated by one sakawa boy 'at a time that we are struggling to rent a single room, a friend has four-bedroom house with a swimming pool, a gym and a wine bar that most hotels in town would envy.

Informal Reparation

The sakawa boys look at money from internet fraud as some sort of reparation from the Western countries and as a punishment for corrupt political leaders. There is external and internal revenge as revealed in the literature. As such most of the Sakawa boys do not feel any remorse for their actions because the common believe is that Ghana's wealth was stolen to the western countries. So technology and religion are used in fraudulent activities as a way of bringing back the looted resources. Therefore, sakawa is described as payback time for natural resources the colonial masters stole from Ghana to develop their countries. The claim is that this deprivation left the country in absolute poverty which the West must pay for. "The west stole this wealth and we are going to scam it back, it's rightfully ours". Internally, most of the youths believe that politicians use pen and paper to defraud the state and live flamboyant lifestyles at the expense of the masses so money from the internet fraud can be used to solve most of the neglected problems, thus deprive them some revenue.

Modus Operandi of Sakawa Boys

The term modus operandi refer to a way of doing things associated with particular groups (Collins, 2012). In Rosewarne's (2012) study, such crimes involve an attack on the confidentiality, integrity and accessibility of an organisation's online computer network. The types of crime include traditional crimes committed through the Internet such as Personal Information theft, Financial Information fraud, Hacking of E-commerce, e-banking, Credit Procession Centres, Spam, Counterfeiting Gambling Money laundering, Pornography, cyber stalking, cyberbullying and cyber grooming (Rosewarne, 2012; Ohene, 2015; Danquah and Longe, 2011; Anderson et al., 2012). The focus is on Internet-deception and theft which involves stealing with the use of technology which comes in various forms. The sakawa boys operate with different ways depending on the nature of contact with client. For instance, a sakawa boy needs a ring on the finger if the contact is about using the key board and mouse of the computer. While rinsing the mouth with concoction of water is required when engaging a client in talking, intermittent rubbing of the face with a spiritual handkerchief is required with face to face engagement. They operate with kind of tricks and machinations some of which are outlined below (Danquah and Longe, 2011).

Credit Card Schemes

This refers to the use of unlawful methods to obtain credit card numbers to order goods and services over the Internet. Credit card scheme was the only way the youth engage in fraud before the introduction of vodou into the system. Then, they rely much on carding professionals

amongst them to either buy stolen credit card information or for them to decode cards with strong security features. These cards were used to place order for expensive items, such as video cameras, wedding rings, DVD players and others at very attractive price. (Schmalleger, 2008).

Phishing

Phishing is employed to aid the credit card fraud. It aims at acquiring confidential financial information such as account numbers and passwords to be used (Anti-Phishing Working Group 2007). Even though these two were previously used to be the ideal forms, sakawa boy still make use of them as well. Besides, the spread of email and easy access to email-harvesting software significantly made it easy to operate (Danquah and Longe, 2011).

Advance Fee Fraud

These are typically advance fee fraud mails (419) which require victims to pay a series of fees to process a transaction that supposedly enables the victim claim a large sum of money or do something on client's behalf (Cukier et al, 2007; Danquah and Longe, 2011). These happen where men posed as women to chat with unsuspecting victims online. They pretend to fall in love with them and ask them to send sums of money for marriage arrangement (Slater and Kwami, 2005). They build up a romantic relationship with the clients before convincing them to send them money. They also deal in non-existent gold dust, timber, securities and oil which is supported with documents from government agencies to establish its authenticity to defraud innocent clients (Danquah and Longe, 2011; Boateng et al, 2011). With the aid of vodou powers they compel the client to send money for their fake business arrangements.

Spoofing or Page-Jacking

This involves the use of fake websites to extract personal information by inserting keywords and meta-tags from other websites to be used by search engines (Dinev 2006 Danquah and Longe, 2011). Initially, the victims were approached by letter but now electronic mail is used without prior contact. As of now the addresses are obtained from telephone and email directories, business journals, magazines, newspapers or through web e-mail address harvesters (Longe and Chiemeké, 2006). To have a successful extraction of addresses of the client, they now involves vodous occult practices and other spiritual assistance to facilitate and enhance their chances in defrauding. The groups and technique in defrauding include linking internet-fraud with vodouism, strictly use their brains or seek blood money and pretend to be engaged in internet-fraud.

Vodou Power

The normal practice of Vodou involves supplications by pouring of libation to ask for long life and material wealth, harmony in their interpersonal relationships and protection from evil forces and persons. Such requests are addressed to supernatural entities like gods and ancestors to the Supreme Being through libation. However, sakawa is beyond the physical internet fraud as they engage in all sort of evil activities including sacrifice of babies and relative by embroiling them in rituals (Amstrong, 2011; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). The purpose of these rituals is to endow the internet fraudster with power to possess the mind of the foreign target, forcing them to hand

over their money (Amstrong, 2011; Boateng et al, 2011; Danquah and Longe, 2011). For example, one sakawa boy reported to have killed 115 babies including his own son and two sisters as sacrifice to the lesser water spirits (mermaid). The sakawa boys arrange with nurses in hospitals to supplied the babies at Ghc100, 000 (25000USD) each. When the babies could not be supplied, the spirit asked for either the father or mother. However, the parent was advised against taking a car gift from the son since the two sisters died from accident with cars giving them by this boy. The spell was broken so the spirit requested for the sakawa boy's life as he was told he had a week to live⁴ <http://www.ghanaweb.com/>. Such Vodou practices are condemned by the major religions like Christianity and Islam even though majority of the followers acknowledge the efficacy of rituals in bringing about material outcomes. For instance, human blood and body parts are allegedly used in the process (Danquah and Longe, 2011).

Implication of Internet Fraud

Despite all the fancy cars and the well decorated houses, sakawa boys do not have peace of mind to enjoy themselves. Before the superficial gain, they instructed to sacrifice their parents and relatives as well as their manhood before initiation. As revealed, there are a lot of uninhabitable houses for sakawa boys because they are haunted by the souls of the people sacrificed. At this time, they start having nightmares as the reality of sleeping with animals against their will, being a forced pedophile, the memories of dead boy and girlfriend, parents, brothers and sisters now disturbs them (Amstrong, 2011; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). For example, the spiritual ring of one of the boys got stuck to his finger and could not be taken off for fear of becoming poor as a punishment until the finger got rotten. Although the boy was not comfortable with the ring, but refused to remove it. With this and many others, they suffer psychological, social and health consequences which constitute a serious threat to them (Wolf, 2013). Anderson (2009) predicts that information technology will be inherently insecure. Based on this, the concern whether the cultural values and identity are in jeopardy is raised. For example, the fact that internet has become a channel for the transmission of pornography cannot be overlooked.

The positive side of IT is that communication, democracy and human rights are strengthened to elevate the status of the people in society (Owen, 2014; Rosewarne, 2012). The positive impact is the foreign direct investment in all over the world. The past decade witnessed a significant increase in remittances which boost the economy and undoubtedly sakawa boys played a significant role in achieving these successes. Most of the remittances are from clients to sakawa boys through the various money transfer systems and banks (Ohene, 2015). These money-transfer outlets also benefits as they pay service charge. Through FDI job opportunities and employments are created, poverty reduced to some extent and incomes improved in developing countries. Besides, ICT connect communities in developing countries to access information on health and medicine, education and pedagogic techniques (Asabere, 2012; Leckson-Leckey, Osei and Harvey, 2011). This technology brought changes to the people's way of life. The impact of technology and religion in Ghana is on the social, political and cultural values of the youth in

⁴See <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Sakawa-boy-Nana-Wan-confesses-in-Church-472418>. For more detail see <https://yen.com.gh/69900-sakawa-boy-to-die-in-two-weeks.html>

particular and society in general. All the aspects of relationship among the people of Ghana are governed by social and economic values which unfortunately is nearing destruction.

The combination of technology and religion has serious consequences on the country. For instance, Ghana was blacklisted for money-laundering by the international watchdog of the global Financial Action Task Force in 2012 because of sakawa activities. Besides, Ghana is viewed as a country with high rate of cyber-fraud which sends bad signal to the international business community. As such, people condemn Sakawa as alien behaviour for Ghanaian because the reputation of the country is damaged (Amstrong, 2011). As revealed, foreign investors have been scared off business transactions on the internet. As a result, sakawa boys are viewed as criminals and a threat to national security and those perceived to be standing on their way (Wolf, 2013). Of late, most foreign companies are reluctant and skeptical to engage Ghanaian counterpart in business deals thus affecting their confidence in online transactions (Salifu, 2008; Longe et al., 2009; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). The country loses revenue, especially from the private sector for the restriction on Ghana in online trade in international companies' websites. Invariably, the E-commerce in the country has also suffered a major setback as it takes the moral rights of Ghana to pride itself as the gateway to Africa. Quite apart, the foreign direct investment and other trade issues are affected (Oumarou, 2007; Duah and Kwabena, 2015).

It is revealed that Sakawa costs retailers of e-commerce approximately \$4 billion per annum which is a treat to Ghanaian economy (Goodchild 2009; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). This results in serious negative press coverage, loss of credibility and bad image suffered by banks and state institutions (Duah and Kwabena, 2015). As such, online business transaction with a credit card is getting tougher as many companies have blacklisted Ghana. Besides, the attempts to penetrate the western markets with made in Ghana goods has also been affected greatly due to restriction on Ghana to trade on the international companies' websites, thus consumer confidence is affected, losses incurred and expenses for crime prevention being shifted to them (Salifu, 2008; Longe et al., 2009; Oumarou, 2007; Boateng et al., 2010). Moreover, the country's resources which could have been used for infrastructural development are used to combat internet crime (Oduro-Frimpong, 2014; Boateng et al., 2010; Duah and Kwabena, 2015).

The pupils' drop-out rate for Sakawa has reached alarming proportions in Ghana. Primary school children are influenced by the lifestyles of sakawa boys so they abandoned school to learn internet fraud. These children are found in internet cafes in school uniforms at school hours.

Discussion

Ghana is one of the countries with highest internet penetration rates in Africa which might contribute to the high rate of internet fraud. The Sakawa boys are aggressive in their pursuit of wealth which in a way gives them considerable influence due to the money acquired and less costly internet access. Those involved in sakawa use various means including the spiritual powers to get what they want from their victims putting the image of the country at stake (Amstrong, 2011; Oduro-Frimpong, 2014). It is not surprising to see one sakawa boy with a flit of azotic cars in the compound. Most of the areas noted for sakawa activities are located in Greater Accra, Ashanti, Central, Brong Ahafo and Northern Regions of Ghana. Access to internet in these areas is high will minimal cost. The amount of money receive depends on the sort of business or activity proposed. Sometimes they make a lot or little and sometimes nothing which calls for vodou

intervention. There is a collection of Sakawa boy storylines often on use of vodou (Amstrong, 2011).

The Vodou priests make their services available to these boys to enhance their powers of persuasion and make their emails irresistible to whoever reads them. They sacrifice some prescribed things to compel the client or victim to send money upon request after the manipulation of the spirit. In most of the sakawa rituals, the parents, boyfriend or girlfriend, brother, sister, or very close relatives is sacrificed. The sacrifices demanded most often include blood of babies, blood of virgin or discarded female menstrual pads or the spermatozoa of certain kinds of people (Duah and Kwabena, 2015; Bosco, 2012; Wolf, 2013). Quite apart, there are unimaginable request like having sexual intercourse with fellow men or fellow women or sleep in coffins and taking an oath not to reveal sakawa secrets (Duah and Kwabena, 2015). Some of the milder requests include not taking bath or eating some particular foods or meat. Majority of them are alleged to have hidden skin rashes on the body for months as consequence for disobeying the spirits, thus for refusing the instruction to perform certain sacrifices. Previous studies explain the complex interdependency of technology and religion and how they tap into ideas that structure internet fraud experiences (Meyer 2009; Oduro-Frimpong, 2014).

The review suggests that the sacrifice performed every five weeks result in pain and frustration (Amstrong, 2011; Oduro-Frimpong, 2014; Danquah and Longe, 2011). And to finalize the process, ritual objects like a frog, a ring and others which serve as link between them the spirit being are swallowed. These rituals are performed to ensure that their demands are granted by whoever it is directed to without failure and in return must also obey and fulfill some prescribed sacrifices without failure. It is revealed that most of these youths who failed to obey have hidden boil around the anus and sore with multi-rashes dripping whitish fluid as punishment for disobeying the spirits. Many are losing their lives for failing to perform the mandatory sacrifices as obligations towards the deity they have sworn allegiance to. According to Opare-Henaku (2014) these spiritual misfortunes can include curses, punishment from the Supreme Being, the Devil and witchcraft. The majority of them have expressed a strong desire to quit sakawa due to the scary nature of the task at initiation but are afraid to loss their lives. The performance of sacrifices is not consistent but kept changing a sacrifice today might not be same the next day thus the spirit instructs one to do unimaginable things (Oduro-Frimpong, 2014).

Some tracks of internet fraud operation show that sakawa boys place order either late in the night or early morning. It is revealed that they consistently placed large order from online with stolen visa cards. It is estimated that financial losses occasioned by internet fraud in the United States alone increased from \$52.5 million in 2006 to \$67 million in 2007 (Richardson, 2008; Boateng et al., 2010; IC3, 2010). They often order same item like engagement rings, DVD players, digital cameras and other items that can be sold (Oduro-Frimpong, 2014; Duah and Kwabena, 2015). The success of this depends on how they manipulate the relationship within technology and religion. The review shows that the youth who engage in sakawa often uses *vodou* to help them scam their victims of millions of dollars.

As deduced from the review, unemployment pushes the youth to lawlessness. The term Sakawa was not known in Ghana a decade ago. Internet fraudsters were called Yahoo boys - a term mostly used in Nigeria. In corroboration, Cukier et al. (2007) state that these fraudulent internet activities originate from Nigeria. These Yahoo boys were only into specific online

purchases which currently expanded to include different internet frauds with foreigners (Duah and Kwabena, 2015; Wolf, 2013). The desire to get quick money without hard work, poverty and unemployment contributes to the rise of this social menace. They prefer to engage in sakawa activities making them synonymous with designer clothes, luxury cars, wealth and little education. They create emails in certain amazing ways and are identified with certain types of music. The majority of them is from poor family background and lives in impoverished areas so sakawa is considered a panacea to their problems (Duah and Kwabena, 2015). A combination of technology and *Vodou* spirits infused in them same kind of logic and thinking (Amstrong, 2011; Danquah and Longe, 2011). The economic iniquities are generated by the advent of technology since most activities can be done by machines, means less people needed. The internet has a lot of benefits which the youth can take advantage of but rather they misuse it to jeopardize their future and society in general (Boateng et al., 2010; Magele, 2005; Oduro-Frimpong, 2014).

Recommendation

A provision should be made in the statute books to address internet fraud as a type of crime. The review indicates the Ghana Police Service lack adequate technical know-how and legal support to effectively discharge their duties. They use the conventional crime laws on false pretense in the criminal Code Act 29/60 Section 131 to internet fraud which is not sufficient enough (Boateng et al., 2010). As explained by Boateng et al., it is inappropriate to use this law because it lacks facts to support the charges made against the suspects. With this, a multi-stakeholder effort and appropriate technical training for the Police and supportive legislation are needed. This necessitate the need for the government to establish investigative bodies, if there is none, or reactivate the existing ones for victims to lodge formal complaints which must be followed with investigation and conviction when necessary. The issue of sakawa requires a general consensus of all the stakeholders hence the Electronic Transaction Act (ACT 2008) was launched to regulate electronic communication and transactions as part of an attempt to address cases of internet crime. As such, the security agencies mandated by ACT 2008 should be supported by the state and the general public to execute their mandate. Besides, the Economic and Organized Crime Office was also set up by Act 804 of 2010 in line with the 1992 constitution which needs empowerment to fight against corruption (Duah, and Kwabena, 2015). For efficiency and effectiveness, Ghanaian must be courageous to report any suspicious transaction to the Financial Intelligence Centre as required by the Mutual Legal Assistance Act, 2010 (Act 807) without fear or favour.

The emergency Cyber Crime Response Team must be well resourced. The existing laws governing the activities of the technology must be reviewed and supported by all stakeholders to enhance cyber security. The law-making agencies should streamline the activities of internet users. It is revealed that sakawa results from a large and complex network of serious national issues supported by highly placed official from both the public and private sector (Duah and Kwabena, 2015). These corrupt officials should also be dealt with mercilessly to serve as deterrent for others. According to Grosby (2005), nationalism and kinship involves the transmission of values across generations. This call is supported by studies that internet crime has become a global issue that requires a concerted effort from governments, the private sector, civic and legal institutions and other social organizations (Boateng et al., 2010; Broadhurst, 2006).

Even though, there are problems in terms of jurisdiction and availability of evidence, co-ordination of the investigation and the legal framework(s) can still be applied (Ohene, 2015; Ibikunle and Ewemiyi, 2013).

The youths are the future and are therefore important so policies that recognize youth unemployment should be pursued as a critical national problem and the urgency to get it solved. These policies should aim at job creation or needs to provide more jobs in the country to tackle the menace. This call is for proper job creation and not partisan job snatching happening in Ghana. For instance, the upsurge of NPP *foot soldiers known as Invisible Forces, Kandaha Boys, Delta Forces and all the forces* who have engaged in the seizure of public toilets, toll booths and the ejection of public officials from their offices to protest the unfulfilled campaign promise to provide them with jobs is a sign of the level of unemployment in the country. These youths have the technical know-how so the state needs to design appropriate development programs which utilize the technical competencies they used. Studies support that sakawa boys are young, clever and often without any criminal records, possessing expert knowledge and always motivated by varied financial and non-financial goals (Balkin et al., 2006; Salifu, 2008; Coomson, 2006).

If care is not taken, human resources of the country will be depleted as sakawa boys do not find education and acquiring skills relevant. They are destroying the potentials in exchange for vodou powers to defraud people. Therefore, the youth should be encouraged to stay in school and to refrain from sakawa by reassuring them that education can offer the best way to success. There is need for counseling and rehabilitation. The government and religious leaders need common platform to discuss ways of containing the menace. It is a crucial moral issue and a serious security threat that can destroy the youth if left unchecked. So parents should ensure that their children are brought up according to the morals of society and always question the source of their income.

Conclusion

The penetration and adoption of ICT are on the increase in the country making internet accessible and affordable. This led to the growth of youth internet patronage with simultaneous rise of Internet fraud *sakawa* in Ghana. It is found that sakawa is fast gaining grounds in Ghana and the investigative agencies seem to lack the technical know-how to contain the problem. The sakawa boys are young with technical competence prompted to commit internet crimes due to unfavourable economic conditions. Unemployment and extreme economic hardships made the boys lost trust in the state and cannot therefore look to the government for solution. They are frustrated as university graduate and individuals who cannot take care of themselves or fulfill their obligations to their parents. The internet provides opportunities for individuals and organizations as well as information security risk as the dimension of spirituality is added. The idea of seeking spiritual help becomes necessary when sakawa boys do not get favourable responds from their clients. All the major religious faiths in Ghana believe in the efficacy of religious rituals that uses the supernatural in order to produce material outcomes, even though they condemned the criminality as it affects the moral standing of everybody. Further, doing business on the Internet is made riskier than dealing with a conventional customer. As a last resort, they engaged in internet fraud and reluctantly seek the aid of the vodou. They engage in this fraud with impunity partly because of the difficulty in

prosecuting this type of crime with the victims living abroad. Conclusion can therefore be made that internet fraud is increasing in countries with few or no laws against the crime or little capacity to enforce laws against it as the scenario in Ghana.

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