



Social Media and Cybercrime: A Sociological Study in Light of Symbolic Interactionism and Its Psychological and Social Effects on University Youth

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Abstract

The world has witnessed a rapid development in communication technology, which has led to the emergence of modern tools for social interaction. We now live in an era where human relationships increasingly rely on technology as a means of enhancing and expanding these connections. Among these tools are social networking websites, which have enabled large groups of individuals to

gather in interactive virtual environments that occupy a significant portion of young people's time, attention, and thought in particular, and various age groups in general.

This virtual community shares a unified space that allows users to interact with one another through features such as short messages, synchronous chatting, and the exchange of files, images, and videos.

The main objective of this research paper is to explore the reality of cybercrime on social media platforms and its recent manifestations among university students. This is achieved by describing and defining the phenomenon, identifying its types, and examining its legal and social frameworks, while also highlighting the psychological and social impacts and risks it poses to these students

Keywords: Cybercrime; university youth; communication technology; privacy violation; defamation; psychological effects.

Résumé

Le monde a connu un développement rapide des technologies de communication, qui a conduit à l'émergence d'outils modernes favorisant les interactions sociales. Nous vivons aujourd'hui à une époque où les relations humaines s'appuient de plus en plus sur la technologie pour renforcer et élargir ces liens. Parmi ces outils figurent les sites web de réseaux sociaux, qui permettent à de grands groupes d'individus de se réunir dans des environnements virtuels interactifs qui occupent une part importante du temps, de l'attention et des pensées des jeunes en particulier, et de divers groupes d'âge en général.

Cette communauté virtuelle partage un espace unifié qui permet aux utilisateurs d'interagir entre eux grâce à des fonctionnalités telles que les messages courts, le chat synchrone et l'échange de fichiers, d'images et de vidéos.

L'objectif principal de cet article de recherche est d'explorer la réalité de la cybercriminalité sur les plateformes de réseaux sociaux et ses manifestations récentes chez les étudiants universitaires. Pour ce faire, il décrit et définit le phénomène, identifie ses types et examine ses cadres juridiques et sociaux, tout en soulignant les impacts psychologiques et sociaux et les risques qu'il représente pour ces étudiants.

Mots-clés : cybercriminalité ; jeunes universitaires ; technologies de communication ; violation de la vie privée ; diffamation ; effets psychologiques.



Introduction

The world today has witnessed a rapid development in communication technology, which has reshaped social life and enabled it to operate according to new and emerging standards. Technological media now intervene to occupy an increasingly significant portion of people's time and attention. This immense and accelerating advancement in communication tools has been accompanied by the evolution of crimes related to the technological sphere in general and the electronic sphere in particular. Technology has played a major role in facilitating the expansion of criminal phenomena in various forms within the social environment (Ali Ahmed Al-Majdhoub, 2013, p. 11).

The world is currently exposed to a form of cyber warfare, evident in the unlawful practices and behaviors that target internet users—especially users of social networking sites, whose numbers are vast and continuously increasing. Studies on social networks indicate that these platforms have affected individuals' economic and social lives. Statistics from March 2019 show that the number of internet users reached approximately 4,168,461,500, representing 50.8% of the world's population. According to the same statistics for that year, there were 2.22 billion social media users worldwide, accounting for 31% of the global population (Lakhdar Salami, 2021, p. 189).

This massive use of social media platforms makes them a fertile environment for the growth and spread of online criminal behaviors. Cybercrime varies according to time and place, and its definitions are numerous. Due to its novelty

and the limited number of studies addressing it, cybercrime lacks a comprehensive definition, largely because of the continuous and rapid developments it undergoes, as well as the diversity of tools used to commit it and the emergence of new forms. Definitions also differ depending on the perspectives of those attempting to conceptualize it. In general terms, cybercrime is defined as: “crimes committed through the global network, in which computers and global networks are used as tools to assist in committing offenses such as fraud, money laundering, defamation, and verbal abuse” (Noura bin Abdullah, 2012, p. 4).

As previously mentioned, social media platforms have brought with them serious social problems, many of which stem from cybercrimes. These platforms have become the primary and most effective medium for developing, facilitating, and accelerating the commission of crimes in ways that were not possible before, due to their distinctive features and the massive interaction among users. Increased user interaction—particularly among youth—leads directly to an increase in cybercrime and its evolution.

Given that social media platforms attract great interest from university youth, who rely on them to benefit from the various services they offer, these young users also become vulnerable to their negative aspects. From this perspective, the importance of the present study emerges, as it addresses one of the most significant and prevalent issues facing the contemporary world—an issue that increasingly affects university students.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are centered on investigating emerging forms of cybercrime occurring through social media platforms, identifying the types of crimes that university students are exposed to, examining



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how they fall victim to them, and understanding the risks and negative psychological effects these crimes have on the privacy and mental well-being of university students who depend on these platforms in various academic and social aspects of their lives.

1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

1.1 The Concept of Cybercrime

Cybercrime is defined as any unauthorized, unethical, or socially harmful act or criminal activity – whether directly or indirectly – carried out through computers or smartphones via the Internet as a means to execute an intended criminal act. Such acts include copying, altering, deleting, or gaining access to information stored in computers and electronic devices, including smartphones, as previously mentioned. Cybercrimes are characterized by their speed, constant evolution, and the absence of physical violence against individuals during their commission. Perpetrators typically possess technical knowledge of the tools and methods involved. These crimes are also transnational, their evidence is easily destroyed, they are difficult to detect and investigate, and they often do not fall under a precisely defined legal provision addressing them (Rahmouni Mohamed, 2018, pp. 435–437).

Cybercrime is also defined as a set of behaviors and actions that fall outside the scope of the law, committed against individuals or groups by other individuals or groups with the intent to harm a legitimate material or moral interest, such as fraud, money laundering, defamation, and verbal abuse. These crimes are based on computers, global networks, and automated information systems. The law

punishes them regardless of the offender's intent, as they relate to evolving interests and values that fall under the protection of criminal law (Bahloul Soumia, 2020, pp. 139–142).

It is difficult to adopt a single definition of cybercrime because it is a criminal phenomenon of a unique nature, undergoing continuous evolution and diversification, and viewed differently depending on the discipline of the researcher and the criteria used in defining it. Accordingly, definitions can be classified into four major approaches, which represent some of the most prominent attempts at determining what constitutes cybercrime:

1. First Approach: Based on the Means of Committing the Crime This approach defines cybercrime according to the tool used in its commission. The jurist Tiedeman, for instance, defines computer crimes as “all forms of unlawful (or socially harmful) behavior committed using a computer” (Hisham Rustem, 1995, p. 110).

2. Second Approach: Based on the Object of the Crime Supporters of this approach argue that the computer itself must be the target of the crime—meaning that the attack must be directed at the computer or its system. Rosenblatt, representing this approach, defines cybercrime as “an unlawful activity aimed at copying, altering, deleting, or accessing information stored in or transmitted through the computer” (Hisham Rustem, 1995, p. 110).

3. Third Approach: Based on the Perpetrator's Technical Knowledge Supporters of this approach rely on a personal criterion, requiring the offender to possess knowledge of



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computer technology and use in order for the act to be considered a computer-related crime. Dr. Hisham Rustem cites definitions from proponents of this perspective, including David Thompson, who defines cybercrime as “any crime whose commission requires the offender to have knowledge of computer technology.”

4. Fourth Approach: Based on the Result of the Attack

The French jurist Masse defines cybercrime as “illegal attacks that may be committed through informatics for the purpose of gaining profit.” Similarly, American expert Don B. Barker defines it as “a criminal act—regardless of its connection to information technology—through which the victim suffers a loss and the offender intentionally gains a benefit” (Sami Al-Shawa, 1993, p. 516).

Legal Definition of Cybercrime

The Algerian legislator uses the term “crimes related to information and communication technology” and defines them under Article 2 of Law 09-04 as: “Crimes involving attacks on automated data processing systems as specified in the Penal Code, or any crime committed or facilitated through an information system or electronic communications network” (Official Gazette, No. 47, 2019).

This definition reveals the following: First, the Algerian legislator adopted a composite standard for defining cybercrime. The first component is the **means** of the crime, namely the electronic communication system. The second is the **object** of the crime, which is the attack on automated data processing systems. The third is the **legal standard**,

referring to the applicable criminal law provisions (Namdili Rahima, 2017, p. 100).

Second: Defining the Scope of Cybercrime

The Algerian legislator has also defined the scope of cybercrime by stipulating that such crimes are committed within an information system or are facilitated through it. This broadens the legal scope of cybercrimes under Algerian law (Namdili Rahima, 2017, p. 100).

It is worth noting that, just as the definitions of cybercrime vary, so do the terms and labels used to refer to it. These include: computer and internet crimes, high-tech crimes, hacking and sabotage crimes (Younes Arab, 2002, p. 7), cybercrime, soft crimes, information crimes, and white-collar crime (Nahla Abdelkader, 2010, p. 46).

The Concept of Cybercrime Victims

Victims of crimes are defined as any person or group that suffers material, physical, psychological, economic, political, or social harm, or any individual or group exposed to damage—including harm to physical or intellectual integrity or serious violations of fundamental human rights recognized internationally. Legally, the Algerian legislator does not use the term “victim” in the Code of Criminal Procedure; instead, it defines victims simply as any person upon whom the crime has been committed (Khaled Ahmed Lotfi, 2020, p. 43).

Victims of cybercrime may be ordinary individuals, political figures, businesspeople, internationally known celebrities, or legal persons such as companies, banks, governmental and private sectors, and financial institutions, which are considered highly targeted environments due to



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the financial resources they possess (Khalili Nabila, 2016, p. 7).

Interpreting Internet Crimes in Light of Symbolic Interactionism

The Internet has created extensive and unlimited processes of interaction and communication, which have come to dominate our lives, behaviors, work, and aspirations. This dominance has produced social relationships grounded in symbols and meanings generated through boundless communication processes. Consequently, a symbolic interactional system emerged—one that attracts groups from diverse cultures. The Internet has thus assumed a serious and influential role in our daily lives.

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, focusing on cybercrime requires examining the interactions within groups. With the rapid growth of information and communication technologies, individuals can now join any group at any time and from any place. As a result, influence occurs through symbols, leading to the development of a criminal culture within individuals—who, in turn, become more easily targeted through the web.

According to Mead, an individual's relationship with the group occurs through small groups, which influence the mind and the self. This is precisely what happens in online communities that increasingly target children, drawing them into interaction with the aim of achieving criminal objectives. Here, Sutherland's theory of differential association is also relevant, as interaction and exposure to certain groups can facilitate crimes such as sexual exploitation of children, trafficking, and influencing their

cultural and national identities. This also explains the emergence of a generation of Arab youth lost within foreign cultural entities.

The Importance of the Symbolic Interactionist Approach in Explaining the Communication Phenomenon

Symbolic interactionism focuses on communication processes—something the Internet has reinforced through its diverse tools and technologies. Within this framework, interactionism views the victim as playing a role in provoking the offender through words or insinuations that may lead the latter to commit a crime. This is particularly evident on the Internet, especially on social media platforms, where insulting, slandering, defaming individuals and families, and spreading rumors have become widespread. Such actions serve as triggers that greatly contribute to the spread of crime—either by retaliation through similar means or through acts of violence, murder, and other behaviors learned through the open, unrestricted content available online (Shireen Dabbabneh, p. 100).

Interpreting Cybercrime in Light of Criminological Theories

Criminal behavior is essentially the same, regardless of whether it is committed using traditional methods or modern technological means. Many contemporary crimes can be understood through the lens of sociological theories of crime, as explained below:

In 1957, Sykes and Matza introduced the concept of “subterranean values”—values that guide behavior and action, such as cleverness and opportunism, which overshadow values like honesty and integrity. Practical



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values dominate moral ones due to the constant deception individuals experience in daily life. This framework applies to Internet crimes and newly emerging offenses rooted in technological life and online environments that expose individuals to ongoing deception, potentially influencing them to commit crimes.

Sutherland emphasizes that criminal behavior is learned through interaction and communication with others. Technological innovations in communication have impacted inherited values, replacing them with practical ones reinforced through continuous direct interaction with others on the Internet.

Social Media as an Interactive Virtual Environment

Social media platforms are websites on the Internet that emerged with Web 2.0. They allow users to create personal pages and connect them through an electronic social system with other members. They facilitate communication within a virtual community defined by specific relationships such as friendships, collaborative work, shared information, common interests, or quasi-affiliations such as belonging to a country, school, university, or company. These platforms enable users to share files and photos, exchange videos, create blogs, send messages, and engage in instant chats with people—whether known in real life or known only within virtual contexts (Mohamed Mostafa Refaat, 2018, p. 17).

Sociologists refer to social media platforms as the “third place” – the space individuals turn to after their first place (home) and second place (work, school, or university). It is now clear that this third place has become predominantly

electronic (Tahseen Mansour, 2012, p. 4). This digital world, represented by the Internet, includes accessible platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, and others. University students resort to these platforms to establish various social relationships, forming networks with other students and users within specific relationships—friendships, shared work, exchanging information, or sharing activities and interests with individuals who share academic interests (such as research) or broader affiliations such as the same university. Users also share and access multimedia such as photos, videos, files, and other forms of information.

B. Defamation, Slander, and Blackmail

Certain suspicious websites have emerged on the Internet, dedicating themselves to spreading rumors and false news with the aim of defaming and slandering others—whether political, intellectual, or religious figures, or ordinary individuals. In some cases, such websites seek to blackmail individuals by threatening to publish rumors unless they comply with financial demands (Muneer Mohamed, 2006, p. 30).

Cyber Identity Theft on Social Media

Identity theft refers to the act of impersonating another person to benefit from their reputation, wealth, or authority. This highlights the importance of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of users' personal information online. An identity thief can use personal data that is easily accessible on the Internet—such as a name, address, or ID number—which may be sufficient to impersonate someone else (Hassan Taher Dawood, 2014, p. 84).



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Cyber identity theft can result in draining a victim's bank account, withdrawing funds using their credit card, damaging their reputation, or committing fraud against others using the stolen identity. The criminal may exploit the victim's positive reputation, whether an individual or a company, which might have taken years to build. Frequently, criminals change the victim's mailing address to their own so that they receive bills and alerts that could otherwise expose the crime.

Cyber Privacy Violation

Individual privacy is a human right that allows a person to protect their personal information from others. Intruding into someone's office, home, personal computer, or even their thoughts is considered a violation of their privacy. Intrusion does not necessarily mean destroying or altering data; simply opening someone's personal computer and viewing its contents constitutes a violation of individual privacy.

Methodological and Field Framework of the Study

Study Method and Techniques

We relied on the qualitative method to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of cybercrimes on social media platforms among university students. The qualitative method is one of the research approaches used to achieve an in-depth understanding and comprehensive description of a social phenomenon. It is a method based on studying the human being and the social reality in its various dimensions. It involves a qualitative methodological imagination that infers reality, anticipates the future, and studies the human

subject using diverse cognitive tools such as participant observation, free and in-depth interviews, expert interviews, and focus group discussions (Arabi Abdelkader, 2007, p.195).

Both observation and interviewing were employed to meet with university students who had been exposed to cybercrimes through social media platforms. Most interviews were conducted on campus. A semi-structured interview tool was used to support respondents in understanding the questions and answering them accurately, while also allowing them freedom in their responses to obtain information that serves our topic with precision.

Open-ended questions were posed to the respondents, focusing on the types of cybercrimes university students experience on social media, their psychological and social impacts, and how they deal with them. The sample consisted of **5 males and 10 females**, with ages ranging from **19 to 27 years**, representing both undergraduate and master’s students.

Habits and Patterns of Social Media Use Among University Students

Table (01): The Most Frequently Used Social Media Platforms Among the Sample

Category	Units of Analysis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Facebook	13	28.26
2	Instagram	10	21.73
3	YouTube	10	21.73
4	WhatsApp	9	19.56
5	Snapchat	2	4.34
6	TikTok	2	4.34
Total		46	100



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Members of the sample attributed their frequent use of Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram to their ease of browsing, simplicity, clarity, flexibility of use, and global popularity. These platforms are also the most commonly used by friends, relatives, and colleagues in work and study. One respondent stated: **“Most of the people I know use Facebook.”**

These platforms enabled students to communicate, exchange messages, share photos and videos, post stories, and interact with professors and classmates. Several participants mentioned that these platforms—particularly Facebook—serve as a link between them and the university. Entertainment was another reason for use, as one participant explained: **“I watch trends and reels.”**

Students also use these platforms to stay informed about different updates and news. One respondent said: **“I chose these platforms because they contain all the cultural, political, religious, and entertainment news, and I use them to communicate with acquaintances.”** Another added:

“I chose these platforms for the ease of communication and to keep up with various events.”

Some respondents also used these platforms for marketing, work-related purposes, or sharing specific messages such as promoting religious content. These platforms help reach a large audience. As one interviewee noted: **“To market products, I must target customers on all social media platforms, especially Instagram and Facebook, because many people follow them, and even their algorithms help with sales and marketing.”**

Another female participant used Facebook and Instagram to promote her small business. YouTube ranked third in terms of use, mainly for entertainment, relaxation, and learning through various YouTube channels and videos related to users' interests.

A participant stated: **“I watch things that benefit me and topics I’m interested in, like learning languages, cooking, and watching YouTube channels such as Joe Hattab or storytelling channels.”** Another said: **“I use YouTube to watch videos related to fashion, pet care, travel, nature, horror stories, and other topics I enjoy.”**

All respondents used YouTube for viewing content – not for producing or uploading videos. Thus, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube – especially Facebook – are the most widely used platforms among the study participants due to their diverse features and services.

Students also use other platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and Snapchat, indicating that the sample possesses multiple social media accounts due to their intensive use of technology and their desire to keep up with modern digital developments.

Table (02): Reasons for Social Media Use Among the Sample

Category: Objectives - Social Media Platforms Provide Multiple Services

Unit No.	Units of Analysis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Communication and chatting	15	25.86
2	Entertainment and leisure	14	24.13



3	Accessing news and updates	6	10.34
4	Learning and studying	10	17.24
5	Work	5	8.62
6	Shopping	4	6.89
7	Religious outreach	4	6.89
Total		58	100

The results show that most respondents use social media platforms primarily for communication and chatting. This indicates that the essential purpose of social media is interaction and communication with others. These platforms make it easier for students to connect with friends, relatives, and colleagues in work and study environments. They allow interaction through messages, posts, and stories by commenting, sharing, and other forms of engagement.

One female respondent stated: **“Most of my friends and acquaintances use Instagram and Facebook, so I can easily communicate with them. On Instagram, I also watch reels and trends. I also use WhatsApp because some of my friends don’t use Facebook or Instagram, and WhatsApp is the only platform through which I can communicate with them.”**

Another respondent said: **“I use them for communication, work, shopping, and studying.”**

A third participant explained that social media platforms are: **“Useful for interacting with others, whether acquaintances, new members in the Scouts, or new friends. I like forming friendships in real life, and social media helps maintain these friendships by staying connected despite long distances.”**

Another respondent added: **“I communicate a lot with my close friends and tell them almost everything about my daily life, and they do the same.”**

A different participant said: **“Facebook is the platform where all my acquaintances—relatives, friends, and colleagues—have accounts, and they are very active on it. I watch their stories, communicate with them, exchange photos and videos, and interact with their posts. There are also study groups where I find all the information I need, access lessons, and communicate with professors and classmates. As for YouTube, I use it to watch different videos related to fashion and new topics.”**

This type of communication occurs without restrictions of geographical location, travel cost, or lack of time for face-to-face meetings. Social media allows interaction with others anywhere in the world at a cost significantly lower than traditional communication methods. As one respondent stated: **“Communicating with friends and family on these platforms saves me phone credit many times.”**

These findings also indicate that social media offers diverse positive uses. It provides educational benefits by granting access to information, knowledge, distance learning materials, and other academic resources. It also meets students’ entertainment and practical needs. One participant explained: **“I mainly use Facebook for studying because it contains the study groups.”**



Cybercrimes Experienced by University Students on Social Media Platforms

Table (03): Types of Cybercrimes Experienced by the Sample

Category: Cybercrimes on Social Media Platforms

Unit No.	Units of Analysis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Facebook account hacking	9	25
2	Defamation	4	11.11
3	Sexual harassment	4	11.11
4	Blackmail and threats	1	2.77
5	Fraud and scamming	1	2.77
6	Financial theft	3	8.33
7	Work-related harm	1	2.77
8	Identity theft	3	8.33
9	Theft and destruction of photos and personal information	4	11.11
10	Posting offensive or misleading information	2	5.55
11	Sharing personal data and private photos	4	11.11
Total		36	100

These findings confirm what was previously addressed in the theoretical section: although social media platforms provide numerous benefits—most notably ease of communication and messaging, as indicated in the table—they also entail significant drawbacks due to the increasing

number of users. This widespread use has facilitated the spread of cybercrime, which has become a *learned behavior*, as Sutherland argued. As mentioned earlier, extensive interaction among users on these platforms promotes the learning of cybercrimes through engagement with groups that disregard the law and exploit opportunities to harm others. Social media platforms make such contact easy, thereby contributing to the emergence of new types of cybercrimes.

From the perspective of rational choice theory, crime becomes a rational decision, as offenders, once provided with the necessary tools and opportunities, proceed to commit the criminal act.

Regarding the target groups of offenders, the classification of cybercrime victims is not limited to financial sectors, government agencies, military institutions, or corporate entities. Many ordinary individuals are also frequently exposed to various crimes on social media platforms, which constitute fertile ground for targeting users due to the presence of personal secrets and sensitive information online.

The crimes experienced by the sample fall within the types of offenses that typically target natural persons. Many individuals are subjected to fraud, theft, data destruction, hacking, unauthorized access to private accounts, and violations of privacy—exactly in line with what the participants in this study reported.



Table (04): Psychological Impact of Cyber-Attacks
Category: Psychological Effects of Cybercrimes

Unit No.	Units of Analysis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Feeling of guilt	15	17.04
2	Feeling of sadness	15	17.04
3	Feeling of injustice	7	7.95
4	Stress, anxiety, and fear	9	10.22
5	Shock and astonishment	6	6.81
6	Anger	4	4.54
7	Discomfort	15	17.04
8	Loss of trust in others	7	7.95
9	Feeling of personal boundary violation and humiliation	10	11.36
Total		88	100

The results of the table indicate that cyber-attacks have multiple psychological effects on the sample participants. These effects include feelings of guilt due to not taking necessary precautions, as expressed by one respondent: **“I felt guilty and sad because I didn’t take precautions and tried to recover my Facebook account by changing the password, but it didn’t work.”**

Other effects reported include anxiety, stress, fear, shock, sadness, discomfort, anger, loss of trust in others, feelings of injustice, violation of personal boundaries, privacy breaches, humiliation, defamation, and theft of personal information and photos. Some of the respondents’ statements illustrate these impacts:

- **“I was deeply affected psychologically. I felt sad because my account contained many memories and important photos, including awards from cultural competitions. I also had a cooking group where I was the admin, and it was very active, but I lost it due to the hack. After searching for it, I couldn’t find it, so I started using Instagram more and avoided Facebook.”**
- **“What happened affected my psychology and changed my trust in others; it taught me that appearances can be deceiving.”**
- **“I was very upset and shared my experience with my acquaintances so they would know about the fake photos. I reported the person to cyber police and now I don’t trust anyone anymore.”**
- **“I was psychologically affected, very angry, and I now only rely on verified pages or sources. Cyber fraud is easy on social media. I chose not to report the theft formally; I left it to God and decided to forget it. Money isn’t worth what I lost emotionally when I tried to contact them, and they mocked me. Anyway, I’m thankful for everything.”**
- **“I was psychologically affected in terms of trust in people.”**

From these findings, we can conclude the seriousness of these cybercrimes in causing significant psychological problems for the participants, most notably loss of trust in others, anxiety, stress, fear, and anger.



How Participants Responded to Cybercrimes

**Table (05): Reporting Cybercrimes to the Cybercrime Unit
Category: Reporting or Not Reporting Cybercrimes**

Unit No.	Units of Analysis	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Reporting to the relevant authorities	3	20%
2	Not reporting	12	80%
Total		15	100%

The results indicate that most participants prefer to conceal cybercrimes and attacks committed against them. Several reasons may explain this behavior, including fear of the perpetrator. One respondent stated: **“I did not file a complaint and concealed what happened because I suspected he was mentally unstable and could harm me. I chose to hide it to avoid problems I did not want, and I knew he would most likely not face any punishment. Even if he were punished, he might take revenge, which he had threatened.”**

Other reasons include the lack of clear legislation protecting victims' rights and the tendency of participants to address cyber-attacks privately, believing that such offenses are minor and do not warrant reporting. Many prefer to continue their personal lives rather than pursue legal action against offenders.

The table also highlights a common characteristic of cybercrimes: victims often refrain from reporting incidents. This reluctance may also stem from the conflict between the need for investigation and the right to informational privacy,

leading victims to keep their experiences secret to protect their reputation.

Consequently, the role of the victim in preventing cybercrime is limited and largely passive. Reporting, however, benefits judicial authorities by enhancing their experience, defining the framework of the crimes, and developing better strategies for combating cybercrime in the future.

Conclusion

The field study on the phenomenon of cybercrime among university students revealed that most students have personal accounts on multiple social media platforms. This indicates that Algerian students are keeping pace with technology. Most of them maintain accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube due to their frequent usage. Students use these platforms for various purposes: academic activities, entertainment, chatting, meeting new friends, staying updated with the latest news, work, shopping, and more. The reasons for their usage include ease of account creation, simplicity, and global accessibility.

The high level of interaction among users on these platforms has created a fertile environment for committing various new forms of misconduct that can cause psychological and social harm to others, which was observed among the students in the study.

Key findings from the study include:

- **Psychological Impact:** Cybercrimes caused significant psychological problems among



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participants, most notably loss of trust in others, anxiety, stress, fear, and anger.

- **Other Impacts:** Participants also suffered privacy violations, reputation damage, exposure of personal information and photos, dissemination of false and harmful information, intrusion of privacy, theft and destruction of personal data, and monetary theft.
- **Support Systems:** Most participants received support from family, friends, and peers to cope with the psychological or material damage resulting from cyber-attacks.
- **Reluctance to Report:** Most participants preferred to conceal the cybercrimes committed against them and to address them privately, rather than involving legal authorities. They chose to continue their personal lives instead of pursuing legal action against offenders.
- **Low Reporting Rate:** A majority of participants did not report the perpetrators to the relevant authorities. This confirms the findings of the theoretical study, highlighting that victims of cybercrime often refrain from filing complaints. This reluctance may be due to the conflict between evidence investigation and the right to informational privacy, leading victims to keep incidents secret to protect their reputation.

In conclusion, the role of the victim in curbing cybercrime is limited and largely passive. Reporting, however, benefits judicial authorities by enhancing their experience, defining the scope of cybercrime, and developing more effective strategies to combat it in the future.

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