Research Article:

Social Media Implications of Cybercrime on Human Security in Namibia

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Abstract

Technological development has proven to be one of the fastest innovations in humankind. The potential of this innovation has not passed unnoticed and unutilised by business, citizens and criminals alike. The Namibian Police Force (NamPol) noted with grave concern recent spate of recordings, distribution and circulation of obscene, indecent and pornographic materials in graphic and explicit videos that are widely distributed on social media platforms during the period 2015 to 2018. In a context where cybercrime is still under researched in Namibia, this study explored the social media implications of cybercrime on human security with an objective of assessing its implications. A qualitative research methodology was used to gather data for this paper. A sample of 20 participants from the Namibian Police Force, Ministry of Justice, Namibia Law Society, Communication Regulatory Framework of Namibia (CRAN) and members of the public were engaged to collect data using questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Respondents' age varied from eighteen to above sixty years. Data was coded and analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed threats to economic security through Internet fraud, theft under false pretence and expenses of connectivity. Furthermore, social media crimes threaten personal security by violating privacy and distributing pornographic materials, especially sex videos online. Food and community security have also been threatened through the spreading of fake news, for example an outbreak of food disease. In addition, health security was compromised by adverts of fake medication and fake traditional doctors on social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. Environmental security threats were notably inciting crimes towards conservation of environment such as illegal fishing, sand mining and poaching of endangered species. Findings of this study revealed that Namibia has a high level of connectivity and social media crimes are skyrocketing daily. The findings are expected to inform policies and practices in the digital communication era with the enaction of laws enabling the combating of social media crimes and protecting Internet users in Namibia.

Keywords: *social media, social media implications, cybercrime, human security.*

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, the development of modern societies has become intimately interconnected due to globalisation that has brought sophisticated technology. As a consequence, the re-organisation of criminal behaviour has been transformed by these new technologies (Minnaar, 2016). The potential of this innovation has not passed unnoticed by business, citizens and criminals. With more than three billion internet users in the world and the speed with which technology brings new developments to the market, anyone connected can become a victim of cybercrime (Council of Europe, 2015). Snell (2015) has added that since 1973, as computers have become increasingly more accessible, affordable, diverse and pervasive, the nature and rate of offending via technology has evolved and grown to enormous proportions. It is imperative to research of the impacts of technology on human security with specific reference to social media platforms. Some researchers focused more on computer crimes such as hacking and others on cyber security for information systems and infrastructures. Nevertheless, the concept of cybercrime is still under researched in the Namibian context. This study is the first of its kind which specifically focuses on how cybercrime committed on social media impacts individuals. The majority of citizens heavily use the internet in their daily lives, as such it became a paramount need for this study to assess the impacts of cybercrime on internet users. This study models the concept human security along the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report approach to human security. Therefore, the focus will be largely premised on the human centricity approach and rather than its state centric counterpart. The paper first discusses, the conceptual framework employed in the study and goes on to look at cybercrimes committed through social media, specifically on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook in Namibia. It then presents the research methodology which guided the study and assesses the implications of cybercrime on human security dimensions; economic, food, personal, health, political, community and environmental.

Conceptual framework and human security dimensions

Human security is a people centred concept that illuminates a significant shift from national security to the protection of individuals, to respond to ordinary people's needs and dealing with sources of threats to the welfare of the individual (UNDP Human Development Report, 1994). Singh (2014) posits that human security is the protection of the vital core of all human lives from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Social media is a term used to describe a variety of web-based applications and mobile platforms through which users can generate and share digital contents (Chander, 2014). With this in mind, the purpose of the paper is to assess the implications of social media cybercrimes on human security in the Namibian context. MacGuire and Dowling (2013) argue that cybercrime is an umbrella term used to describe two distinct, but closely related criminal activities, cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled crimes.

Mendoza (2017) added that three general parts that converge in the cybercrime are: cyber victims (any user in cyberspace can be the victim of a criminal attack), cyber offenders (individuals who use ICT as an instrument carry out an offense classified as a crime) and the state (government departments specialized in cybercrime to protect internet users in their crime prevention work,). Human security could be traced to the publication of the United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report (1994) which identified a list of perceived new security threats, namely economic, food, health, environment, personal, community, and political security. Human security consists of two main components: "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want (Ossip, 2017); hence, the relevance and application of the concept to the study due to securitisation of cybercrime as a threat to the security of human beings or cyber victims.

Economic security: UNDP Report (1994) asserts that economic security requires an assured basic income-usually from productive and remunerative work or in the last resort from some publicly financed safety net.

Food Security: Singh (2014) states that food security means end of hunger, malnutrition, ensuring healthy diet and lifestyles, especially for vulnerable groups, ensuring availability of food entitlement with work and end of famine.

Health security: health security involves guaranteeing a minimum protection from disease and unhealthy lifestyle (Singh, 2014).

Environmental security: Singh (2014) further maintain that environmental security means integrity of safe water, fresh air and arable land and also includes freedom from deforestation, desertification and natural disasters.

Personal security: Singh (2014) and UNTFHS (1999) agree that no other aspect of human security was so vital for people as their security from physical violence.

Community Security: UNTFHS (1999) argues that most people derive security from their membership in a group a family, a community, an organization, a racial or ethnic group that can provide a cultural identity and a reassuring set of values.

Political security: UNTFHS (1999) informs that one of the most important aspects of human security was that people should be able to live in a society that honours their basic human rights. Literature shows that these security dimensions are at risk of cyber-attacks especially via social media platforms. Any threat to the above dimensions could be a total violation of both human right and security; this is why an understanding of each dimension remain crucial. The application of human security concepts proves to be a low politic matter, witnessing the

national interests in improving the livelihoods, protection of lives through developmental agendas at international, regional and national level necessitated the framework.

Social media platforms usage in Namibia

Internet usage in Namibia is growing at a rate of 4.39% over 10 years and currently 53% of the population is connected to the internet and Facebook has a penetration rate of 27.3 (Internet World Stats, 2020). According to Social Media Stats Namibia (2020) in February 2019, Facebook was rated (46.67%) followed by Pinterest (41.07%) and Twitter (5.68%). While in February 2020, a slight decrease was observed in all social media usage, and this could be caused by affordability of data to stay online or awareness of the social media impacts on users. Facebook usage became reduced to 37.71% and Pinterest (33.12%). Usage for other social media platforms has reduced significantly as shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Social media usage in Namibia

Source: https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/namibia
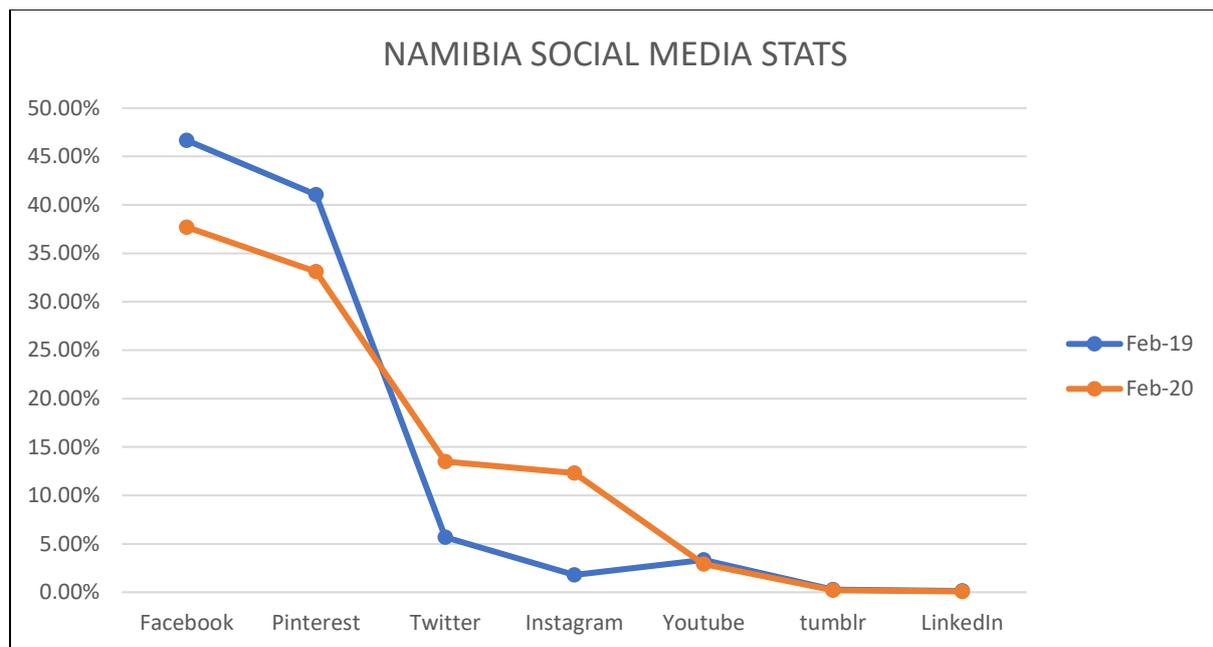
Social media implications

Amendie (2015) looks at the negative impacts of social media and puts them in three main categories; First, social media fosters a false sense of online 'connections' and superficial friendships leading to emotional and psychological problems. Secondly, harm of social media was that it could become easily addictive taking away family and personal time as well as diminish interpersonal skills, leading to antisocial behaviour. Lastly, social media has become a tool for criminals, predators and terrorists enabling them to commit illegal acts. UNODC

(2013) postulate that consumer victims of cybercrime in 24 countries across the world report that they suffered average direct losses of between US$50 and US$850 as a result of a cybercrime incident(s) experienced in one year. Morgan (2017) stated that cyber security firm Ventures predicts cybercrime will cost the world in excess of US$6 trillion annually by 2021. Sinca and Masca (2015) states that one of the new crimes facilitated by the digital environment and social media was grooming - a special form of harassment of minors online and Facebook plays an important role in the grooming of victims.

Amendie (2015) claimed that many deaths, suicides, and emotional problems among youths have started from several moral debates about the side effect of social media. Singh (2014) asserts that revenge pornography victims could be harmed because they lose their anonymity as they are raised out of the anonymous masses and connected to specific nude pictures and forever surface on internet searches involving their names. Barman (2015) adds that privacy was infringed when a hacker accesses a person's profile by hacking his account on a particular social networking website. Singh (2014) postulate that posting-revealing photos of non-consenting others along with identifying information leads to humiliation and embarrassment and could increase the potential online and real-life harassment. Williams and Pearson (2016) maintain, that cyber bullying can result in depression, loss of confidence, fear, isolation and relationship problems self- harming and suicide. Amendie (2015) stressed that terrorist started using the Internet almost 16 years ago. After 9/11, many terrorist groups, such as the Jihadist movements and al-Qaida moved to cyberspace. Nsude and Onwe (2017) added that many lives have been lost through Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, Boko Haram leaders continue to use Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other Jihadist networks to claim responsibility, celebrate success and issue threats for further attacks.

Kamp (2016) state that a small number of individuals were covering the news themselves, by posting photos or videos of news events. Due to the lack of regulations and standards, abuse in forms of spreading false information and rumours, defamation and hate speech can hardly be prevented (Kamp, 2016). In addition, Stroud (2014) posits that, the circulation of false stories, propaganda, and media manipulation by a diverse array of actors online remains a significant threat to American democracy. Stroud (2014) further state that fake news challenges commitments to importance of truthful information in the media and the value of encouraging the use of media to promote fair and wise decisions in the interest of the public. One can sum up that the social media crimes implications include damage and destruction of data, stolen money, lost productivity, theft of intellectual property, theft of personal and financial data, embezzlement, fraud, post-attack disruption to the normal course of business, forensic investigation, restoration and deletion of hacked data and systems: and reputation harm (Morgan, 2017). Based on social media usage rates, it is imperative that we seek to understand the implications thereof in Namibia.

Prevalence and types of cybercrime

According to Links (2018), the Norton Cyber-Crime Report reveals that, every second 18 adults are victims of cybercrime, resulting in more than 1.5 million victims globally per day. South Africa (80%) has the third highest number of cybercrime victims in the world, after Russia (92%) and China (84%). A study done by Kobek (2017) found that in 2013, Mexico held the number one position in the world for pornographic material involving minors and second place for its internet production. There were 1,330 websites, 116,000 web searches a day, and at least 80,000 children who were exploited. Barfi, Ngagome and Yeboah (2018) carried out research in Ghana with 200 students in Sunyani Senior High School which revealed that the most prevalent forms of cybercrime were hacking 20%, credit fraud 18%, identify theft 11%, pornography 10%, sweetheart swindle (social networking) 7.5%, defamation 5% and cyber stalking 3.5% among other forms. It is evident that human security is largely compromised as they share inappropriate or sensitive information on the public platforms and thus exposing selves to hackers.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach. A case study was used to select participants to obtain in-depth understanding of the situation as it allows interaction with participants in their settings. Data collection was undertaken in Namibia. Namibia has fourteen regions and only the central region (Khomas) where the capital city is located was considered during data collection. The city is strategic in making decisions for the nation and has typical issues that can be experienced anywhere else due to its diversity in service and regional representativeness. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 key respondents from various ministries and offices. The sample size was justified by Yin (2016) argument that the researcher selects the specific instances to have those that will yield the most relevant and plentiful data in essence given your topic. A self-administered open-ended questionnaire was used for data collection from the public members, focusing on social media crime information. Unstructured face-to-face interviews were held with officials from Ministries and Offices to gather rich information on the subject. The researcher collected data over a period of three weeks. The age of respondents ranged from eighteen to above sixty as these constitute the active economy contributors.

Twenty (20) participants were purposively selected from the target population based on the argument of Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) that purposive sampling method is effective because it involves identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well- informed with a phenomenon of interest. Ten participants who are public members drawn from Windhoek completed questionnaires, 60% were female while 40% were male. Interviews were conducted with eight participants from line ministries and the regulator, male were majority with 75 %, while female were 25. The representation was as follows: three (3) officials from the Namibian Police Force, two (2) from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), one each from the Legislature Office, Namibia Law Society, and Communication Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN).

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Namibia and permission was granted to collect data within the Ministries, Offices as well as form individual participants. Each participant signed an informed consent form after the researcher had explained the rights to voluntary participation and withdrawal from the study. The study was conducted for academic purpose and anonymity and confidentiality issues were fully observed. As such in this publication we will use pseudo names to speak to the responses.

Implications of cybercrime on human security

This section reports on the social media implications of cybercrime on human security in Namibia. Respondents were requested to describe the implications of cybercrime on the seven human security dimensions as follows:

Economic security

Fifteen respondents posit that internet users lose their money through social media scams, identity theft, online shopping and theft under false pretence. Twelve participants concurred that criminals target Facebook to advertise fake services and products and demand interested buyers to deposit certain amount to them before delivering the product or service. The criminals then terminate their Facebook accounts and change sim cards after having received the deposit. In addition, the results revealed that individuals create Facebook accounts with fake identify and demand funds from known victims by pretending to be in trouble and needing emergency rescue (Amendie, 2015). Since Facebook and WhatsApp seems to be the most common and used social media platform in Namibia, many users fell victims of robbery, housebreaking and theft after posting their possessions on their profiles or WhatsApp status. Three respondents cited a financial pyramid scam known as 'My Life Change' where individuals joined by investing money into it and after sometimes before they could get back their shares, the pyramid was discontinued. The study found that about 40-50 people who joined My Life Change through WhatsApp groups, each with N$ 4000.00 complained of not having received their money back. These findings are the same as for Morgan (2017), McGuire and Dowling (2013), Links (2018) and UNODC (2013) on Internet users financial losses experienced across the globe.

Personal Security

Respondents posit that Facebook and WhatsApp platforms where individuals share their current statuses and residential locations and this leads them to physical attacks, their properties being stolen from their homes during their absence. Eight respondents concurred that social media is heavily used to spread hate speeches as found by Kamp (2016), defamation of character and enable commission of human trafficking. Four respondents point out that violation of human rights such as privacy, similar finding as for Barman (2015) and dignity was compromised with the excessive use of social media in Namibia. Seven respondents stated that incidents of recording and circulation of private conversation, sexual

acts and nude pictures of individuals was noticeably rising during the past four years in Namibia coincide with the study of Kobek (2017). Such exposure of individuals leads into sour relationships, suicide, murder and divorce and this is confirmed by Amendie (2015) and Williams and Pearson (2016). Moreover, respondents noted that Facebook and WhatsApp enabled cyberbullying of persons of all age groups. Related study by Amendie (2015), Sinca and Masca (2015) and Kamp (2016) coincide on the personal security threats.

Community Security

On this dimension, respondents stressed on threats posed to the general community. Reference was made to spreading of fake news on WhatsApp and Facebook, sharing unverified information about education, health and employment opportunities as found by Williams and Pearson (2016) and Stroud (2014). Thirteen respondents argued that social media destroyed ethics, morals and traditions of the Namibian nation. Adding that some Namibian youths adopted foreign cultures instead of following their own. In addition, Facebook and WhatsApp were believed to allow distribution of prohibited items such as drugs and pornographic materials as indicated by Stroud (2014), which destroy the society. Ten of the respondents agreed that individuals incite violence and commission of crimes through social media platforms and such acts threatens community security as posted by Amendie (2015). Sinca and Masca (2015) and Kamp (2016) supports this finding that due to the lack of regulations and standards, abuse in forms of spreading false information and rumours can hardly be prevented.

Environmental Security

Three respondents believe that Facebook and WhatsApp promote unregistered businesses, which cause environmental degradation thereby contributing to climate change. Thirteen respondents describe the effect to environment such as overfishing, illegal fishing or hunting, poaching of wildlife, sand mining and illicit trading of timber which are considered. One respondent stated that matters, which might be harmful to the environment, are discussed on social media. Five respondents indicated that they have no idea of any environmental security threat caused by social media. There were no related studies on the environmental security threats posed by social media crimes.

Health Security

Respondents concurred that it became hard for people with chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, diabetics, high blood pressure and stroke among others to follow their medication due fake information shared through social media about healing of such diseases. Respondents explained that since almost every individual were advertising uncertified medication, which is claimed to heal such diseases, the patients' stop taking medications prescribed by their doctors and buy herbs, pills and other products in the streets. Similarly,

the study revealed that traditional healers and fake doctors saturate the market and target victims of chronic diseases on social media to claiming to heal such diseases. The patients' health deteriorates when they stop consulting their medical doctors and some got side effects after using fake or uncertified medications. Five respondents indicated that Facebook and WhatsApp was also used to reveal the health status of other people and to publicly stigmatize those with HIV/AIDS, similar finding were made by Kamp (2016). As a result, some individuals committed suicide after being exposed. Six respondents further revealed that some people spread fake news about outbreak of diseases or cure of certain diseases. The study further found that infectious diseases spread when minors are groomed on Facebook for sex and having unprotected sexual intercourse with adults. Equally, four respondents informed that many internet users spend most of their time on WhatsApp and Facebook and this leads to anxiety, addiction, and depression, which negatively affects their health.

Food Security

The study noted that citizens advertise and sell exposed food products on Facebook and WhatsApp. One respondent claimed that citizens openly criticized the Food Bank on social media. The Food Bank is an initiative by the Namibian Government to feed the vulnerable during droughts. This criticism might hinder the Government's effort to distribute food to the needy citizens. Seven respondents posit that many people do not understand the implications of their posts on Facebook or WhatsApp, such as the outbreak of food diseases, fake video of food processing and production, which may threaten food security as this may compromise the consumption of some food, thereby contributing to hunger. Four respondents stated that there was no food security threat emanating from social media. However, Kamp (2016) stated that there is abuse in forms of spreading false information and rumours on social media, which could in turn affect food security.

Political Security

Some respondents stressed that Facebook and WhatsApp has been used to attract mass political movements which leads to political unrest, sedition, high treason and organized crimes. Three respondents stated citizens humiliates and insults political leaders on Facebook. Moreover, the study found out that terrorist agencies recruit their members from social networking platforms such as Facebook as discussed by Nsude and Onwe (2017). Additionally, it revealed that during political campaigns, political party followers spread hate speeches as was observed by Kamp (2016), false accusations and threats directed to opposition parties and leaders. Lastly, it was found that Facebook and WhatsApp platforms could be used to incite and plan xenophobic attacks. Amendie (2015) support the findings that social media has become a tool for criminals, predators and terrorists enabling them to commit illegal acts.

The cybercrime situation in Namibia

Respondents were asked to explain the cybercrime situation in Namibia, specifically those committed on WhatsApp and Facebook. All respondents indicated that social media crimes were rising because the majority can afford to have a smartphone and to stay connected. They all made reference to a new trend of recording sexual acts and private conversations of others and circulate them online. The study noted that spreading of fake news and distribution of obscene materials through Facebook or WhatsApp was also common in Namibia. The cybercrime situation was seen to be getting worse in Namibia and interventions were required to curb social media crimes, which threaten human security. Respondents stated that most of married couples divorced when their acts of adultery were exposed on Facebook or WhatsApp. One respondent contend that cybercrime situation was normal in Namibia compared to other developed countries and the bordering South Africa.

## Prevalence of social media crimes in Namibia

In this section, respondents were asked to mention the most common social media crimes in Namibia by rating them on a scale of one to five, one being for the most prevalent and five for the least prevalent crime. In response, distribution and circulation of obscene materials was rated as most prevalent with (94.4%), followed by cyber bullying (72.2%), defamation of character (66.6%), hate speech (61.1.%), cyber stalking and pornography (55.5%), sexting (50%), identity theft and internet fraud (44.4%) were all rated number one, for most prevalent. Crimes rated in category two of prevalence are breach of privacy (44.4%), and child pornography (33.3%).

Human security during Covid-19 pandemic

The emergency of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) believed to have begun in Wuhan, Hubei province- China in the late 2019, posed serious human security threats across the globe. Governments' incompliance with the World Health Organization (WHO) declared state of emergency with some regulations. In Namibia, the State of Emergency was declared in March 2020. Just like other countries, Namibia implemented lockdown measures with some regulations- known as Covid-19 regulations. Among these regulations was the stay at home, social distancing, working from home and restriction on transportation, gatherings and freedom of movements. All these regulations had the possibility of increasing the impacts of cybercrime on human security as individuals, business and society relied heavily on use of technological devices such as computer system, laptops and internet to enable communication, work and conduct business. Now than ever, majority became victims of social media crime prevalently fake news through WhatsApp and Facebook, which could have a serious impact on health, food, personnel and community security. The fact that the world become dependent on internet, which could double the risks of cybercrime on human security could be over emphasized.

Figure 2: Social media crimes in Namibia
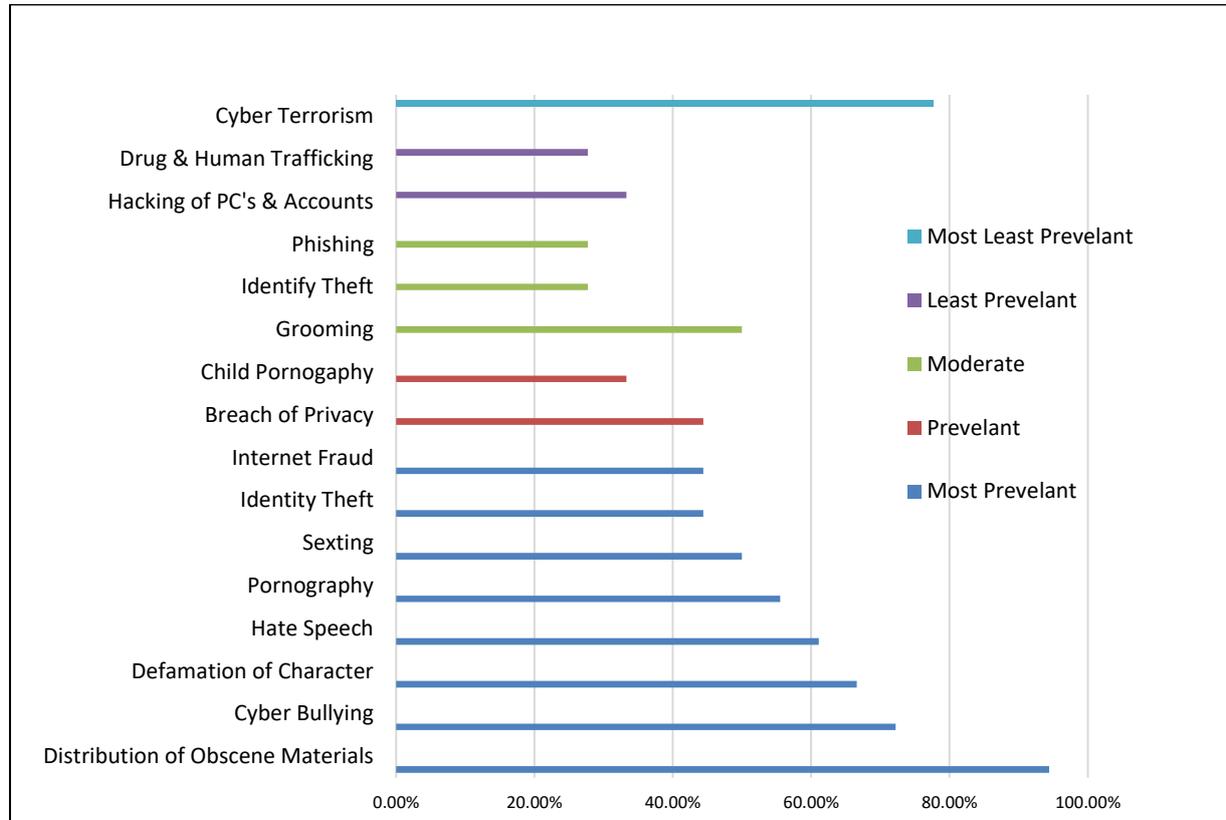
Source: Author fieldwork

The study found out that some crimes were moderate. Examples are grooming with (50%) and identity theft and phishing (27.7%). In addition, hacking of personal computers and accounts (33.3%) and drug and human trafficking (27.7%) appear to be the least prevalent crimes rated four, while cyber terrorism happens to be the most least prevalent social media crime with (77.7%). Prevalence of social media crime in Namibia is constant with the literature of Kobek (2017), Barfi et al (2018) and Links (2018) confirming the study findings.

Commission of social media crime in Namibia

This section reports on a question which asked on how social media crimes were committed in Namibia. Nine respondents indicated that criminals befriend targeted people on Facebook and WhatsApp. Some respondent stated that individuals create Facebook accounts with fake identity and claim to know other Facebook users and start demanding money and favours from unknown persons as found by Amendie (2015). Some respondents stated that individuals steal the pictures of Facebook and WhatsApp users and edit them into pornographic ones and repost them on social media platforms, Kobek (2017) and Barfi et al. (2018) also had similar findings. Moreover, individuals fraudulently pose as estate agents; they advertise flats, houses and vehicles and request interested clients to deposit 50% just as Kobek (2017) and Morgan (2017) found. Once the deposit was made, the criminals deactivate

their Facebook accounts. Fourteen respondents claimed that WhatsApp allows many people to interact at the same time while sending instant messages, videos and pictures to multiple WhatsApp users, and in this way fake news, obscene and indecent materials go viral, as was observed by Kamp (2016). Some internet users share their confidential information on Facebook and WhatsApp, putting them at risk of being robbed, physical attacks and extortion. Furthermore, the study revealed that there is an ongoing trend of recording people's private moments and uploading and distribute sex videos and nude pictures on Facebook and WhatsApp, Barfi et al (2018) got similar findings. Hacking of Facebook account as discussed by Barfi et al (2018) was also reported in Namibia, whereby the account owners are denied access. The study finds that some married couples commit cyber stalking when they use stalking software to trace their spouses when they suspect infidelity in their marriages. Finally, individuals receive phishing messages stating that they have won awards, items and scholarships and the said recipients should provide banking details for the awards money to be deposited, or sometimes the fraudsters ask for money from the said recipient claiming to need money to be able to transport the won items. As a result, the recipient's money gets stolen from their accounts and they do not receive anything in return. This finding is comparable to the literature of Amedie (2015) and Barfi et al (2018).

Conclusion and recommendations

This study's purpose was to assess the social media implications of cybercrime on human security in Namibia. The study further analyzed the cybercrime situation and prevalence in Namibia. Methods of committing social media crimes through WhatsApp and Facebook were also determined. Data was collected in Windhoek, Namibia, focusing on few ministries, offices as well members of public. Adults between ages of eighteen to above sixty were considered for the study. Findings reveal that social media has a serious impact on individuals, businesses and government, server threats are notable on economic, personal and health security. Economic security threats range from thefts under false pretence, identity theft, fraud, embezzlement, hacking of personal accounts and demand money from the befriend users and online shopping. Personal implications were human rights violations; privacy, defamation of character, cyber stalking, physical attacks and hate speeches. Community security was threatened through share fake news, lack of humanity and sharing of obscene and pornographic materials, eroding cultures and traditions, tribalism and organised crimes. One serious mater noted was exposing people's private life on Facebook and WhatsApp exposing by uploading and sharing sex or nude video and pictures. Cyber terrorism appears to be the least prevalent crime. Consequently, online safety or social media education is needed for all internet users in Namibia to prevent economic loses and protect internet users from human rights violations. Future studies may be focused on the cybercrime legal framework as well as the strategies to combat cybercrimes in Namibia.

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