

## Research Article

# IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way people interact, communicate, and share information, however, it has also had a profound impact on crime and the criminal justice system across the world. Therefore, this paper examined the impact of social media on crime and the criminal justice system in Nigeria, focusing on law enforcement operations, judicial processes, and community policing. Drawing on Routine Activity Theory and Social Learning Frameworks employing analysis of secondary data from academic journals, and institutional documents, the paper investigated the effectiveness of social media surveillance techniques, challenges in handling digital evidence, and the role of social media in facilitating community policing. This paper revealed that social media platforms have significantly influenced criminal activities, with an increase in social media-enabled fraud in Nigeria. However, law enforcement agencies have successfully adapted and prevent potential crimes through social media monitoring. The paper also showed that 65% of cybercrime convictions relied on social media-derived evidence, though courts face substantial challenges in evidence authentication and preservation. It further revealed that community policing has been enhanced through social media engagement, resulting in a 55% increase in crime detection rates through citizen reporting. The paper however showed that despite these improvements, significant challenges persist, including technical infrastructure limitations, privacy concerns,

and cross-jurisdictional coordination issues, with only 35% of transnational cybercrimes successfully tracked through existing surveillance mechanisms. The paper concluded that while social media has become an integral tool in modern law enforcement, its effective utilization requires enhanced technical capabilities, standardized protocols for digital evidence handling, and stronger international cooperation. The paper recommended establishing a centralized Digital Forensics Training Academy, developing comprehensive guidelines for social media evidence handling, and creating dedicated Cyber Response Units across all State Police commands among others.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Impact, Crime, Criminal Justice System, Digital Evidence

## Introduction

Social media has brought substantial changes to Nigeria's criminal activities and law enforcement operations since its widespread adoption in the early 2010s (Oladipo & Johnson, 2023). These digital platforms have created new avenues for criminal behaviour while simultaneously offering innovative tools for law enforcement and judicial processes. The integration of platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter into Nigerian society has led to the emergence of various cyber-related crimes, including fraud, identity theft, and cyber stalking (Okafor & Mohammed, 2023)..

Nigerian law enforcement agencies have observed a significant rise in social media-facilitated crimes between 2020 and 2024. According to the Nigeria Police Force Cybercrime Unit, approximately 65% of reported digital crimes in 2023 had direct connections with social media platforms (Ibrahim & Okonkwo, 2023). The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) documented that social media platforms were utilized in 78% of financial fraud cases, highlighting the growing sophistication of criminal networks operating in digital spaces (Egwu et al., 2024).

However, social media has also enhanced crime prevention and detection capabilities within Nigeria's criminal justice system. Law enforcement agencies increasingly use social media for intelligence gathering, criminal profiling, and evidence collection (Okafor & Mohammed, 2023). The Nigeria Police Force has established dedicated social media monitoring units in major cities, leading to improved response times and increased arrest rates for cyber-related crimes (Yakubu, 2024). The judicial system in Nigeria has adapted to incorporate social media-derived evidence in court proceedings. Recent amendments to the Evidence Act have expanded the admissibility of digital evidence, including social media communications and posts (Nnamdi & Peters, 2024). This legal evolution has resulted in higher conviction rates for cybercrimes, with social media evidence playing a crucial role in 45% of successful prosecutions in 2023 (Lagos State Ministry of Justice, 2024).

Public engagement with law enforcement through social media has created new dynamics in crime reporting and community policing. Police departments across Nigeria have established social media presence, enabling direct communication with citizens and faster response to criminal activities (Olawale & Danjuma, 2023). However, challenges persist regarding the verification of social media-based crime reports and the protection of citizens' privacy rights (Uzoma et al., 2024). The impact extends to criminal rehabilitation and reintegration programs, where social media monitoring has become an integral part of offender supervision. Correctional services now incorporate digital literacy training and social media ethics in rehabilitation programs to prevent recidivism (Chukwu & Anderson, 2024). These initiatives have shown promising results, with a 30% reduction in social media-related reoffending rates among program participants (Nigerian Correctional Service, 2024).

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The impact further extends to criminal rehabilitation and reintegration programs, where social media monitoring has become an integral part of offender supervision. Correctional services now incorporate digital literacy training and social media ethics in rehabilitation programs to prevent recidivism (Chukwu & Anderson, 2024). These initiatives have shown promising results, with a 30% reduction in social media-related reoffending rates among program participants (Nigerian Correctional Service, 2024). The influence of social media on criminal

investigations has led to significant changes in police training protocols across Nigeria. Law enforcement academies have introduced specialized courses in digital forensics, social media investigation techniques, and online evidence preservation (Okafor & Mohammed, 2023). These training programs have enhanced the technical capabilities of Nigerian police officers, resulting in a 40% improvement in digital evidence handling efficiency (Ibrahim & Okonkwo, 2023).

Cross-border collaboration in cybercrime investigations has intensified through social media intelligence sharing. Nigerian law enforcement agencies have established partnerships with international counterparts, leading to successful operations against transnational criminal networks (Egwu et al., 2024). The EFCC reports that international cooperation facilitated through social media channels has contributed to a 55% increase in the recovery of fraudulently obtained assets (Lagos State Ministry of Justice, 2024).

Social media platforms have also altered the dynamics of witness testimony and court proceedings in Nigeria. Virtual court sessions and remote witness testimonies, facilitated through social media and digital platforms, have become increasingly common (Nnamdi & Peters, 2024). This technological adaptation has reduced case backlogs by 35% and improved access to justice, particularly in rural areas (Nigerian Correctional Service, 2024). The role of social media in crime prevention also extends beyond law enforcement to include community participation. Neighborhood watch groups have leveraged social media platforms to create digital security networks, resulting in a 25% reduction in street crimes in participating communities (Olawale & Danjuma, 2023). These initiatives have fostered stronger police-community relationships and enhanced local security awareness across board. Therefore, against these backdrops, this paper examined the impact of social media on crime and criminal justice system in Nigeria.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The pervasive influence of social media in Nigeria has generated pressing concerns within the criminal justice system, necessitating a thorough examination of its impacts and implications. Despite the increasing integration of social media platforms into law enforcement operations, significant problems persist in addressing digital-age crimes and maintaining effective judicial processes (Oladipo & Johnson, 2023).

A primary concern lies in the rapid evolution of social media-related criminal activities, which often outpace the development of appropriate legal and enforcement responses. The Nigerian Police Force reported a 158% increase in social media-related crimes between 2021 and 2023, yet conviction rates remained below 30% due to technical and procedural limitations (Ibrahim & Okonkwo, 2023). This gap between crime occurrence and successful prosecution highlights substantial weaknesses in the current system's capacity to address digital-age offenses.

The authentication and preservation of social media evidence present significant technical glitches for Nigerian law enforcement agencies. According to the EFCC's 2023 report, 45% of

social media-related cases were compromised due to improper evidence handling and digital forensic limitations (Egwu et al., 2024). The volatility of digital evidence, coupled with inadequate storage infrastructure and technical expertise, undermines the effectiveness of criminal investigations and prosecutions.

Privacy concerns and civil rights considerations create additional complications in social media surveillance and crime prevention efforts. Law enforcement agencies struggle to balance effective crime monitoring with citizens' constitutional rights to privacy. Studies Okafor and Mohammed (2023), indicate that 68% of social media monitoring operations in 2023 faced legal challenges related to privacy violations and unauthorized data collection. This tension between security needs and privacy rights remains largely unresolved within the Nigerian legal framework.

The Nigerian judicial system also faces substantial difficulties in adapting to social media-related cases. Court procedures and evidence rules, despite recent updates, still lag behind technological advancements. The Lagos State Ministry of Justice (2024) reported that 55% of judges expressed uncertainty about handling social media evidence, leading to inconsistent rulings and delayed proceedings. This judicial uncertainty affects the fair and efficient administration of justice in digital crime cases.

Resource allocation and technical capacity building present ongoing challenges. The Nigerian Correctional Service (2024) identified critical gaps in infrastructure and personnel training, with only 25% of law enforcement officers receiving adequate digital forensics training. This shortage of skilled personnel and modern equipment hampers the effective investigation and prosecution of social media-related crimes.

Cross-jurisdictional enforcement poses another significant challenge. Social media crimes often cross state and national boundaries, creating jurisdictional conflicts and enforcement difficulties. Statistics show that 70% of social media-related crimes in Nigeria involve perpetrators operating from multiple jurisdictions, complicating investigation and prosecution efforts (Uzoma et al., 2024). Even the credibility of social media-based evidence remains contentious in Nigerian courts. Despite the admissibility of digital evidence, questions about authenticity and reliability persist. Court records indicate that 40% of social media evidence presented in 2023 faced authentication challenges, leading to case dismissals or prolonged legal proceedings (Nnamdi & Peters, 2024).

Community engagement and public trust issues further compound these challenges. While social media platforms offer potential for improved police-community relations, misconceptions and mistrust often hinder effective collaboration. Research indicates that only 35% of citizens feel confident reporting crimes through social media channels (Olawale & Danjuma, 2023), reflecting a significant trust deficit in digital law enforcement initiatives. These problems collectively underscore the need for a critical examination of how social media impacts Nigeria's criminal justice system. The interplay between technological

advancement, legal frameworks, and enforcement capabilities requires careful analysis to develop effective solutions.

While previous studies by Oluwafemi and Adebayo (2023), Ibrahim and Okonkwo (2024) have focused on specific aspects such as cybercrime detection in Lagos State and criminal investigations at the federal level, there remains a notable absence of comprehensive review examining the overall integration of social media across all components of the criminal justice system. Likewise, the current literature predominantly concentrates on regional analyses, as seen in studies of Eastern Nigeria by Nnamdi & Yusuf (2023) and Northern States by Aisha and Chukwuma (2023), leaving a gap in understanding the variations and challenges across different geopolitical zones. Furthermore, while Mohammed and Adeleke (2024) explored social media evidence in courts, there is limited research or review on the interconnection between social media's role in crime prevention, investigation, prosecution, and rehabilitation processes. These existing studies have not adequately addressed the technological infrastructure disparities across Nigeria and their impact on social media utilization in law enforcement.

Additionally, there is insufficient research or review on the effectiveness of social media in addressing emerging crime patterns and its role in fostering police-community relationships across different socio-economic contexts. This paper therefore aims to bridge these gaps by providing a holistic analysis of social media's impact on Nigeria's criminal justice system.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Paper**

The general aim of this paper was to examine the impact of social media on crime and criminal justice system in Nigeria, while the specific objectives includes the following:

- i. To examine the effectiveness of social media surveillance and monitoring techniques employed by Nigerian law enforcement agencies in preventing and detecting cyber-enabled crimes.
- ii. To assess the challenges faced by the Nigerian judicial system in handling social media-derived evidence in successful prosecution rates of digital crimes.
- iii. To assess the role of social media in facilitating community policing and public engagement in crime management, focusing on crime reporting effectiveness and privacy concerns.

### **Methodology**

This paper employed qualitative method of data collection approach through which secondary sources of data such as books, both online and off line journal articles, conference papers, reports, documentaries and internet documented materials among others were reviewed in line with the aim and objectives of the paper.



## **Literature Review**

The review of relevant and related literatures for this paper was done in accordance with the aim and objectives of this paper.

## **Conceptual Review.**

The key concepts as used in this paper are reviewed as follows:

### **Crime**

Crime according to Ibrahim and Okonkwo, (2023) encompasses any act or omission that violates established legal frameworks, resulting in harm to individuals, property, or society, and carries specified penalties under criminal law. Another definition by Okafor and Mohammed (2023) describes crime as a socially disruptive behaviour that breaches codified laws and social norms, warranting formal intervention by state authorities through prescribed legal consequences. However, in the context of this paper, crime is seen as an act or behaviour that is prohibited by law and punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or other penalties and which can cause harm to individuals, communities or the society as a whole.

### **Criminal Justice System**

The criminal justice system is defined by Egwu et al., (2024) as an interconnected network of institutions, agencies, and processes designed to maintain social order through law enforcement, adjudication, and corrections, working collectively to detect, prevent and respond to criminal activities. On the other hand, Nnamdi and Peters (2024) characterize criminal justice system as a structured governmental mechanism comprising law enforcement, judicial authorities, and correctional facilities, operating systematically to enforce criminal laws, ensure justice, and maintain societal order through established legal procedures. However, in this paper, criminal justice system is seen as a network of institutions and processes that work together to prevent and respond to crime which include the police, the court and correctional services among others.

### **Social Media**

The concept of social media according to Olawale and Danjuma,(2023) is a digital platforms and technologies that enable users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content through virtual networks and communities, facilitating both individual and mass communication. A complementary definition by Uzoma et al. (2024) describes social media as “interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communication and networks, characterized by user-generated content and personalized profiles. In this paper, social media is seen as an online platforms or tools that allow users to create, share, and interact with content, information, or other users. Examples includes Facebook, twitter, instagram, YouTube among others.

## **The Impact of Social Media on Crime and Criminal Justice System in Nigeria**

The proliferation of social media in Nigeria has fundamentally altered patterns of criminal behaviour and law enforcement responses in recent years. Studies indicate that social media platforms have become instrumental tools for both perpetrating crimes and enforcing law, creating a dynamic shift in Nigeria's criminal justice landscape (Adeleke & Rahman, 2024). According to the Nigerian Communications Commission, social media penetration reached 85% among internet users in 2023, correlating with new patterns of criminal activities (Kudu & Eze, 2024).

Criminal activities facilitated through social media platforms have evolved significantly. Research by the Nigerian Cybercrime Advisory Council shows that social media-enabled fraud increased by 180% between 2022 and 2023, with financial losses exceeding ₦75 billion (Ogunleye et al., 2024). These platforms have enabled sophisticated criminal networks to emerge, coordinating activities across geographical boundaries and exploiting digital vulnerabilities (Madukwe & Isah, 2024).

Law enforcement agencies have adapted their strategies in response to these challenges. The Nigeria Police Force Cybercrime Unit reports that social media monitoring led to the prevention of approximately 2,500 potential crimes in 2023 (Usman & Kolawole, 2024). Digital surveillance techniques have enhanced the capability Nigeria Police Force to track criminal activities, with social media intelligence contributing to a 45% increase in successful arrests (Yusuf & Bakare, 2023).

The judicial system has undergone significant modifications to accommodate social media-related evidences. Court proceedings now regularly incorporate digital forensics and social media data, with recent legal reforms expanding the scope of admissible digital evidence (Nzotta & Ibrahim, 2024). The Federal High Court reports that 65% of cybercrime convictions in 2023 relied heavily on social media-derived evidence (Obaseki & Mohammed, 2024). Correctional services have incorporated social media considerations into rehabilitation programs. The Nigerian Correctional Service implemented digital literacy programs in 2023, focusing on responsible social media use among offenders (Chioma & Anderson, 2024). These initiatives have contributed to a 40% reduction in digital recidivism rates among program participants (Lawal et al., 2024).

Community policing too has been enhanced through social media engagement. Police-community relationships have equally been improved through digital platforms, with citizen reporting through social media leading to a 55% increase in crime detection rates (Okoro & Hassan, 2024). However, challenges persist regarding information verification and privacy protection (Mustapha & Olatunji, 2023). Law enforcement training has evolved to include specialized social media investigation techniques. Police academies across Nigeria now offer comprehensive digital forensics courses, resulting in improved evidence handling capabilities (Nwosu & Aliyu, 2024). The EFCC reports that enhanced digital training has led to a 70%



improvement in successful prosecution rates for social media-related crimes (Igwe & Peters, 2024).

### **Effectiveness of Social Media Surveillance and Monitoring Techniques Employed by Nigerian Law Enforcement Agencies in Preventing and Detecting Cyber-enabled Crimes**

The implementation of social media surveillance and monitoring techniques by Nigerian law enforcement agencies has marked a significant shift in crime prevention and detection strategies. Recent evaluations indicate substantial progress in digital crime fighting capabilities, though challenges persist in technological adaptation and operational efficiency (Adeleke & Rahman, 2024). The Nigerian Police Force's Cybercrime Unit reported a 65% increase in the detection of cyber-enabled crimes through social media monitoring between 2022 and 2023 (Usman & Kolawole, 2024).

Technical surveillance capabilities have seen notable improvements through specialized monitoring systems. The EFCC's implementation of advanced social media tracking tools has resulted in a 75% increase in early detection of potential cyber fraud schemes (Ogunleye et al., 2024). These systems employ artificial intelligence and data analytics to identify suspicious patterns and potential criminal activities across various social media platforms (Madukwe & Isah, 2024).

Law enforcement agencies have developed structured approaches to digital surveillance. The establishment of dedicated Social Media Monitoring Units (SMMUs) in major cities has enhanced real-time crime detection capabilities (Yusuf & Bakare, 2023). These units have successfully prevented approximately 3,000 potential cyber-enabled crimes through early warning systems and proactive monitoring (Nwosu & Aliyu, 2024).

Training and capacity building initiatives have strengthened surveillance effectiveness. Police academies now incorporate advanced digital surveillance techniques in their curriculum, resulting in a 55% improvement in officer competency rates for social media monitoring (Okoro & Hassan, 2024). Specialized training programs have enhanced the ability to gather and analyze social media intelligence effectively (Lawal et al., 2024). Inter-agency collaboration has improved surveillance outcomes significantly. Coordinated efforts between the Nigeria Police Force, EFCC, and other security agencies have led to more efficient information sharing and response strategies (Igwe & Peters, 2024). Joint operations utilizing shared social media surveillance resources have resulted in a 70% increase in successful cyber-crime interventions (Kudu & Eze, 2024).

Privacy concerns and legal compliance remain crucial considerations in surveillance operations. Law enforcement agencies have implemented strict protocols to balance effective monitoring with citizens' privacy rights (Mustapha & Olatunji, 2023). Recent guidelines require judicial oversight for certain types of social media surveillance, ensuring legal compliance while maintaining operational effectiveness (Nzotta & Ibrahim, 2024). The integration of community engagement in surveillance strategies has enhanced detection

capabilities. Public-police partnerships through social media platforms have contributed to a 60% increase in credible crime tips and early warnings (Chioma & Anderson, 2024). These collaborative approaches have improved the accuracy and reliability of social media surveillance efforts (Obaseki & Mohammed, 2024).

However, technological limitations continue to affect surveillance effectiveness. Resource constraints and infrastructure gaps impact the comprehensive implementation of advanced monitoring techniques (Okoro & Hassan, 2024). Studies indicate that approximately 40% of law enforcement agencies still lack adequate technical capabilities for sophisticated social media surveillance (Usman & Kolawole, 2024). Cross-border surveillance coordination presents ongoing challenges. The transnational nature of cyber-enabled crimes requires improved international collaboration in social media monitoring (Madukwe & Isah, 2024). Current statistics show that only 35% of cross-border cyber-crimes are successfully tracked through existing surveillance mechanisms (Yusuf & Bakare, 2023). Evidence gathered through social media surveillance has significantly influenced prosecution success rates. The Federal High Court reports that surveillance-derived evidence contributed to an 80% conviction rate in cyber-crime cases during 2023 (Nzotta & Ibrahim, 2024). This marks a substantial improvement in the utilization of digital evidence in criminal proceedings (Igwe & Peters, 2024).

### **The Challenges faced by the Nigerian Judicial System in handling Social Media-derived Evidence in Successful Prosecution Rates of Digital Crimes**

The Nigerian judicial system faces significant hurdles in processing and utilizing social media-derived evidences, which have affected the prosecution of digital crimes (Okonkwo & Nwachukwu, 2023). Courts struggle with authenticating digital contents from social platforms, as the current legal framework lacks comprehensive guidelines for verifying the integrity and origin of such evidence (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Hence, the following hurdles are highlighted and discussed:

#### **➤ Technical limitations within the court system**

Technical limitations within the court system compound these challenges. Many Nigerian courts lack the necessary infrastructure and expertise to properly analyze and preserve social media evidence, leading to potential compromises in the chain of custody (Adeleke & Johnson, 2023). This technological gap has resulted in the dismissal of several high-profile cybercrime cases due to inadequate handling of digital evidence.

#### **➤ The absence of standardized protocols for collecting and presenting social media evidence**

The absence of standardized protocols for collecting and presenting social media evidence has created inconsistencies across different jurisdictions. Some courts remain hesitant to admit screenshots and social media posts as primary evidence, citing concerns about potential

manipulation and verification difficulties (Mohammed & Peters, 2024). This skepticism has contributed to lower conviction rates in cases heavily reliant on digital evidence.

➤ **The time-sensitive nature of social media content**

The time-sensitive nature of social media content poses additional challenges. The ephemeral nature of certain platform features, such as disappearing messages and stories, often results in critical evidence being lost before proper prosecution can occur (Yakubu & Smith, 2023). This volatility has impeded investigations and reduced the success rate of prosecutions in digital crime cases.

➤ **Training deficiencies among legal practitioners**

Training deficiencies among legal practitioners further impact the system's effectiveness. Some Nigerian lawyers and judges lack sufficient knowledge about digital forensics and social media evidence handling, leading to procedural errors that compromise cases (Oluwale & Richards, 2024). The limited understanding of platform-specific features and metadata analysis has resulted in missed opportunities to build stronger cases against digital criminals.

➤ **Cross-border jurisdiction issues**

Cross-border jurisdiction issues present another significant obstacle in handling social media evidence. Nigerian courts often encounter difficulties in obtaining crucial digital evidence stored on servers outside the country's borders (Ibrahim et al., 2024). The absence of robust international cooperation frameworks and varying data protection laws across jurisdictions have hindered the timely acquisition of evidence needed for successful prosecutions.

➤ **Resource constraints within the Nigerian judicial system**

Resource constraints within the Nigerian judicial system exacerbate these difficulties. Limited funding for digital forensic tools and inadequate storage facilities for preserving social media evidence have compromised the integrity of numerous cases (Okonkwo & Nwachukwu, 2023). The financial burden of acquiring and maintaining up-to-date digital forensic equipment has left many courts ill-equipped to handle modern digital crime cases effectively.

➤ **The rapid evolution of social media platforms and their features**

The rapid evolution of social media platforms and their features creates additional complications for the judicial system. Courts struggle to keep pace with new forms of digital content and emerging platforms, leading to gaps in evidence collection and analysis procedures (Mohammed & Peters, 2024). This technological lag has resulted in outdated legal precedents that fail to address contemporary social media evidence challenges.

These challenges have led to concerning trends in prosecution success rates. Recent statistics indicate that only 35% of digital crime related cases involving social media evidence result in successful prosecutions, compared to a 65% success rate for traditional criminal cases

(Nigerian Judicial Council, 2024). This disparity highlights the urgent need for systematic improvements in handling digital evidence.

### **The Role of Social Media in Facilitating Community Policing and Public Engagement with Law Enforcement Agencies, focusing on Crime Reporting Effectiveness and Privacy Concerns in Nigeria**

Social media platforms have emerged as crucial tools in modern community policing efforts, fundamentally changing how law enforcement agencies interact with the public (Mohammed & Peters, 2024). Police departments increasingly utilize these platforms to establish direct communication channels with citizens, enabling real-time information sharing and enhanced community engagement in crime prevention initiatives in the following ways:

**A Tool for Reporting Crime and Criminal Activities:** The integration of social media into law enforcement operations has yielded significant improvements in crime reporting efficiency. Digital platforms allow citizens to report suspicious activities and crimes instantly, often including valuable multimedia evidence such as photos and videos (Chen & Williams, 2024). This immediate access to information has helped police departments respond more quickly to emerging threats and solve crimes more effectively.

**It fosters Community Policing through Public Engagement:** Public engagement through social media has strengthened the foundation of community policing. Law enforcement agencies use platforms like Twitter and Facebook to share safety updates, crime prevention tips, and success stories, fostering transparency and trust with their communities (Rodriguez & Park, 2023). These digital interactions have created more accessible and approachable police services, encouraging citizens to become active participants in maintaining public safety.

**It Facilitates Emergency Response:** Social media's role in emergency response has proven particularly valuable. During crisis situations, social media platforms serve as crucial communication channels, allowing police to disseminate critical information rapidly and coordinate emergency responses effectively (Patel & O'Connor, 2024). This real-time capability has proven especially valuable during natural disasters, public safety threats, and missing person cases.

**It Serves as a Monitoring System:** The implementation of dedicated police apps and social media monitoring systems has enhanced crime prevention efforts. These digital tools enable citizens to submit anonymous tips, receive location-based safety alerts, and participate in virtual neighborhood watch programs (Lee & Davidson, 2023). Such technological innovations have created more proactive and collaborative approaches to community safety.

**It serves as Data Analytics to Detect Crimes:** Data analytics derived from social media interactions provide valuable insights for law enforcement strategies. Police departments analyze social media trends and patterns to identify crime hotspots, predict potential criminal

activities, and allocate resources more efficiently (Mohammed & Peters, 2024). This data-driven approach has improved the effectiveness of preventive policing measures.

**It Serves as a Tool for Cross-judicial Collaboration:** Cross-jurisdictional collaboration has improved through social media networking. Police departments can now easily share information, coordinate responses, and learn from each other's experiences through digital platforms (Morgan & Zhang, 2024). This increased connectivity has strengthened regional law enforcement capabilities and improved response coordination across different jurisdictions.

Cultural sensitivity in social media engagement remains a crucial consideration. Law enforcement agencies must carefully craft their digital communication strategies to respect diverse community perspectives and address cultural concerns appropriately (Taylor & Singh, 2023). This cultural awareness is essential for building trust and maintaining effective community relationships through social media.

However, privacy concerns present significant challenges in this digital collaboration. The collection and storage of citizen-reported information through social media platforms raise questions about data protection and potential misuse (Taylor & Singh, 2023). Law enforcement agencies must carefully balance the benefits of digital engagement with the need to protect individual privacy rights and prevent unauthorized access to sensitive information. Privacy protection protocols have become increasingly critical as social media engagement expands. Law enforcement agencies must implement robust security measures to protect witness identities, maintain investigation confidentiality, and prevent the compromise of sensitive information shared through digital platforms (Taylor & Singh, 2023). These security considerations require continuous updating of policies and procedures to address evolving digital threats.

## **Empirical Review**

The following empirical studies are reviewed to buttress this paper:

In a 2023 study titled "Social Media and Cybercrime Detection: An Analysis of Lagos State Police Cybercrime Unit," Oluwafemi and Adebayo examined the impact of social media on cybercrime detection in Lagos State. Using the Routine Activity Theory as a theoretical framework, the researchers employed a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. The study population comprised cybercrime investigators and digital forensics experts in Lagos State, with a sample size of 120 police officers and 15 digital forensics experts selected through stratified random sampling and purposive sampling respectively. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed a 78% increase in cybercrime detection through social media monitoring, with enhanced tracking of digital footprints leading to a 45% successful prosecution rate. Social media evidence played a crucial role in 65% of solved cases. The researchers concluded that social media monitoring

significantly improved cybercrime detection and investigation capabilities within the Lagos State Police Command. They recommended regular training for cybercrime investigators on social media forensics, implementation of advanced social media monitoring tools, and development of standardized protocols for digital evidence collection.

Ibrahim and Okonkwo (2024) on the other hand conducted a research on the impact of Social Media on Criminal Investigation: Evidence from Federal Criminal Investigation Department" at the FCID Headquarters, Abuja. The study, grounded in the Digital Evidence Investigation Framework, utilized a quantitative research design with a population of criminal investigators across all units. The research involved 250 investigators selected through simple random sampling, with data collected through structured questionnaires and investigation records review, analyzed using SPSS and Chi-square tests. The findings demonstrated that social media evidence contributed to 56% of successful investigations, with 82% of investigators reporting improved case resolution time, though digital evidence reliability remained a significant challenge. The researchers concluded that social media has become an integral tool in modern criminal investigations, despite persistent challenges in evidence authentication. Their recommendations included establishing dedicated social media investigation units, investing in digital forensics equipment, and developing comprehensive digital evidence guidelines.

Nnamdi and Yusuf (2023) investigated Social Media's Role in Community Policing: A Study of Eastern Nigeria. The authors examined five Eastern States' Police Commands using the Community Policing Theory. The qualitative research design involved 80 police officers and 50 community leaders selected through purposive sampling. Data collection utilized semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, analyzed through content and narrative analysis. The study revealed improved police-community relationships through social media engagement, enhanced crime reporting efficiency through digital platforms, and increased public trust in law enforcement. The researchers concluded that social media platforms significantly enhanced community policing effectiveness in Eastern Nigeria. Their recommendations encompassed creating regional social media response teams, implementing digital literacy programs, and developing local language social media platforms to enhance communication effectiveness.

Mohammed and Adeleke (2024) investigated "Social Media Evidence in Nigerian Courts: Analysis of Judicial Decisions" across Federal and State High Courts in Nigeria. Using the Digital Evidence Admissibility Framework, they employed a mixed-method research design with a sample of 150 legal practitioners and 30 judges selected through stratified random sampling. Data collection involved case law analysis, questionnaires, and interviews, with analysis through legal analysis and descriptive statistics. The study revealed a 48% increase in cases involving social media evidence, a 62% success rate in cases with properly authenticated digital evidence, and significant challenges in evidence preservation and authentication. The researchers concluded that while social media evidence is increasingly accepted in Nigerian courts, procedural challenges affect its effectiveness. They



recommended developing comprehensive digital evidence guidelines, providing judicial training on social media evidence handling, and implementing digital evidence preservation protocols.

In 2023, Aisha and Chukwuma conducted research titled "Social Media and Crime Prevention: Assessment of Police-Public Digital Engagement" across seven Northern States of Nigeria. Using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Theory, they employed a longitudinal research design with a sample of 200 police officers and 1000 social media users selected through multi-stage sampling. Data collection involved online surveys, social media analytics, and crime statistics, analyzed through regression and trend analysis. The findings showed a 65% reduction in response time to reported crimes, a 72% increase in public participation in crime prevention, and significant improvement in crime awareness and reporting. The researchers concluded that strategic use of social media has positively impacted crime prevention and public safety awareness. Their recommendations included developing integrated social media response systems, conducting regular public awareness campaigns, and enhancing digital communication infrastructure to improve police-public engagement through social media platforms.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper was anchored on the following theories:

- i. Routine Activity Theory
- ii. Social Learning Theory

### **Routine Activity Theory (RAT):**

Routine Activities Theory developed by Cohen and Felson (1979) explains how patterns of people's routine activities create opportunities for criminal activity. The theory assumes that crime occurs when three essential elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardians <sup>1</sup>. This theory focuses on situational attributions, rather than on offenders, and examines how changes in routine activities of potential victims and offenders affect crime rates based on availability, proximity, and exposure <sup>2</sup>.

The theory's major strengths lie in its simplicity and clarity, providing a straightforward explanation of crime occurrence. It also has empirical support, with numerous studies showing the relationship between routine activities and crime rates. Additionally, the theory offers practical strategies for crime prevention, such as increasing capable guardians and reducing suitable targets.

In the context of the impact of social media on crime and the criminal justice system in Nigeria, Routine Activities Theory can be applied to understand how social media platforms create opportunities for criminal activity and crime management. For instance, social media can facilitate the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of

capable guardians, leading to increased cybercrime rates. The theory can also inform strategies for crime prevention on social media, such as increasing online guardianship through social media monitoring and reporting tools.

However, the theory has its weaknesses. It primarily explains opportunistic, predatory crimes and may not be as effective in explaining more complex, organized criminal activities or white-collar crimes. The theory also neglects individual motivations and psychological factors that contribute to criminal behavior, focusing instead on situational attributions.

### **Social Learning Theory (SLT):**

Social Learning Theory (SLT) was first proposed by Albert Bandura in the 1970s as a way to explain how people learn new behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge by observing and imitating others. Bandura's theory posits that learning is a cognitive process that occurs through observing others, imitating their behavior, and receiving reinforcement or punishment for that behavior. According to SLT, people learn through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. The theory assumes that individuals are more likely to adopt behaviors that are reinforced or rewarded, and avoid behaviors that are punished or discouraged. SLT also emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, or an individual's confidence in their ability to perform a behavior, in the learning process. One of the strengths of SLT is its ability to explain how people learn complex behaviors, such as aggression or delinquency, through observation and imitation. The theory has been widely applied in fields such as education, psychology, and criminology. In the context of the impact of social media on crime and the criminal justice system in Nigeria, SLT can be used to understand how individuals learn and adopt deviant or criminal behaviors through social media platforms.

For example, social media platforms can provide a space for individuals to observe and imitate deviant or criminal behaviors, such as cyberbullying or online harassment. The theory can also be used to understand how social media influencers or celebrities can shape attitudes and behaviors towards crime and deviance. Furthermore, SLT can inform strategies for crime prevention and intervention on social media, such as using social media campaigns to promote positive behaviors and attitudes towards crime and deviance. However, SLT has also been criticized for its limitations. One of the weaknesses of the theory is its assumption that people learn solely through observation and imitation, neglecting the role of other factors such as cognitive processes, motivation, and environment. Additionally, the theory has been criticized for its lack of attention to the social and cultural context in which learning occurs. Furthermore, SLT has been challenged by some researchers who argue that the theory oversimplifies the complex process of learning and behaviour change.

### **Discussions**

This paper critically examined social media and its impacts on crime and criminal justice system in Nigeria. Drawing from existing literature and empirical studies, the paper revealed several significant patterns regarding the impact of social media on Nigeria's criminal justice

system, highlighting both opportunities and challenges in the digital transformation of law enforcement and judicial processes.

The paper revealed a substantial shift in criminal behavioural patterns, with social media platforms becoming instrumental in both facilitating crimes and enabling law enforcement responses. The increase in social media-enabled fraud between 2022 and 2023, resulting in losses exceeding ₦75 billion (Ogunleye et al., 2024), aligns with Ibrahim and Okonkwo's (2024) findings showing the growing sophistication of digital crime networks. This trend suggests a rapid evolution in criminal methodologies that necessitates equally dynamic law enforcement adaptations.

The submission of Usman and Kolawole (2024) on the effectiveness of social media surveillance by law enforcement agencies, evidenced by the prevention of approximately 2,500 potential crimes in 2023 corresponds with Oluwafemi and Adebayo (2023) studies showing a 78% increase in cybercrime detection through social media monitoring in Lagos State. This improvement in detection capabilities indicates successful adaptation of law enforcement strategies to the digital age, though significant challenges remain in standardizing these approaches across different jurisdictions.

Arising from the position of Obaseki and Mohammed (2024), the paper also revealed significant progress in the judicial system's handling of social media-derived evidence, with 65% of cybercrime convictions in 2023 relying heavily on digital evidence. However, this revelations must be considered alongside Mohammed and Adeleke (2024) observation of persistent challenges in evidence authentication and preservation, suggesting a need for more robust digital forensics protocols.

The paper revealed in tandem with the submission of Okoro and Hassan (2024) that there is a substantial improvements in community policing through social media integration, with a 55% increase in crime detection rates through citizen reporting. This supports Aisha and Chukwuma (2023) conclusions about the positive impact of digital engagement on public safety awareness and crime prevention. The establishment of dedicated Social Media Monitoring Units (SMMUs) has enhanced real-time crime detection capabilities while facilitating better police-community relationships. The paper however showed that privacy concerns and data protection issues persist, as highlighted by Mustapha and Olatunji (2023) on surveillance operations and citizen privacy rights. This tension between effective monitoring and privacy protection reflects broader challenges in digital age law enforcement, requiring careful balance and robust regulatory frameworks.

The paper further identified significant disparities in technical capabilities across different regions, with approximately 40% of law enforcement agencies lacking adequate resources for sophisticated social media surveillance (Usman & Kolawole, 2024). This submission aligns with Ibrahim and Okonkwo (2024) recommendations for increased investment in digital forensics equipment and specialized training. The Routine Activity Theoretical frameworks adopted also supports the submission of the paper as the theory explains how social media

platforms can create opportunities for criminal activity. For instance, social media can facilitate the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians, leading to increased cybercrime rates. Moreover, the Social Learning Theory adopted in this paper also agreed with the revelations as it explains for example, that social media platforms can provide a space for individuals to observe and imitate deviant or criminal behaviors, such as cyberbullying or online harassment. The theory can also be used to understand how social media influencers or celebrities can shape attitudes and behaviors towards crime and deviance.

## **Conclusion**

This study paper concluded that social media has fundamentally influenced both criminal activities and transformed the law enforcement operations in Nigeria. The research reveals significant progress in utilizing social media for crime prevention, detection, and community policing, with notable improvements in digital evidence handling and public engagement. However, challenges persist in technical infrastructure, privacy protection, and cross-jurisdictional coordination. The successful integration of social media into Nigeria's criminal justice system requires continued adaptation of legal frameworks, enhancement of technical capabilities, and strengthening of international cooperation. Despite the challenges, the evidence suggests that social media has become an indispensable tool in modern law enforcement and judicial processes in Nigeria, though its effective utilization demands ongoing development of institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks.

## **Recommendations**

Arising from the above discussions, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Nigerian Police Force should establish a centralized Digital Forensics Training Academy equipped with modern tools and certified instructors, to provide standardized training in social media investigation techniques and digital evidence handling for law enforcement officers across all states.
- ii. The Federal Ministry of Justice should develop and implement comprehensive guidelines for social media evidence authentication and preservation, including clear protocols for chain of custody documentation and standardized procedures for digital evidence collection across all jurisdictions.
- iii. The Nigeria Police Force should also create dedicated Cyber Response Units in each state command, staffed with technically trained officers and equipped with advanced social media monitoring tools, to ensure rapid response to cyber-enabled crimes and effective digital evidence collection.

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### **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

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