ANALYZING CYBERCRIMES IN URBAN SETTINGS: A CASE STUDY OF BISKRA CITY

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Abstract:

The objective of this research paper is to elucidate the notion of electronic crimes, encompassing offenses perpetrated against individuals through the Internet, and to delineate their distinguishing features along with prevalent types prevalent in the city of Biskra. To accomplish this, existing studies on the subject were consulted, and a descriptive methodology was adopted for this investigation. Based on statistical data reflecting the incidence of Internet-related crimes in Biskra from 2019 to 2021, it was determined that the most common types of such crimes involve infringements upon individuals' privacy, followed closely by instances of threats and defamation. Subsequently, several recommendations have been formulated. These include the necessity for conducting further studies into this category of crime, exploring the demographics and motivations of perpetrators, and understanding their nationalities and age groups. Such endeavors aim to empower relevant authorities to devise effective security measures and legislative frameworks aimed at mitigating or addressing the impact of these crimes on urban society.

Keywords: Electronic Crimes; Internet; People; City.

Introduction:

Modern and advanced technology has effectively transformed the world into a global village, connecting countries across the globe. The utilization of modern technologies, particularly the Internet, has played a pivotal role in driving the economies and interests of many nations. However, this widespread adoption of technology has presented a dual nature, akin to a double-edged sword. While it has significantly eased daily life and fostered advancements across various sectors such as education, healthcare, and governance, it has also introduced numerous detrimental consequences. These include societal harms, threats to security, and the emergence of novel forms of crime proliferating in cities worldwide.

Cities have increasingly relied on advanced technologies, computers, and the Internet, permeating every aspect of life due to their precision and speed. With nearly every individual possessing a computer or mobile phone, along with accounts on social networking platforms and personal email addresses, access to diverse cultures and online services has become ubiquitous. However, this pervasive integration of technology has had adverse ramifications, providing opportunities for criminals and individuals with nefarious intentions to exploit them for personal gain. Consequently, there has been a surge in the emergence and proliferation of new forms of electronic crime across urban landscapes, posing a significant threat to societal security. This

necessitates the undertaking of comprehensive studies across various disciplines such as law, economics, criminology, and sociology. In light of these circumstances, the following questions arise:

- → What do we mean by electronic crimes?
- → what are the types of crimes committed against people via the Internet in the city of Biskra.?
- → How widespread is the phenomenon of crimes committed against people via the Internet in the city of Biskra?

We aim to address these questions through an investigation into the concept and various types of crimes perpetrated against individuals via the Internet. Furthermore, we will delve into research on the prevalence of these crimes, particularly focusing on the most common types observed within the city of Biskra

Research Structure:

- 1. The theoretical aspect of the research
- 1.1. Objectives of the research
- 1.2. The significance of the research
- 1.3. Previous studies
- 1.4. Defining the concepts of the study
- 1.5. Characteristics of cyber crimes
- 1.6. Causes of cyber crimes
- 1.7. Types of crimes committed against people online
- 2. The field aspect of the research
- 1.2. Study Approach
- 2.2. Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the study results
- 2.3. Results
- 2.4. Recommendations and suggestions
- 1. The theoretical aspect of the research
- 1.1. Objectives of the research:

The present research aims to achieve a set of objectives, including:

- → Identifying cybercrimes and crimes committed against people via the Internet.
- → Identifying types of crimes committed against people via the Internet in the city of Biskra.
- → Discovering the most common types of these crimes that occur in the Baskar community.

1.2. The significance of the research

The significance of our study resides in the exploration of crimes perpetrated against individuals via the Internet, elucidating their various types and discerning the most prevalent ones within the city of Biskra from 2019 to 2022

1.3. Previous studies:

This study builds upon previous research endeavors focused on crimes committed against individuals via the Internet, encompassing investigations conducted in Algeria, other Arab countries, and abroad.

Study 1: Ti Huang and Livia Wagner: Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in West Africa, ECOWAS Committee, OCWAR Policy Brief-T7, August 2023.

The objective of this study was to examine the occurrence of sexual exploitation and abuse of children through the Internet in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Cape Verde, with a focus on identifying the primary risk factors involved. The findings of this research revealed significant gaps and deficiencies in the identification, protection, and prosecution of perpetrators of these crimes against children. The study underscores the urgent need for enhanced measures to address and mitigate the impact of such offenses on vulnerable individuals. (Tie Huang and Livia Wagther, August 2023)

The second study: The study of Ben Abed Jamila, Ben Abed Fatima: Electronic crime in Algerian society - a descriptive study on the development of the phenomenon in the state of Laghouat -, Journal of Legal and Economic Research, Volume: 05, Issue: 02, Algeria, 2022.

This study aimed to offer a tangible illustration of cybercrime occurrences in Algeria, focusing on the state of Laghouat. It delved into the conceptualization and categorization of cybercrime, while also examining the prevalence of this phenomenon in Algeria overall and specifically within the city of Laghouat. The researchers employed a descriptive and analytical approach to fulfill these objectives, providing valuable insights into the landscape of cybercrime within the region. Using statistics for the years (2017-2018), the study concluded that young people in the city of Laghouat have the same ideas as young people in other cities, despite the difference in culture and spatial privacy. The study further revealed that the community is significantly impacted by the manifestations of these electronic crimes, with statistics highlighting a noticeable disparity in the occurrence of such offenses. This variance is attributed to factors such as the methods employed and the profile of the perpetrators themselves. (Ben Abed, 2022)

The third study: Sarah Mohammad Hanash's study: Criminal liability for threats through electronic means - a comparative study - a dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining a master's degree in public law, Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, Middle East University, Amman, Jordan, January 2020.

The study aimed to elucidate the substantive and procedural legal frameworks governing criminal liability for the offense of threatening via electronic means in both Jordanian and Iraqi legislation. Employing an analytical and comparative approach, the study drew upon legal texts, court precedents, and comparative legislative analysis. The findings of the research highlighted that the Jordanian legislature recognized the gravity of online threats and their escalating prevalence in light of technological advancements. Consequently, Law (27) of 2015 on electronic crimes was enacted, incorporating provisions specifically addressing the crime of electronic threats. (Hanash, 2020)

The fourth study: Abdallah ben Salem Al-Shalabi: Electronic crime in the Sultanate of Oman: challenges and legal solutions, Journal of Economic, Administrative and Legal Sciences, Volume Three, Issue Two, College of Law, Sohar University, Sultanate of Oman, February 2019.

The objective of this study was to delineate the concept of electronic crime and its defining characteristics, while also assessing the role of Omani legislation in formulating effective solutions to combat such offenses. Employing a descriptive legal approach, the researcher analyzed pertinent legal frameworks. The study concluded that the Omani legislature has demonstrated a capacity to adapt to societal advancements by enacting laws aimed at addressing electronic crimes. These legislative measures entail imposing fines, financial penalties, and imprisonment on individuals found guilty of perpetrating such offenses.

Fifth study: Bariq Muntadhar Abdul Wahab Lami: The crime of violating privacy through electronic means in Jordanian legislation - a comparative study - a thesis submitted to complete the requirements for obtaining a master's degree in public law, Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, Middle East University, Amman, Jordan, May 2017.

This study aimed to elucidate the nature of private life, tracing the evolution of its recognition within jurisprudence and the judicial system. Additionally, it sought to clarify the concept of privacy violations in the realm of information and the associated rights to privacy. Employing a descriptive comparative analytical method, the researcher analyzed and compared provisions within Jordanian and Iraqi penal laws pertaining to the safeguarding of private life. The study yielded several findings and recommendations, notably that legislators in both Iraq and Jordan have enacted laws aimed at regulating and safeguarding private life, particularly concerning violations perpetrated through electronic means. (Barek, 2017)

Comments on previous studies:

Through the exploration of previous studies, it becomes evident that cybercrimes exhibit diversity, innovation, and a reliance on advanced and precise technologies. These offenses transcend geographical boundaries, manifesting globally and posing a source of concern for individuals and societies alike. The multitude of cybercrime types reflects the various means and methods employed in their commission. Notably, crimes perpetrated against individuals via the Internet emerge as a prevalent category among these offenses, serving as the focal point of our current study.

As for the similarities and benefits of these previous studies in our current study:

The majority of studies surveyed delved into the concept of electronic crimes and their various types, with some focusing specifically on crimes perpetrated against individuals via the Internet. These studies predominantly adopted a descriptive approach, be it analytical or comparative. Statistical data sourced from security centers served as the primary means of gathering information, facilitating the understanding and conceptualization of electronic crimes as a whole, and crimes committed against individuals via the Internet in particular. This data was instrumental in identifying key characteristics that differentiate these crimes from traditional forms of criminal activity. Moreover, it guided the selection of appropriate research

methodologies and tools, aiding in the collection and analysis of information necessary for the study. Ultimately, the synthesis and analysis of this data contributed to the generation of overarching findings and conclusions within the field of study.

1.4. Defining the concepts of the study:

a. Definition of cybercrime:

The World English Dictionary defines cybercrime as criminal activity perpetrated through the utilization of computers or networks, including the Internet. (Collins English Dictionary, 2009)

Debar Etheldred and Jaishankar define cybercrime as criminal acts perpetrated against individuals or groups with the intent to harm the victim's reputation or cause direct or indirect physical, mental, or financial harm. These crimes are carried out using modern communication networks, such as the Internet (including chat rooms, email messages, electronic bulletin boards, and groups), as well as mobile phones. (Osman, 2022, p. 29)

It is additionally defined as: "any activity that is conducted through computers, digital devices or networks used in the Internet world and is facilitated through the Internet medium. It can include the remote theft of information belonging to an individual, governmental or corporate sector through criminal passage to a remote-control device." "Unauthorized systems around the world include stealing millions of rupees from online banks to harassing and stalking netizens." (Munir A, 2018, p. 84)

Numerous forms of electronic crimes exist, among which are offenses committed against individuals via the Internet, the focus of this study. These crimes are broadly categorized into two main groups.

- 1. **Non-sexual crimes targeting persons:** These encompass a range of offenses such as computer-assisted homicide, inducing fatalities, acts of negligence related to computer usage, instigating suicide, deliberate prompting of murder via online platforms, cyberbullying and harassment through automated communication channels, deliberate infliction of emotional distress or harm using technological methods, cyberstalking, unauthorized access or surveillance, email bombing, dissemination of unsolicited or spam emails, propagation of misleading or false information, and invasion of computer privacy.
- 2. **Sexual crimes:** These encompass urging and inciting minors to participate in unlawful sexual activities, corrupting minors with sexual content through electronic means, enticing or attempting to entice minors to engage in illegal sexual activities, receiving or distributing information about minors via computer systems for the purpose of engaging in unlawful sexual activities, and sexually harassing minors via computer-mediated means, along with other related offenses. (Youssef, 2011, pp. 137-139)

Procedural definition of cybercrime:

It refers to any action or behavior wherein computers and digital devices serve as the primary tools for executing criminal activities, and where the global network (the Internet) serves as the platform through which these criminal acts or activities are conducted. These activities typically target individuals or communities and are orchestrated to fulfill the objectives of the perpetrators.

B. Definition of the Internet: The Internet comprises interconnected computer networks spanning various countries worldwide, facilitating communication between users without official supervision. Today, it serves as a platform for diverse forms of communication, such as email exchanges between individuals in different locations, such as Jerusalem and San Francisco, USA. Additionally, it offers numerous benefits, including enabling institutions or companies across the globe to showcase their information and products to Internet users, who can access and even download relevant content onto their devices. Furthermore, displayed information can be regularly updated, a feature commonly referred to as the World Wide Web (WWW). In summary, the WWW revolutionizes communication and information dissemination on a global scale. (Musa Muhammad, 2013, p. 2)

Another definition of the Internet is provided as follows: "It consists of a collection of computer devices linked together, communicating through a specialized language known as protocols." (Al-Harbi, 2006, p. 18)

Additionally, it is described as: "A network of networks, signifying a collection of interconnected computer networks, whereby these individual networks amalgamate to form a global network known as the Internet." (Fandushi, 2005, p. 139)

Procedural definition of the Internet: The Internet is a network that links a multitude of computers worldwide, facilitating the transfer, organization, and conversion of information across the globe.

C. Definition of people:

Linguistic definition: In its traditional sense, the term "person" originates from the Latin word "persona," which is derived from the verb "**personare**," meaning "**to sound through**" or "**to speak through**," akin to a theatrical mask equipped with a special device that amplifies the wearer's voice. Initially, "persona" referred to the mask worn by actors on stage, later evolving to denote the wearer of the mask, i.e., the actor, and subsequently the character or role portrayed by the actor. (Al-Hilali, 2010, pp. 11-14)

Terminological definition: Individuals serve as the cornerstone of society, providing it with strength and the necessary labor force. While society sets overarching goals and tasks for each person, individuals are responsible for executing these objectives and fulfilling the roles assigned to them. They play a crucial role in contributing towards the achievement of these communal goals, irrespective of personal inclinations towards self-interest, self-love, and individual desires. (The individual and social groups...an interactive relationship, 2023)

Procedural definition of people: A collective term used to describe a group of individuals who unite to form a community or society of which they are members. Within this societal framework, each individual possesses both rights and responsibilities.

D. Definition of the city: Max Weber defined it as: "It represents a social structure that fosters the emergence of diverse and concrete patterns in methods and lifestyles, facilitating the highest levels of social individualism and serving as a vehicle for historical social transformation." (Ghaith, 1995, p. 129)

Robert Park defined it as: "A natural habitat for civilized human habitation, characterized by its unique cultural patterns. It embodies an integrated structure governed by both natural and social laws, exhibiting a high degree of organization that cannot be circumvented."

A city has also been described as: "Any locality where 20,000 people or more reside." (The Meeting, 2023)

Procedural definition of the city: It refers to a spatial area distinguished by human activity, particularly in industrial and commercial domains, and characterized by the availability of services and road networks. It is typically inhabited by an estimated population of 20,000 people or more.

1.5. Characteristics of cybercrimes:

Electronic crimes exhibit numerous features or characteristics that set them apart from traditional crimes. These distinctive traits can be summarized as follows:

1. Difficulty in detecting cybercrime:

Cybercrimes are often depicted as subtle and largely clandestine, as they may transpire without the victim's awareness while they are online. The perpetrator typically possesses technical prowess, enabling precise execution of crimes such as deploying viruses, pilfering or eradicating funds and confidential data, espionage, wiretapping, and other illicit activities.

2. Cybercrime crosses borders:

This implies that cybercrime transcends geographical boundaries, disregarding the borders between countries or continents. With the proliferation of communication networks spanning the globe, countless computers across various countries have become interconnected. Consequently, perpetrators can be situated in one country while victims reside in another. As a result, cybercrimes frequently occur across multiple international borders.

3. Quiet crimes:

While traditional crimes necessitate physical exertion, such as murder or theft, electronic crimes differ significantly by requiring minimal physical effort. Instead, they rely on intellectual analysis and strategic planning rooted in computer technology knowledge. Electronic crimes primarily involve manipulating data stored in computer memory, including altering, modifying, or erasing information. Despite the absence of physical force, some liken electronic crimes to violent offenses due to similarities in the motives of attackers targeting computer systems, as noted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States of America.

4. Difficult crimes to prove:

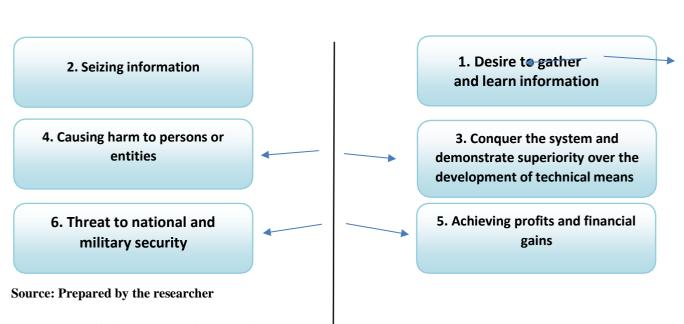
Detecting and proving cybercrime poses significant challenges, as it often leaves no tangible trace and is essentially comprised of digital data. Unlike traditional crimes, cybercrimes lack physical evidence such as fingerprints. Many cybercrimes are only discovered serendipitously long after their commission. Additionally, tracking cybercriminals demands technical expertise beyond the capabilities of ordinary investigators. Perpetrators of cybercrimes employ tactics of camouflage, deception, and obfuscation to evade identification, further complicating the investigative process. (Masika, 2022, pages 138-139)

1.6. Causes and motives of cybercrime:

The occurrence of electronic crimes is influenced by various causes and motives that compel criminals to engage in such activities. These factors can be summarized as follows:

Causes and motives

Figure (01) shows the causes and motives of cybercrime.



1.7. Types of crimes committed against people via the Internet:

a. The crime of threatening, harassing, and stalking:

It refers to a crime aimed at intimidating individuals and instilling fear by coercing their will and threatening harm to themselves or those they are associated with. This form of crime is perpetrated through the Internet, utilizing email, or various other communication channels. It may involve stalking or sending intimidating and harassing messages to the victim. (Saghir, 2013, p. 50)

2. The crime of defaming people over the Internet:

Linguistically: The term "slandering" can be likened to "throwing," where someone maliciously makes false and damaging statements about another. In this context, if a man "slandered" a chaste woman, it metaphorically implies that he figuratively "threw" accusations or insults at her, tarnishing her reputation or character.

In Article 296 of the Algerian Penal Code, the Algerian legislator defines defamation as follows: "Any assertion of a fact that could harm the honor and reputation of individuals or entities, or attributing such assertions to them or to said entities, shall be subject to direct punishment or through republication. Even if such assertions were made ambiguously or targeted an individual or entity without explicitly naming them if it is possible to identify them from the context of the

speech, threat, writing, publications, banners, or advertisements that constitute the offense." (Buqrin, 2019, p. 5)

Defamation via the Internet is recognized as one of the prevalent offenses on the World Wide Web, employed to tarnish the reputation or integrity of individuals. This crime is defined as: "Any public statement or attribution of an event that involves an assault on the honor or reputation of an individual or an established entity." (Saudi, 2014, p. 366)

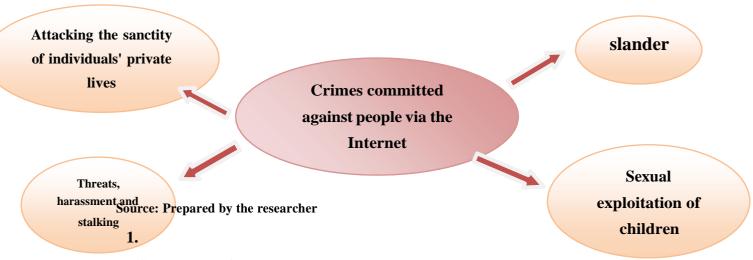
C. The crime of assaulting the sanctity of the private life of individuals:

These are offenses perpetrated via the World Wide Web (Internet), encompassing various types such as: public disclosure of private information detrimental to an individual, such as revealing embarrassing medical conditions or financial struggles; dissemination of personal photographs or data, including names and personal details pertaining to private life; and acts of defamation and slander aimed at damaging an individual's reputation in the eyes of the public. (Ali Nehme, 2019, p. 18)

D. Crimes of sexual exploitation of children:

In broad terms, crimes of sexual exploitation of children entail leveraging a position of vulnerability or power differentials to fulfill sexual objectives, which may also encompass deriving financial, social, or even political advantages through the sexual exploitation of another individual. (Youssef A., 2015, p. 26) Specifically regarding crimes of sexual exploitation of children via the Internet, they involve the dissemination of images depicting naked or partially clothed children on web pages with the intention of objectifying the child sexually. (Zidan, 2016, p. 12)

Figure (02) the types of crimes committed against people via the Internet.



2. The field aspect of the research

To gain deeper insights into the occurrence of crimes perpetrated against individuals via the Internet, and to ascertain the types of such crimes prevalent in the city of Biskra, we opted to gather field data by compiling statistics on this phenomenon spanning the period from 2019 to 2022. These statistics were sourced from the Biskra State Judicial Council. Subsequently, we categorized and analyzed the data to derive a comprehensive set of findings.

- **2.1 Study Methodology:** To tackle the issue outlined in this study, the descriptive analytical approach was employed. This involved presenting relevant literature on crimes committed against individuals via the Internet and analyzing the data or statistics procured from the Judicial Council of the State of Biskra.
- **1.2 Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the study results** Following the approval of our request to obtain information (statistics) by the Biskra State Judicial Council, we proceeded with a field visit to collect the data. Subsequently, we organized the statistics into Table 01 for analysis and interpretation.

Table 01: The number of crimes committed against people via the Internet in the city of Biskra in the period (2019-2021)

Type of crime			the	So
Slander	Threat of defamation	Crime affecting the sanctity of individuals' private lives	years	rc Bi kr
00	00	07	2019	St
01	02	13	2020	te
00	04	12	2021	Ju

icial Council

Figure (03): crimes committed against people via the Internet in the city of Biskra in the period between (2019-2021)

Source: Prepared by the researcher

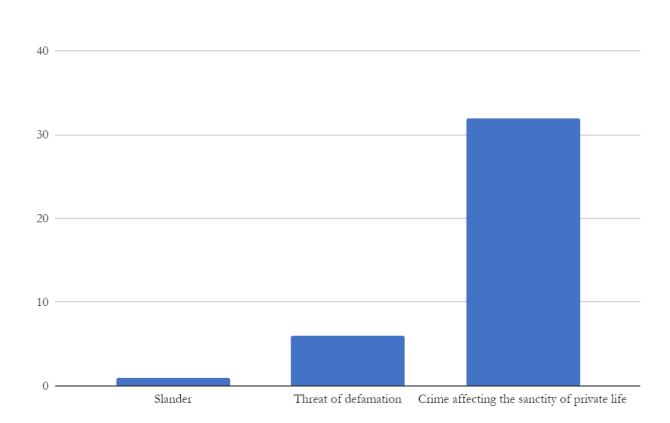


Table No. 01 illustrates the statistics of crimes committed against individuals via the Internet in the city of Biskra. According to the data, a total of 39 such crimes were recorded in Biskra over the period spanning 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Based on the data provided in Table No. 01 and the graphs depicted in Figure No. 03, it is evident that the most prevalent type of crime occurring in the city of Biskra is the violation of individuals' privacy via the Internet. In 2019, this type of crime accounted for 7 recorded incidents, which nearly doubled in 2020 to reach 13 recorded incidents. However, there was a slight decrease in the number of incidents in 2021, with 12 crimes reported.

The crime of threatening defamation ranks second in frequency, although its occurrence as recorded by the National Security Center in the state of Biskra appears relatively modest. Upon examining Table No. 01, it is evident that no incidents of this nature were documented in 2019. However, two cases were recorded in 2020, and this number increased to four incidents in 2021.

As for the crime of defamation via the Internet, which ranks last in terms of the number of crimes recorded in the city of Biskra, we note its absence in the year (2019), while in the year (2020) only one (01) crime was recorded, then it decreased and disappeared completely in the year (2021).

Figure (03) illustrates that the highest percentage of crimes committed against individuals pertains to the violation of their privacy, followed by threats of defamation and then defamation over the Internet. We can attribute the emergence of these crimes in the period from 2019 to 2021 in the city of Biskra to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic necessitated quarantine measures, leading to limited contact and severed interactions, both socially and economically, which may have contributed to the increase in these types of crimes. This situation

prompted individuals to increasingly rely on the Internet for communication and personal fulfillment. With prolonged periods spent in front of screens, whether on phones or computers, individuals became more vulnerable to exploitation by malicious individuals and criminals seeking to achieve their objectives and fulfill their desires. Electronic crimes are particularly conducive to exploitation due to their ease of commission and the challenge of tracing them back to specific individuals or communities, as well as the difficulty of proving or identifying the perpetrators of these crimes.

Additionally, we can attribute these trends to the economic conditions prevalent in Algeria overall, and specifically in the city of Biskra. The unemployment rate has risen, particularly among young people who traditionally engaged in activities such as trade or manual labor for private individuals (daily workers). Consequently, there has been a decline in income for this demographic, prompting some individuals to seek alternative means of generating revenue. As reflected in the table, instances of threatening defamation recorded in the years 2020 and 2021 often involve the extortion of financial gain through the publication of private photos or personal information.

As for the limited reporting or absence of certain crimes, such as defamation, with no recorded incidents in 2019 and 2021, this can be attributed to the conservative nature of Biskra's society. Biskra is known for its conservative values, and individuals may opt to conceal such crimes rather than report them. There is a prevailing cultural reluctance among members of society to report these types of crimes or seek assistance from authorities tasked with combating them. Moreover, since defamation crimes are often perpetrated against women, there is a fear among victims of tarnishing their reputation or facing societal judgment if they were to report or file a complaint against the perpetrator.

3.2. Results:

Our study yielded several findings, which can be summarized as follows:

- 1. There are many forms and types of electronic crimes committed against people in the Baskar community, including (violating the sanctity of people's private lives, defamation, slander...).
- 2. The research confirmed that the most prevalent crime against individuals in Biskra is the violation of their privacy, with 32 incidents recorded between 2019 and 2021. The highest occurrence of this type of crime was observed in 2020, with 13 incidents reported.
- **3.** The study showed that the number of crimes committed against people via the Internet in the Baskar community during the period between (2019-2021) amounted to (39) crimes.
- **4.** It is evident that there is a notable absence of recorded instances of electronic defamation crimes within the Biskra community, particularly in the years 2019 and 2021, with only a few cases being documented in 2020.
- **5.** Regarding electronic crimes targeting individuals, it is apparent that there is a significant underreporting, likely attributable to the conservative nature of Biskra society.

Conclusion:

While modern technologies have undoubtedly served as valuable tools for societal development and enhancing individual convenience by bridging distances and expediting various processes, they have also ushered in negative consequences by being exploited for criminal purposes. This shift has propelled crime into a new and highly sophisticated direction. The electronic criminal has evolved their methods in tandem with technological advancements, resulting in a steady rise in the incidence of crimes committed against individuals and electronic crimes in general. These crimes, characterized by their difficulty in detection and proof, are particularly prevalent in Biskra, with offenses targeting individuals' privacy and electronic defamation and slander via the Internet being among the most frequent occurrences. However, in return, security services always seek to confront it and protect individuals from it, and institutions and associations also work to spread awareness about its danger and its effects on the individual and society.

Recommendations and suggestions:

- 1. It is imperative to raise awareness within society regarding the significance of reporting such crimes.
- 2. Enforcing stricter penalties for offenses perpetrated against individuals via the Internet.
- 3. Establishing tailored programs aimed at safeguarding individuals and combating this form of crime.
- 4. Promoting education and awareness regarding the utilization of modern technologies for the benefit of both individuals and society.
- 5. Enhancing awareness campaigns on the perils associated with crimes against individuals, emphasizing their significant social, psychological, and economic ramifications.

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