



Article

The Impact of Social, Economic, and Technological Changes on the Growing Risks of Cybercrime in Iraqi Society

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore the extent to which social, economic, and technological changes contribute to the increasing risks of cybercrime in Iraq. To achieve its objectives, it adopted a descriptive-analytical approach using an online survey method. A validated and reliable questionnaire was employed to collect data from a sample of 650 students selected from public and private universities in Iraq at various academic levels. The study utilized descriptive statistical analysis methods, employing SPSS software for data analysis. The results indicated that the overall impact of social, economic, and technological changes on the growing risks of cybercrime in Iraqi society was high, with an overall mean score of (4.017). The findings further revealed that technological changes ranked first in terms of their relative importance in contributing to the increase in cybercrime risks, with a mean score of (4.118), followed by economic changes with a mean score of (4.053), also at a high level. Social changes ranked last, with a mean score of (3.879), yet still at a high level.

Keywords: Impact, Social, Economic, Technological Changes, Cybercrime, Iraqi Society.

1. Introduction

The structural changes that society is witnessing at the social, economic and technological levels are among the main factors that contribute to shaping its nature and directing the behavior of its members, and these changes lead to some imbalance in the core values, attitudes and behavioral patterns in societies. In Iraqi society, which has witnessed in recent decades large-scale changes due to multiple factors such as globalization, economic openness and demographic changes in the structure of the population, these changes have clearly reflected in various aspects of life, and the ongoing security and political challenges have directly affected the stability of the social fabric, adding a new dimension to the complexity of the changes taking place in society.

My study (Othman, 2020; Al-Gohari, 2015) indicated that these changes may contribute to increasing the risk of high rates of committing crimes of all kinds, especially cybercrime, which has become a worrying phenomenon that threatens the security and stability of society, and economic changes, such as high unemployment rates, declining income levels and the spread of poverty, have contributed to pushing some individuals towards committing cybercrimes such as fraud and forgery as a means of escaping from the difficult economic reality or to achieve illegal financial gains, and social changes, represented by the weakness of family ties, the increase in individualistic tendencies, and the influence of Western lifestyles, which led to the decline of the traditional role of society in control and guidance, which gave way to the spread of these crimes among different segments of society, especially young people who know technological matters.

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At the cultural level, openness to the outside world and the spread of social media have facilitated access to information sources and spread a culture of acceptance or tolerance of some types of cybercrime, which contributed to their high rates (Abbas, 2016). In addition, changes in cultural and religious values have led to a weakening of the moral scruples of some individuals, making them more likely to engage in criminal behaviors.

Accordingly, confronting the high rates of information technology or cybercrime in Iraq requires the development of comprehensive strategies that include social, economic, and cultural dimensions, by enhancing community awareness, provide fair economic opportunities, and develop security and legislative policies that contribute to reducing the spread of these crimes, with a focus on awareness programs about the seriousness of these crimes in society.

Recent studies have shown that young people suffer from conflicts between traditional values and modern values, creating a state of social tension and unbalanced adaptation to the ongoing transformations (Abu Zaher, 2024). In Iraq, which has witnessed rapid changes at various levels, this was significantly reflected in the nature of crimes, as statistics revealed an increase in cybercrime rates as a direct result of economic, social and cultural changes, as increasing rates of unemployment, poverty, and lifestyle changes led some individuals to commit these crimes and achieve illegal financial gains (Al-Mandalawi, 2024).

In recent years, Iraqi society has witnessed fundamental changes at various levels, which have clearly reflected on the social roles of individuals, and contributed to creating new challenges, especially in light of technological progress and openness to the digital world. According to a study by Jassim (2019), some Iraqi youth face difficulties in reconciling traditional values with modern technological developments, leading to increased social tensions and changing behavior patterns. In this context, data and statistics have shown an increase in cybercrime rates in Iraq as a direct result of these rapid transformations. The widespread use of the Internet and social media, coupled with rapid technological development, has led to the emergence of new patterns of crime. Such as electronic fraud, digital extortion, and personal data breaches, pose a significant threat to individuals and organizations alike. Al-Marri (2018) points out that the increasing access to the Internet and the lack of cyber security awareness have contributed to the escalation of these crimes, which requires in-depth analysis to understand their dimensions and causes and develop appropriate solutions to reduce them. The social, economic and cultural transformations in Iraqi society require the adoption of comprehensive strategies to combat cybercrime, by enhancing societal awareness of the importance of cybersecurity, developing strict legislation governing the digital space, in addition to developing security and technological capabilities to keep pace with new challenges and protect individuals and institutions from increasing cyber threats.

2. Materials and Methods

Changes in the social, economic and technological fields are important issues that deserve study and research, due to their direct impact on various aspects of life in modern societies, and accordingly this study came as a new attempt to identify the role of socio-economic and cultural change in increasing the risks of cybercrime in Iraqi society.

Study problems and questions

In recent years, Iraqi society has witnessed major social, cultural, economic and technological transformations, which have contributed to the reshaping of social roles and relations, and opened new horizons for development and development. However, these shifts have been accompanied by increasing security challenges, with crime rates skyrocketing and patterns diversifying to include new, more complex forms. Technological development and digital openness have led to the emergence of new cybercrimes, such as online fraud, cyber extortion, and data breaches, which are increasingly threatening to individuals and organizations alike. These shifts have also contributed to the evolution of traditional crime methods, making combating them more complex and requiring modern and integrated security strategies.

Despite the modernization and development of security policies in Iraqi society in the field of cybercrime prevention, and the adoption of modern technological methods in detecting these crimes and limiting their spread, there are increasing challenges represented in their high rates, as official statistics showed a significant increase in their numbers during 2023 compared to 2021 and 2022, where information technology crimes recorded an increase of 28.0%, including crimes of extortion, fraud, and online defamation, reflecting the increasing digital threats in society. Surveys indicate that only 10% of victims of cybercrime submit official reports of crimes they are exposed to, which means that there are challenges related to the lack of security awareness among citizens of the seriousness of cybercrime. Security sources also reveal that the rate of committing cybercrimes of all kinds in Iraq is constantly increasing, which requires strengthening security and legal efforts to confront these crimes.

With reference to the above, cybercrime has become a major threat to societal security in Iraq, which requires studying and analyzing the impact of social, cultural, technological and economic changes on the escalation of these crime rates in Iraqi society. Accordingly, the problem of the study is determined in answering the following main question: What is the impact of social, economic and technological change on the increased risks of cybercrime in Iraqi society?

The main question is sub-questions related to determining the repercussions of social, economic and technological changes in increasing the risk of cybercrime in Iraqi society.

The importance of the study

The importance of the scientific and applied study is highlighted in its attempt to shed light on the role of social, cultural, technological and economic transformations in increasing the risks of crime in Iraqi society, and thus reaching results that represent additions to science and knowledge in this field.

Theoretical significance:

The scientific significance of this study is manifested in the following points:

} The study contributes to enriching the scientific understanding of the phenomenon of cybercrime in Iraqi society through an in-depth analysis of the impact of social, cultural, technological and economic changes on their spread and development.

} The study enhances scientific knowledge on how these changes affect cybercriminal behaviors, opening the door for new studies that shed light on the relationship between technological development, changing social patterns and the growth of cybercrime, such as fraud and digital extortion.

} The study also helps to provide a theoretical framework linking societal changes, technological development and individuals' criminal behaviors in cyberspace, providing a new knowledge base that contributes to the development of mechanisms for preventing cybercrime.

Practical importance:

The practical significance of this study is represented in the following points:

} Provide practical recommendations to the security and legal authorities in Iraq to confront the increasing cybercrimes resulting from rapid social and technological changes.

} The study contributes to guiding decision-makers and competent authorities towards developing effective security strategies to reduce cybercrime, by enhancing cybersecurity and increasing digital awareness among members of society.

} The study helps to provide innovative solutions to security and legal authorities to raise community awareness of the dangers of cybercrime, and to develop security policies based on the analysis of societal and technological changes, which contributes to enhancing cybersecurity and societal stability in Iraq.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to understand the role played by social, economic and technological changes in increasing the risks of cybercrime in Iraq, where the rapid changes in

technology and digital openness require a careful analysis of their impact on the spread of new patterns of cybercrime, such as electronic fraud, digital extortion, data breach, and electronic defamation, and the extent to which these changes reflect on societal security.

Study concepts and terminology:

Cybercrime

The definitions of cybercrime vary according to the different angles of view, as crime in the language is derived from the crime, which means guilt, and its collection is crimes and crimes (Ibn Manzur, 2010). Idiomatically, crime is defined as any external act, whether positive or negative, that is prohibited by law and punishable if it is committed by a reasonable adult who bears legal responsibility (Al-Shazly, 2021), and crime is every human behavior that society punishes through the law, as this behavior is considered a violation of societal values and customs, and it also harms the interests of individuals (Al-Nassar, 2014).

Cybercrime, it is defined as illegal acts committed using modern technical means, such as computers, networks, social networking sites, electronic systems and applications, which aim to harm the interests of individuals, institutions or groups, whether through data infringement, hacking systems, electronic fraud or defamation, and are linked to a legal sanction imposed by the competent authorities to ensure their deterrence and protect digital security (Alia, 2020).

Cybercrime is characterized by reliance on modern technology using technical means or online, and can be committed across international borders, making combating them require international cooperation (Rahbani, 2019). They are also characterized by constantly changing patterns and methods with the development of technology, and they affect individuals, institutions and societies in economic, security and social aspects. Among the most important of these crimes are: electronic financial fraud, hacking and data theft, extortion, defamation and abuse of others, and spreading malware and viruses (Al-Zoubi and Al-Manaasah, 2018).

As for the factors leading to the commission of cybercrime, they are multiple, the most important of which are: technological and technical progress, structural changes that occur in society, in addition to the lack of knowledge of cybersecurity among individuals, especially in developing societies, and often cross-border, and the lack of coordination between countries makes it difficult to prosecute criminals (McAfee, 2022).

Crime risk: expresses the negative effects and consequences of committing crimes, whether at the level of individuals or society as a whole. These risks include social insecurity and stability, high rates of violence, and the economic and social impacts of crime. Crimes also have profound psychological and moral effects on victims, contributing to an environment of fear and insecurity within the community (Wreikat, 2014).

Crime risks are procedurally defined as the negative effects that arise as a result of the increase in the commission of cybercrime in Iraqi society, and these risks include threatening personal and public security, affecting social stability, harming the economy through increased security costs, and psychological and social effects on individuals affected by crime.

Social changes:

Social changes refer to changes in social structures, norms, customs, values and ideas adopted by individuals in determining what is considered acceptable or unacceptable in shaping social relationships and ties within society (Giddens, 1994).

- } Population characteristics: such as internal and external migration.
- } Changes in the educational system: and their effects on building awareness and knowledge.
- } Changes in social roles: gender or intergenerational.

Social changes also include changes in social classes, population growth, and changes in patterns of family relationships. Technological progress and economic changes are key drivers of social change (El Gohary, 2015).

Social changes in this study are defined as the changes that have occurred in the social structure in Iraqi society, whether at the level of customs and values or in the interactions of individuals and social relations, which contributed directly or indirectly to the increased risk of cybercrime in Iraqi society. These changes are measured through the arithmetic mean of the responses of the study sample to the paragraphs of the axis related to this in the study tool.

Technological changes:

Technological changes refer to the rapid advances in communication and information technologies and technical innovations that affect how individuals interact and exchange information within society, and these changes have created new and evolving opportunities for crime, such as cybercrime, which did not exist in the same form previously (Bennett, 2017).

Technological changes usually affect a society's culture, as they are defined as changes in beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns that shape the identity of society (Eargle, 2018), and these changes occur as a result of interaction with other cultures, or as a result of the impact of globalization and technological innovations, leading to the reshaping of values and customs and changing cultural priorities (Castells, 2022).

Technological change is defined procedurally in this study as a set of changes in the use of modern technologies and their applications in various aspects of life in Iraqi society, such as the spread of the Internet, social media, and digital applications, which contributed to the emergence and spread of cybercrime in its various patterns. The technological change is measured quantitatively by the general arithmetic mean of the responses of the study sample to the paragraphs of the axis related to this in the study tool.

Economic changes:

Economic changes refer to developments in the economic system of society, such as changes in income levels, unemployment, and the labor market (Rehann, 2017), and these changes affect social stability and may contribute to exacerbating crime rates, including economic and social crime (Bennett et al, 2017).

Economic change is defined procedurally in this study as a set of changes in the economic systems in Iraqi society, both at the level of income rates, production and consumption methods, which led to changes in economic opportunities and the level of wages, which contributed directly or indirectly to the increase in the dangers of cybercrime in Iraqi society. Economic changes are measured quantitatively by the general arithmetic average of the responses of the study sample to the paragraphs of the axis related to this in the study tool.

Theoretical frameworks explaining the subject of study

Many social theories sought to explain the role of structural changes in society to increase the number of crimes; some of these theories have focused on the social and economic conditions of individuals such as poverty and unemployment, and others of these theories dealt with cultural and technological factors, while other theories focused on the environmental conditions that surround individuals, and in this part will focus on the most important theories through which the subject of the study can be interpreted, as follows.

Functional constructivist theory

Functional constructivist theory provides a framework for understanding the role of social, cultural, technological and economic changes in Iraqi society in the increase in cybercrime, as it looks at these changes as factors affecting social balance and the dynamics of relations between individuals, and the theory emphasizes that society consists of a set of interrelated patterns, such as the technological system, the economic

system and the cultural system, in which the change directly affects the spread of negative phenomena, including cybercrime, as any defect in these patterns may lead to an escalation Cybercrime and its diversity (Al-Warikat, 2014). Given the changes taking place in Iraqi society, such as rapid technological developments and the spread of modern means of communication, it can be said that these changes contribute to creating a fertile environment for committing cybercrime. This calls for studying this phenomenon from an integrative perspective that takes into account all the social, technological, economic and cultural patterns that influence it. As the theory poses, the stability of society depends on the functional interaction between these patterns, where the lack of balance or poor adaptation to emerging changes exacerbates security and social problems.

According to this theory, security, educational, and cultural institutions are subsystems within society that work in an integrated manner to address the challenges arising from cybercrime. Hence, security and cultural awareness can be enhanced through awareness and education campaigns, which contribute to reducing the impact of cybercrime on Iraqi society. (Al-Badayena et al., 2013) point out that functional constructivist theory relies on two basic inputs in the analysis of society: the analytical approach, which studies each subsystem separately to understand its impact on the rest of the systems, and the comprehensive approach, which views society as an integrated entity affected by the interaction of all different formats.

Based on this proposition, addressing cybercrime in Iraq requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account all the social, economic, technological and cultural factors that contribute to the spread of this phenomenon. In light of this theory, technological, educational, cultural and media institutions can be considered open formats that affect and are affected by their social environment, and their role depends on continuous interaction with individuals in order to enhance security awareness and combat cybercrime through continuous guidance, education and awareness.

Behavioral theory

Behavioral theory in explaining criminal behavior is based on the idea that the environment surrounding the individual is the main factor in shaping and directing his behaviors, as they can be modified and controlled by controlling various environmental influences. The American psychologist B.F. Skinner is one of the most prominent founders of this theory, as he believes that criminal behavior is not so much self-motivated as a reflection of the individual's interaction with his social and economic environment. In this sense, the study of behavior requires a focus on an individual's previous learning experiences and relationships with his surroundings, where criminal tendencies can be reduced or increased through environmental reinforcements, whether positive or negative (Nye, 2000). The theory asserts that various reinforcers, such as encouragement or punishment, play a key role in guiding behavior, as exposure to positive social influences contributes to the development of healthy behavior, while interaction with environments that stimulate deviation may lead to criminal behavior. Cybercrime in Iraqi society is one of the prominent examples that can be analyzed in this context, as the rapid spread of digital technology and social media provides stimulating environments that can encourage criminal behavior such as electronic fraud and extortion (Behnam, 2002). On the other hand, Sociologist Edwin Sutherland argues that criminal behavior is significantly influenced by social interaction, as individuals acquire deviant behaviors by dealing with groups engaged in these activities. On this basis, the high rates of cybercrime in Iraqi society can be linked to increased contact with unsafe digital groups that provide content that stimulates criminal behavior, while awareness and censorship may contribute to reducing these behaviors (Harre & Lamp, 2015). Behavioral theory provides an effective framework for understanding cybercrime in Iraq within the overall context of social, cultural, technological and economic changes. With the rapid digital transformations, Iraqi society has become more vulnerable to sophisticated cybercrimes, such as electronic hacks, identity theft and financial extortion. This requires preventive

strategies based on modifying the surrounding environment and enhancing security awareness among individuals. In recent years, Iraq has witnessed significant changes in daily lifestyles due to technological and economic development, which have contributed to the creation of new opportunities for the illegal exploitation of technology. Therefore, dealing with these challenges requires integrated efforts that include educating the community about the dangers of cybercrime, strengthening laws, and developing security policies based on behavioral principles in understanding and modifying the behavior of individuals. "Non-normative" Anomic Theory, the anomic theory presented by sociologist Robert Merton is one of the theories with a social perspective, as it considers that criminal behavior arises as a result of the interaction between the social and cultural structure of society; according to Merton, each society sets goals and ambitions that its members seek to achieve through legitimate means and methods determined by prevailing social norms, however, the disparity in economic and social opportunities available to individuals leads to the inability of some of them to achieve these goals by legitimate means. This pushes them to resort to illegal methods to achieve them (Merton, 1964) in the context of Iraqi society, and with the rapid technological, economic and social developments, the increase in cybercrime can be explained from the perspective of this theory, as social and economic changes have created new ambitions in individuals, while legitimate means to achieve them remain limited or not equally available to all; this disparity leads some to exploit technology in illegal ways, such as electronic intrusions, online fraud, and crimes. Digital blackmail, to achieve quick wins and bridge the gap between ambitions and opportunities. Merton points out that too much focus on achieving goals without paying enough attention to legitimate means leads to a state of "anomia," the absence of social norms that regulate behavior, which promotes individualism and the pursuit of personal interests by any means available.

In this context, the spread of cybercrime in Iraq can be considered a reflection of this imbalance in the social structure, as some individuals seek to achieve financial or social gains through illegal means available in the digital environment, according to this theory, combating cybercrime in Iraqi society requires strengthening the balance between societal goals and legitimate means, through the development of fair economic and social opportunities that allow individuals to achieve their ambitions in legal ways. In addition, laws and regulatory regulations that limit opportunities to commit cybercrime should be strengthened, along with community awareness of the importance of adhering to legal values and standards to ensure social stability. Thus, Anomic theory provides an analytical framework to understand the relationship between social, economic and technological changes in Iraq, and their role in increasing rates of cybercrime, which calls for the adoption of comprehensive strategies that enhance the cohesion of the social structure, and provide legitimate alternatives to achieve societal goals.

Differential contact theory

The theory of differential contact of the American scientist "Edwin Sutherland" is one of the most prominent theories that explain criminal behavior based on previous experiences and the negative attitudes acquired by individuals during their lives, and this theory was put forward to clarify the variation in crime rates between different groups, in addition to analyzing individual crimes committed by individuals without group intervention.

The theory indicates that crime is an acquired behavior that is learned through direct interaction and continuous contact with others, especially within primary groups that are closely related, and the degree of acquisition of criminal behavior depends on factors such as the duration of interaction and the intensity of contact, emphasizing that the process of learning criminal behavior is no different from learning normal behavior (Al-Warikat, 2014).

According to Sutherland, crime propensity occurs when pro-law concepts prevail over those that promote law, and criminal behavior is easily learned within small groups that are characterized by close personal bonding (Sutherland, 1974).

In the context of Iraqi society, social, economic and cultural changes contribute to promoting an environment conducive to the increase in cybercrime, as changing economic factors and social pressures provide fertile ground for the adoption of criminal behaviors, and the differential contact theory emphasizes that individuals are exposed to multiple influences through social media and modern technology, which increases the chances of contact with individuals who practice cybercrime, and thus this behavior is acquired and learned over time. This theory highlights the importance of early intervention by directing preventive and awareness policies to combat cybercrime in Iraqi society, by reducing the chances of contact with criminal factors and promoting a social environment that promotes positive values and proper behavior.

Previous and relevant studies

Due to the lack of sociological studies that dealt with the subject of the study, which is the role of social, cultural, technological, and economic changes in exacerbating the risks of cybercrime in Iraqi society, the focus was on reviewing the relevant studies that discussed various topics related to societal changes and their effects on high crime rates. Several recent studies have been reviewed that deal with these changes and their repercussions on criminal phenomena, the most prominent of which are the following:

Arabic Studies:

Makram and Sharaf's study (2022), aimed to identify the extent to which social changes affect the high rates of organized crimes committed online in Sudan, and the study dealt with a range of influential factors, such as internal and external migrations, political tensions, in addition to the transformations witnessed by social values and customs, and the spread of technology and modern means of communication, The study relied on the descriptive analytical approach, where data was collected through a questionnaire directed to a sample of 100 members of the popular committees in the city of Khartoum, in addition to interviews with (10) officials working in the security services. The results of the study showed that social changes played a prominent role in the spread of organized crime, as the change in the system of social values was a key factor in accepting the patterns of new crimes within society, which led to an increase in crime rates in Sudan. Al-Azmi (2022) conducted a study entitled "Social Changes in the Kuwaiti Family and Their Impact on Juvenile Delinquency", which aimed to explore the manifestations of social transformations within the Kuwaiti family and their role in exacerbating the problem of juvenile delinquency in the Social Calendar House. The study relied on the qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with the sample members, and the study included all juveniles residing in the Social Calendar House in the State of Kuwait. The results revealed that the most prominent social change that contributed to the spread of the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency was the weakness of family ties. The traditional roles of the couple within the family have changed, in addition to the decline in the level of family interaction and communication, which has led to a negative impact on the behavior of juveniles. Bahaudin and Al-Battashi (2021) conducted a study in the Sultanate of Oman to reveal the role of social media in social changes and its relationship to high crime rates, and the study adopted the descriptive approach, using data from the National Centers for Information Safety and the National Center for Statistics in Oman Police for the period 2011-2019. The results showed that the spread of social media contributed to the increase in crimes, and the study recommended community awareness of the dangers of crime and the development of mechanisms to monitor it technologically. Foreign studies: Gorazd, (2022) conducted a study entitled "Crime Prevention – Theory, Practice and Challenges", which aimed to investigate the developments and transformations that the field of crime prevention has witnessed in some European countries, such as France, Britain, and the Netherlands, during the past

twenty-five years. The study relied on the descriptive-inductive approach through the analysis of relevant literature and criminal statistics for the period between 1990 and 2015. The results showed that crime prevention strategies contributed significantly to reducing some types of crime, especially violent crimes related to drug and alcohol use, in addition to family crimes. The results of this study can be used in Iraqi society through the development of effective preventive policies to reduce cybercrime, which is increasing with the continuous social and technological changes.

Eargle (2018) conducted a study entitled "The Impact of Cultural Change on Crime Rates" to analyze the impact of cultural changes on the spread of crime in the French city of Orléans, the study relied on statistical data related to the development of crime rates in the city, in addition to using a questionnaire to collect data from a research sample consisting of (610) male and female students from the University of South Orléans. The study included independent variables to measure the prevailing cultural aspects in society, while the dependent variables included total crime rates, violent crime, and property crime.

The results of this study showed an inverse relationship between the level of adherence to customs and traditions and the overall crime rate. The results also showed a weak correlation between adherence to societal values and crimes committed online. As for the relationship between cultural change and violent crime, it turned out to be statistically insignificant.

The study of Cohen and Felson (1979) dealt with the impact of social changes on the increase in crime rates according to the model of routine activities, and the study assumed that social changes affected the daily lifestyles of individuals in American society, and the study included factors such as increased activities outside the home, the spread of nuclear families, the rise of family disintegration, and women's entry into the labor market. The study was based on crime data in the United States between 1947 and 1974, and the results of the study showed that the rise of some types of crime such as theft and fraud is associated with changing family roles and poor social interactions.

What distinguishes the study from previous studies

It is clear from the presentation of previous studies that they provided an in-depth analysis of the role of social, economic, cultural and technological changes in the rise in crime rates in several societies, as the study of Makram and Sharaf (2022) in Sudan dealt with the impact of internal and external migrations, political tensions, and changing social values on the spread of organized crime online, and the results confirmed that these changes were a key factor in accepting new crime patterns. Al-Azmi's (2022) study focused on the Kuwaiti family and the role of social transformations in juvenile delinquency, highlighting the weakness of family ties and the change of traditional roles as the main drivers of this phenomenon. In Oman, the study of Al-Battashi and Bahauddin (2021) showed that the spread of social media contributed significantly to the increase in crime, which requires enhancing community awareness and developing technological monitoring mechanisms. Internationally, Gorazd's study (2022) provided an analysis of crime prevention strategies in Europe and confirmed their effectiveness in reducing violent and drug crime. While Ergel's (2018) study in France showed a weak correlation between adherence to societal values and cybercrime, it revealed the impact of culture on traditional crime rates. The study of Cohn and Felson (1979) also examined the impact of social changes on crime rates through the model of routine activities.

The current study is characterized by its focus on Iraqi society as a social, economic and cultural environment witnessing rapid developments in technology and communication, and the study also sheds light on the cultural and social specificity of Iraqi society, which contributes to providing a deeper vision of mechanisms for the prevention and control of cybercrime based on an analysis of the influencing factors.

Methodology and design

Study Methodology

The study relied on the descriptive analytical approach using the electronic sample survey method to achieve its objectives, as this approach was used to analyze the reflection of social, economic and technological changes on the growing risks of cybercrime in Iraqi society, relying on the data that were extracted from the members of the study sample and analyzed using descriptive and analytical statistical methods.

Study population and sample

The study population consisted of students of Iraqi public and private universities of various academic levels, who expressed their desire to answer the paragraphs of the study tool electronically through smart phone applications or computers connected to the Internet. To facilitate the practical application process, the study was conducted using electronic means of communication, where the link to the study tool was published through a number of the most used social media platforms in Iraqi society, in addition to the websites of students in universities.

After the end of the application period, which lasted (8) weeks, the answers of (605) students were received, and this number is considered a representative sample of the study population, according to the statistical sampling table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

3. Results

Table (1) shows the relative distribution of students from the study sample according to the variables of gender, college and study program.

Table (1). General characteristics of the study sample.

Percentage (%)	No.	Variable classes	variable
35.70	216	male	gender
64.30	389	female	
100	605	total	
42.64	258	Scientific	Type of collage
57.36	347	Humanities	
100	605	total	
59.17	358	Bachelor	Study Program
29.09	176	Master	
11.74	71	PhD	
100	605	Total	

The results in Table (1) show that male students from the study sample constituted 35.70% of the sample size, while female students constituted 64.30%. As for the distribution of students from the study sample according to the variable of college type, it is clear that students from scientific colleges constituted 42.64%, and from humanities colleges constituted 57.36%. Regarding the distribution of students according to the study program, it is clear that students from the educational program "Bachelor's" constituted 59.17%, from "Master's" constituted 29.09%, and from "PhD" students constituted 11.74%.

Study tool

The study relied on the questionnaire as the main tool for collecting data, and it was developed according to several methodological steps as follows:

1. The initial version of the questionnaire was prepared by identifying the paragraphs and classifying them within the specified fields, based on previous studies, relevant scientific references, and the theoretical framework of the study.
2. The tool was presented to a committee of arbitrators, including a group of faculty members from Iraqi universities, with the aim of verifying the suitability of the paragraphs to achieve the study objectives, and ensuring the accuracy of the wording, clarity of the content, and consistency of the paragraphs.
3. Based on the arbitrators' comments, the necessary amendments were made to the questionnaire, where (5) paragraphs were deleted and (6) paragraphs were reformulated before adopting it in its final form.
4. The answer options were determined according to the five-point Likert scale, where the answer "very high" was given (5) points, "highly high" (4) points, "moderately high" (3) points, "lowly high" (2) points, and "very lowly high" (1) point. The evaluation levels were also classified into three levels: high, medium, and low, based on the correction equation adopted in the study.

Category length = (highest value of the paragraph answer - lowest value of the paragraph answer) / number of options

Category length = $(5-1) / 3 = 1.33$, add the category length to the beginning of the scale, and accordingly the level is measured, as follows:

A. Low impact level: less than or equal to (2.33).

B. Medium impact level: greater than or equal to (2.34) to less than or equal to (3.67).

C. High impact level: greater than or equal to (3.68) to (5).

The study tool in its final form consisted of the following main parts:

Part One: It includes the personal data and information of the study sample members, which included changes (gender, college type, study program).

Part Two: It included (24) paragraphs, which were distributed equally over (3) main areas, which measure the level of answering the study questions related to measuring the reflection of social, economic and technological change on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society.

Construct validity (internal consistency)

The internal consistency of the study tool was confirmed using the compatibility correlation coefficient between the score of a single paragraph and the total score of the axis it includes. The data of the survey sample consisting of (50) male and female students, which were randomly selected from the study community, were relied upon. Table (2) shows these results

Table (2). Correlation coefficients between paragraphs and the total score for the study tool domains

Technological implications		Economic implications		Social implications	
Correlation coefficient	Paragraph No.	Correlation coefficient	Paragraph No.	Correlation coefficient	Paragraph No.
**0.73	1	**0.83	1	**0.85	1
**0.78	2	**0.81	2	**0.89	2
**0.69	3	**0.79	3	**0.77	3
**0.73	4	**0.77	4	**0.82	4
**0.86	5	**0.84	5	**0.75	5
**0.74	6	**0.72	6	**0.79	6
**0.77	7	**0.75	7	**0.78	7
**0.70	8	**0.69	8	**0.75	8

**Statistically significant at a significance level of (0.01).

It is clear from the results in Tables (2) that the correlation coefficients between the scores of each paragraph of the study tool with the field as a whole are statistically significant at a level of (0.01), which indicates that the paragraphs of the study tool enjoy a high degree of internal consistency.

Reliability of the study tool:

The stability of the study tool was verified using the internal consistency method between the paragraphs of the tool, based on Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and after applying this test to the exploratory study sample, the value of the stability coefficients for the fields of the study tool came as shown in Table (3).

Table (3). Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the axes and the total score of the study tool

Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha)	Number of paragraphs	Axes
0.946	8	Social Implications
0.930	8	Economic Implications
0.856	8	Technological Implications
0.983	24	The tool as a whole

Table (3) shows that the study tool with all its axes enjoys a high degree of stability, as the overall stability coefficient of the study tool reached (0.936) and the stability coefficients for the parts and axes of the study tool were limited to (0.901 -0.815). This indicates that the study tool enjoys a high degree of stability.

Presentation of the results of the study questions:

In this part of the study, answers were provided to the study questions based on the descriptive and analytical statistical results extracted from the answers of the study sample members to the axes and paragraphs of the study tool, as follows:

Study results

Results related to the main question: What is the reflection of social, economic and technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society?

To answer the main question of the study; The arithmetic averages and relative importance of the answers of the study sample members were calculated towards the reflection of social, economic and technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society and arranged in descending order of importance, in Table No. (4).

Table (4). Arithmetic averages, relative importance and ranking of the study sample's answers towards the reflection of social, economic and technological changes on the growing risks of cybercrimes in Iraqi society

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	The field	Axis number
high	3	0.59	3.879	Social Implications	1
high	2	0.68	4.053	Economic Implications	2
high	1	0.58	4.118	Technological Implications	3
high	-	0.51	4.017	The overall level of impact of social, economic and	-

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	The field	Axis number
				technological changes on the growing risks of cybercrime	

The results in Table (4) show that the general level of the study sample members' responses to the reflection of social, economic and technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society was high, and the general arithmetic mean of the responses was (4.017) with a standard deviation of (0.51). In detail, the level and order of the reflection of social, economic and technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society can be explained, as shown in Table (10) as follows:

1. The field of reflection of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society achieved an arithmetic mean of (4.118) with a standard deviation of (0.58) and at a high level.
2. The field of reflection of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society came in second place with an arithmetic mean of (4.053) with a standard deviation of (0.68) and at a high level.
3. The third and last place was occupied by the field of reflection of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society with an arithmetic mean (3.879) with a standard deviation (0.59) and at a high level.

The following is a presentation of the answers of the study sample members to the sub-questions, as follows:

The first sub-question: What is the reflection of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society?

To answer the first sub-question: The arithmetic averages and relative importance of the study sample's answers towards the paragraphs of the first field related to measuring the reflection of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society were calculated and arranged in descending order of importance, in Table No. (5).

Table (5). Arithmetic averages, relative importance, order and level of response towards the field of reflection of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	Paragraphs	No. of Paragraph
High	1	0.94	4.259	The increasing tendency towards individualism and selfishness is reflected in the increase in the spread of cybercrimes among individuals.	5
High	2	0.82	4.164	The increasing pursuit of quick financial gains is reflected in the rise and spread of cybercrimes in society.	8
High	3	0.85	4.025	The change in moral values is reflected in the increased acceptance of behaviors related to cybercrimes within Iraqi society.	2
High	4	0.88	3.955	. The weak commitment to religious values among the youth is reflected in	7

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	Paragraphs	No. of Paragraph
				the high rates of cybercrimes in society.	
High	5	0.99	3.845	The weakness of social ties between individuals and groups is reflected in the increased likelihood of committing cybercrimes.	1
High	6	0.87	3.794	. The decline in the role of the family in guiding and raising children is reflected in the spread of cybercrimes in society.	4
Medium	7	0.83	3.581	Internal and external migration is reflected in the deterioration of social relations, which contributes to the rise of cybercrime.	3
Medium	8	0.92	3.406	The high rates of divorce and the increase in cases of domestic violence are reflected in the exacerbation of cybercrime problems in society.	6
High High High	-	0.59	3.879	The general level of reflection of social changes on the growing risks of cybercrime	-

The results in Table (5) showed that the general level of reflection of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society was high, as the general arithmetic mean of the students' answers from the study sample members was (3.879) with a standard deviation of (0.59), and this result reflects a high level of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society. In detail, the role of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society can be clarified in light of the answers of the study sample members shown in the results contained in Table (18), where (6) paragraphs achieved a high level, and the arithmetic mean values of the sample's answers to these paragraphs ranged between (4.259- 3.794). As for the rest of the paragraphs, they achieved an average level, with arithmetic mean values ranging between (3.581- 3.406). As shown in Table (11), the standard deviation values of the study sample members' answers to the paragraphs of the field of reflection of social changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society came at low values, ranging between (0.99-0.82), indicating the convergence in the level of answers and their homogeneity on the paragraphs of this field.

Second sub-question: What is the reflection of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society?

To answer the second sub-question: The arithmetic averages and relative importance of the study sample's answers towards the paragraphs of the second field related to measuring the reflection of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society were calculated and arranged in descending order of importance, in Table No. (6).

Table (6). Arithmetic averages, relative importance, ranking and level of response towards the field of reflection of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	Paragraphs	No. of Paragraph
high	1	0.83	4.351	The expansion of digital financial transactions without adequate controls is reflected in the escalation of cybercrime risks, such as money laundering and fraud through banking systems.	8
high	2	0.93	4.279	The spread of financial and administrative corruption is reflected in the escalation of cybercrime, as weak financial oversight is exploited to carry out sophisticated cyber fraud operations.	1
high	3	1.04	4.259	The huge disparity between economic classes is reflected in the increased feelings of frustration and despair, which pushes some to resort to cybercrime as an alternative source of income.	4
high	4	1.02	4.066	The absence of economic justice and the disparity in the distribution of opportunities are reflected in pushing individuals to commit cybercrime as a means of achieving illicit financial gains.	2
high	5	1.02	3.997	Privatization and economic liberalization are creating a fertile environment for cybercrimes, such as financial market manipulation and online commercial fraud.	6
high	6	0.91	3.885	High youth unemployment rates are also increasing their resort to cybercrimes, such as digital fraud and account hacking, to achieve financial gains.	5
high	7	1.07	3.846	Rising commodity prices and the cost of living are reflected in increased cybercrime rates related to financial fraud and illicit trade via online platforms.	7

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	Paragraphs	No. of Paragraph
high	8	1.23	3.742	. Changes in the labor market and increased reliance on expatriate workers are reflected in increased cybercrime rates related to data theft and online job fraud.	3
high	-	0.68	4.053	The general level of impact of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks	-

The results in Table (6) show that the general level of the impact of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society was high, as the general arithmetic mean of the answers of the students from the study sample was (4.053) with a standard deviation of (0.68), and this result reflects a high level of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society. In detail, the role of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society can be explained in light of the answers of the study sample members shown in the results in Table (18), where all paragraphs achieved a high level, the arithmetic mean values of the sample's answers to these paragraphs ranged between (4.351-3.742). It is also clear from Table (11) that the values of the standard deviations of the answers of the study sample members to the paragraphs of the field of the impact of economic changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society came with low values, and ranged between (1.23-0.83), which indicates the convergence in the level of answers and their homogeneity on the paragraphs of this field. The third sub-question: What is the impact of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society?

To answer the second sub-question: The arithmetic averages and relative importance of the study sample's answers towards the paragraphs of the second field related to measuring the impact of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society were calculated and arranged in descending order of importance, in Table No. (7).

Table (7). Arithmetic averages, relative importance, order and level of response towards the field of impact of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	Paragraphs	No. of Paragraph
high	1	0.98	4.394	The expansion of digital financial transactions without adequate controls is reflected in the escalation of cybercrime risks, such as money laundering and fraud through banking systems.	6
high	2	0.84	4.375	. The spread of financial and administrative corruption is reflected in the escalation of cybercrime, as weak financial oversight is exploited to carry out sophisticated cyber fraud operations.	3

level	Sort by importance	Standard deviation	SMA	Paragraphs	No. of Paragraph
high	3	1.16	4.263	The huge disparity between economic classes is reflected in the increased feelings of frustration and despair, which pushes some to resort to cybercrime as an alternative source of income.	1
high	4	1.01	4.115	. The absence of economic justice and the disparity in the distribution of opportunities are reflected in pushing individuals to commit cybercrime as a means of achieving illicit financial gains.	8
high	5	1.04	4.088	Privatization and economic liberalization are creating a fertile environment for cybercrimes, such as financial market manipulation and online commercial fraud.	5
high	6	1.11	3.991	High youth unemployment rates are also increasing their resort to cybercrimes, such as digital fraud and account hacking, to achieve financial gains.	2
high	7	1.07	3.867	Rising commodity prices and the cost of living are reflected in increased cybercrime rates related to financial fraud and illicit trade via online platforms.	4
high	8	1.19	3.853	Changes in the labor market and increased reliance on expatriate workers are reflected in increased cybercrime rates related to data theft and online job fraud.	7
high	-	0.62	4.118	The overall level of impact of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks	-

The results in Table (7) show that the general level of reflection of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society was high, as the general arithmetic mean of the answers of the students from the study sample was (4.118) with a standard deviation of (0.62), and this result reflects a high level of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society. In detail, the role of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society can be explained in light of the

answers of the study sample members shown in the results in Table (18), where all paragraphs achieved a high level, the arithmetic mean values of the sample's answers to these paragraphs ranged between (4.394-3.853). It is also clear from Table (11) that the values of the standard deviations of the answers of the study sample members to the paragraphs of the field of reflection of technological changes on the growth of cybercrime risks in Iraqi society came with low values, and ranged between (1.19-0.84), which indicates the convergence in the level of answers and their homogeneity on the paragraphs of this field. Discussion and interpretation of the results.

4. Discussion

The results of the study showed that social changes, such as weak family ties and increasing individualistic tendencies, play a prominent role in the rise in cybercrime rates in Iraqi society; This is due to changes in traditional social values that were a strong deterrent against such behaviors; as the results indicated, the tendency towards individualism and selfishness increases the chances of individuals falling into cybercrime, as some seek alternative ways to achieve self-fulfillment or gain away from traditional social control. This reinforces what Abu Zaher (2024) indicated that young people in societies undergoing social and economic transformations suffer from conflicts between traditional and modern values, which pushes some of them to engage in illegal behaviors as a means of adapting to these changes. According to the structural functional theory, the disintegration of the social system and the decline of the supervisory role of society lead to the spread of negative phenomena, including cybercrimes that exploit this societal weakness. Regarding economic changes, the study revealed that unemployment and the high cost of living are major drivers of cybercrime, as individuals seek to compensate for the economic gap by exploiting technology in fraudulent or illegal operations. Merton's anomie theory explains this by emphasizing that individuals who face economic obstacles that prevent them from achieving their goals in a legitimate manner may resort to illegal means, such as electronic fraud and online financial manipulation. Al-Mandlawi's study (2024) confirms these results by indicating that difficult economic conditions have prompted many young people to seek illegal opportunities in the digital space to achieve quick gains, which is in line with the changing economic situation in Iraq. Regarding technological changes, the study results showed that the rapid development of communication methods and the spread of smartphone applications and cloud computing have increased the opportunities for committing cybercrimes, as these technologies provide new opportunities for criminals, such as digital fraud and security breaches, which now threaten individuals and institutions alike. Al-Marri's study (2018) supports these results by indicating that the expansion of Internet access and weak security awareness have contributed to the rise in cybercrimes. Based on Sutherland's differential mixing theory, the rise in these crimes can be explained by the increasing impact of interaction with unsafe electronic communities, as individuals learn these behaviors through their interaction with groups that practice cybercrime. The results also indicate that the absence of sufficient legislation to keep pace with technological developments has led to the provision of a favorable environment for the increase in cybercrimes, as criminals exploit legal loopholes to achieve illicit gains. This is consistent with what was indicated by the study of Jura (2022), which explained that the shortcomings of security policies and legislation in some European countries have led to the rise in cybercrimes, which calls for the development of advanced systems to combat these threats. Compared to previous studies, such as Al-Azmi's (2022) study on the impact of family transformations on criminal behavior, we find that the weakness of social ties in Iraq had a similar effect in terms of providing a fertile environment for the growth of cybercrimes. Al-Batashi and Baha' Al-Din's (2021) study on the role of social media in the rise in crime rates in the Sultanate of Oman confirms that the technological and social effects on cybercrimes are not limited to Iraq only, but rather are a phenomenon that extends to many Arab societies

that have witnessed similar transformations. These results can be explained in light of the radical transformations witnessed by Iraqi society on several levels. Rapid economic and technological openness has led to an increase in the opportunities available for committing cybercrimes, in the absence of sufficient societal awareness of the dangers of these crimes and weak legal oversight. Difficult economic conditions, such as unemployment and poverty, have also prompted many individuals to seek quick and illegal solutions to achieve financial stability. On the other hand, social changes, such as the decline of the role of the family and weak social interaction, have contributed to creating a control gap within society, allowing cybercriminal behaviors to spread without sufficient deterrence. It can be said that modern technology has not only been used to facilitate daily life, but has also become a tool exploited by individuals facing economic and social difficulties.

5. Conclusion

Based on the above, confronting the growing cybercrime in Iraq requires taking several measures, the most important of which are:

1. Raising community awareness about the dangers of cybercrime through awareness campaigns targeting various societal groups.
2. Enacting strict legislation to keep pace with rapid technological developments and ensuring their effective implementation.
3. Providing fair economic opportunities that limit individuals' resort to illegal methods to achieve gains.
4. Developing educational programs that contribute to raising awareness of cybersecurity and the importance of the safe use of technology.
5. Enhancing cooperation between security agencies and educational and technological institutions to develop comprehensive strategies that contribute to preventing and combating cybercrime, through the exchange of expertise and modern technologies to confront the growing security challenges.

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