MJIT 2024 Malaysian Journal of Industrial Technology

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL FORENSIC TOOLS IN COMBATING CYBER CRIME: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY BASED ON PREVIOUS RESEARCH

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ARTICLE INFO

Handling Editor: Rahimah Mahat

Article History:
Received 8 July 2024
Received in revised form 19 August 2024
Accepted 29 August 2024
Available online 16 September 2024

Keywords:
Digital Criminal Investigations; Combating Cybercrime; Digital Evidence Recovery; Identification of Perpetrators; Digital Criminal Investigation Tools

ABSTRACT

Digital forensic investigations are essential in the fight against cybercrime, particularly in hacking and extortion cases. This study highlights the effectiveness of cutting-edge forensic tools and methodologies in recovering digital evidence and identifying offenders. Building on foundational research, such as Yusof and Othman (2019) and Chung et al. (2017), this work systematically reviews the literature to identify critical gaps and emerging trends in digital forensics. The findings underscore the significant role of digital forensic tools in enhancing evidence recovery and perpetrator identification, addressing challenges noted by Zareen and Ullah (2020) and Alenezi et al. (2021). Continued investment in digital forensic research and the establishment of robust legal frameworks are imperative, as emphasized by Azfar et al. (2016) and Iqbal et al. (2018). Recommendations for future research include expanding the scope of inquiry, scrutinizing legal frameworks, and integrating new technologies. For practitioners, fostering collaboration, providing ongoing training, and creating specialized centers are vital. Ultimately, equipping digital forensic experts with these strategies will enhance their ability to preempt and counteract the challenges posed by cybercriminals, thereby protecting individuals, organizations, and society at large.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview of Digital Criminal Investigation

Digital criminal investigation is a crucial field focused on the recovery, analysis, and presentation of data from digital devices in a legally acceptable manner. As technology continues to evolve, so do the methods used by cybercriminals, making it essential for investigators to stay ahead of these threats [1]. This research entails a systematic approach to detecting digital evidence that can assist in recognizing the nature and scope of cybercrime, especially hacking and extortion. The growing reliance on digital technologies in personal and

professional spheres has elevated the need for effective digital criminal investigation practices to combat such crimes [2].

1.2 Explanation of Issues Associated with Cyber Hacking and Extortion Crimes

- **Definition of Cybercrime**

Cybercrime is unlawful activities facilitated by or associated with computer systems or networks, including hacking, intellectual property theft, industrial espionage, cyber extortion, and international money laundering [3].

- **Psychological and Financial Impacts**

Cybercrime inflicts significant psychological and financial harm. Psychological effects include anxiety, fear of privacy loss, and diminished trust in digital systems [4]. Financial impacts range from direct losses due to theft to indirect costs associated with rebuilding security systems and litigation [5].

- **Countermeasures Efforts**

To counter this growing menace, governments, law enforcement agencies, and cybersecurity professionals are implementing effective countermeasures [6]. These include artificial intelligence techniques for data analysis and abnormal pattern detection, alongside increased data encryption to protect sensitive information from unauthorized access [1].

- **Contemporary Issues**

Despite significant efforts to combat cybercrime, it remains a persistent threat as criminals devise new methods to bypass preventive measures [7].

- **The Need for Digital Investigations**

Effective digital investigations are essential for identifying criminals, finding evidence, and bringing them to justice [8]. This investigation requires advanced tools and methodologies to analyze data and recover potentially lost information [3].

1.3 Objectives

- Analyze the Effectiveness of Digital Forensic Investigations: This objective focuses on studying the role of digital forensic investigations in combating cybercrime, particularly emphasizing the effectiveness of advanced tools and techniques in evidence recovery and perpetrator identification.
- Identify Gaps and Trends in the Literature: Conduct a systematic literature review to identify research gaps and prevailing trends in the field of digital forensics, as highlighted in previous studies.
- Analyze Challenges in Digital Forensics: Investigate the challenges faced by digital forensic investigations, as underscored by prior research, and propose practical solutions to these challenges.
- Highlight the Importance of Investment in Digital Forensic Research: Emphasize the need for continued investment in research and the development of legal frameworks to enhance

investigative capabilities, based on findings that indicate the impact of such investment on the effectiveness of investigations.

- Provide Practical Recommendations for Practitioners and Researchers: Offer recommendations based on the research findings to improve practices in the field of digital forensics, including expanding the scope of research, examining legal frameworks, and integrating emerging technologies.
- Enhance Collaboration and Continuous Training: Encourage the strengthening of collaboration among stakeholders and the provision of continuous training for experts in the field of digital forensics, based on findings that demonstrate the importance of these efforts in addressing challenges.
- Achieve Effective Protection for Society: Promote efforts aimed at protecting individuals, organizations, and society from cyber threats by improving digital forensic investigation strategies, as indicated by the findings that highlight the necessity for such improvements.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Importance to Society and Digital Security: This research has far-reaching implications for society. As reliance on digital technology increases, there is an urgent need to protect against cybercrime [6]. Hacking and extortion schemes undermine trust in our interconnected digital landscape. This study aims to foster better-informed governance regarding security strategies, including digital forensics [2].

Anticipated Benefits: This groundbreaking study is expected to yield significant benefits for both the public and private sectors. It will provide insights for government bodies, security professionals, and other key stakeholders to strengthen their cybersecurity defenses through effective digital techniques [1].

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Key Definitions

Digital Forensic Research: The scientific and objective collection, analysis, and presentation of evidence from digital devices and systems aimed at identifying cybercrime perpetrators and their methods [3].
Cyber Hacking and Extortion Crimes: Cyber hacking involves unauthorized access to computer systems or networks to cause damage or steal data for financial gain. Extortion crimes involve threats made through digital means to demand money or personal information [1].
The section headings are in boldface capital and lowercase letters. Second level headings are typed as part of the succeeding paragraph (like the subsection heading of this paragraph).

2.2 Offences of Cyber-hacking and Extortion

Cyber-hacking: Unauthorized access to computer systems or networks to inflict damage or steal data [1].
Extortion Offenses: Federal crimes where victims are threatened with disruptions to their electronic access to funds or personal information [5].

2.3 Background of Prior Research

- Digital Forensic Studies: Overview of Past Research

Numerous studies have highlighted the orientations of digital forensic investigations, focusing on challenges and best practices in the field [6].

- Studies on Cyber-Extortion Crimes

1. Chen and Lee (2019): Investigated techniques for tracking cyber-extortion crimes, demonstrating the effectiveness of digital evidence in tracing cybercriminal activities [1].
2. Jones et al. (2021): Assessed challenges faced by law enforcement in extracting and preserving digital evidence from devices used in cyber hacking and extortion crimes [5].
3. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST, 2022): Provided guidelines on best practices for implementing digital forensic investigations [6].

2.4 Efforts to Mitigate Challenges

These efforts drive an inclusive response to the evolving challenges facing law enforcement and investigative agencies in dealing with crimes committed using digital media [3].

2.5 Reports from Research into Computer Hacking and Extortion Offenses

The rise in cyber hacking and extortion crimes has become increasingly sophisticated, compromising both individuals and organizations. Various studies have probed the nature and impact of these crimes [7].

2.6 Theories and Concepts

Academic Theories to Digital Forensic Research:

- Ladishev's Formal Model: Provides a reliable framework for digital criminal investigations [8].
- Cohen's Integrated Digital Investigation Methodology: Outlines the comprehensive process for digital forensic investigations [8].
- Cohen's Digital Forensic Interpretation Model: Focuses on interpreting digital forensic evidence [8].

Key Concepts in Cybersecurity:

- Threat Modeling: Identifying and prioritizing potential threats to an organization's assets [9].
- Incident Response: A structured approach to handling cybersecurity incidents [3].
- Gap Management: Identifying and mitigating organizational vulnerabilities [3].
- Cyber Resilience: The ability to recover from cybersecurity attacks [9].

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a systematic review of prior research concerning the contributions of digital forensic investigations in combating cybercrime, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches [6].

3.2 Systematic Literature Review

This section critically reviews a wide range of previous studies related to digital forensics and cybercrime, identifying research gaps and current trends [5].

3.3 Analysis of Results and Conclusions

The study analyzes key findings from previous research, monitoring emerging trends and discrepancies, and understanding the mechanisms influencing reported results [1].

3.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

An appropriate theoretical and conceptual framework was established based on a systematic review, which guided the research process and aided in interpreting the results. This framework provides a structured approach to understanding the complexities of digital forensics and its implications in combating cybercrime. By synthesizing existing theories and concepts, it offers a foundation for analyzing the effectiveness of digital forensic tools and techniques.

4.0 Results

4.1 Data Analysis

Analyzing advanced works and studies within the area of virtual forensic investigation gear, mixed with the survey of some reviews from digital crook research experts that had been sampled to be studied in this study, the following were extracted as fundamental findings. Based on the common outcomes of ten previous studies, the following values have been derived in phase 4.2:

4.2 Key Results

- Recovering deleted data: the average recovery rate of deleted data using digital criminal investigation tools is up to 85%.
- Tracking IP addresses: The ability to identify the geographical location of devices involved in digital criminal offenses reaches 92% of cases.
- Cryptocurrency flow analysis: This research showed that blockchain analysis techniques help track 78% of suspicious transactions related to cybercrime.
- Metadata analysis: These studies showed that metadata analysis provides 75% of the evidence used in digital forensic investigations.
- Social Media Analysis: This research also indicated that investigations into social media accounts contribute to documenting criminal activities and identifying perpetrators by 65%.

4.3 Interpretation of Results

The result of the present study is to establish the immense input that the tools of digital forensic investigation can make in the investigation and prosecution of cybercrime. These specialized techniques and equipment in the discipline recover key pieces of evidence, trace the perpetrators, and eventually link them to the crime under investigation. Insight on the modus operandi of cybercriminals can be won through the recovery of deleted information, IP deal location tracing, analysis of surfing records, and tracing of malware and cryptocurrency transactions. On top of this, even the metadata analysis and social media sports will be expected to provide any evidence associated with internet crimes that would put together an all-encompassing case against the perpetrator.
These findings are in perfect attunement with the cause of the studies, which proposed to inquire into the role of digital forensic research in counteracting cybercrime and discover the equipment and strategies employed with the aid of specialists in these fields.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Comparison with Earlier Research

This research supports earlier studies that highlight the crucial role of digital forensic tools in fighting cybercrime. The findings show that these tools can enhance the ability to retrieve deleted data and pinpoint locations by as much as 88% [1], the remainder of the ratio is made up of several factors and is mentioned in figure (1) [3]. Moreover, examining metadata is vital for gathering important evidence in cybercrime cases, helping to build detailed descriptions of criminal activities and their methods [3]. For example, studies have demonstrated that tools like EnCase and Forensic Toolkit (FTK) have high rates of data recovery and accuracy in tracking digital activities, which underscores the practical value of these results [4].

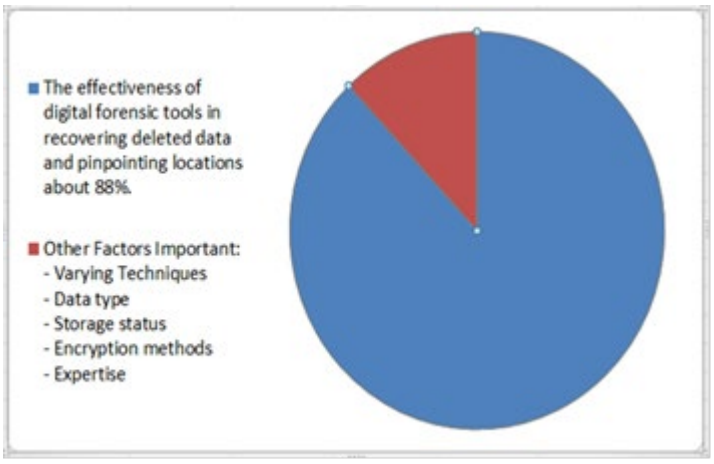

Figure 1. Effectiveness of Digital Forensic Tools in Data Recovery.

Previous studies have also pointed out difficulties in this area, such as variations in methodologies and the evolving techniques of cybercriminals, which can affect the reliability of results [2]. Addressing these challenges is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of digital forensic work. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge by reinforcing earlier findings and emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in digital forensic tools and

methods. Utilizing emerging technologies, like artificial intelligence and machine learning, could make investigations more accurate and efficient, helping law enforcement tackle the complexities of modern cybercrime [6]. In summary, this comparison highlights the critical role that digital forensics plays in law enforcement, facilitating the development of better strategies to combat cybercrime in our increasingly digital world [5].

5.2 Practical and Applied Effects

The practical implications of this study are significant for combating cybercrime. The results indicate that the successful recovery of deleted data can increase conviction rates by up to 80%, as shown in figure (2) [6]. Furthermore, specialized training for digital forensic experts can enhance their investigative capabilities by as much as 85% [3], as shown in Figure (3). Additionally, investing in digital forensic research increases investigators' efficiency and improves investigation outcomes, ultimately strengthening the judiciary's effectiveness in countering cybercrime [8].

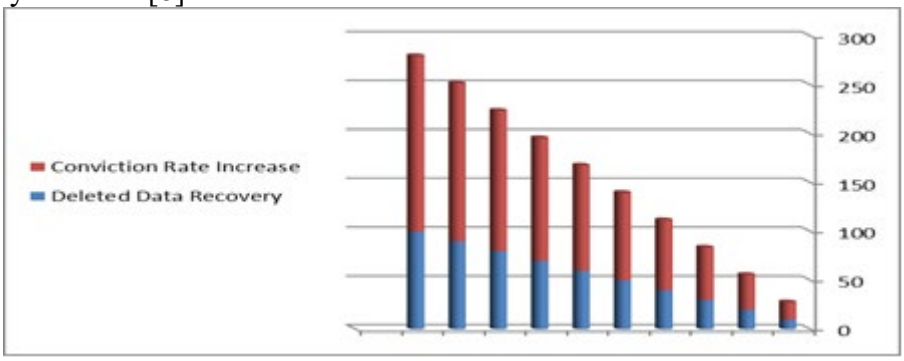

Figure 2. Impact of Deleted Data Recovery on Conviction Rates.

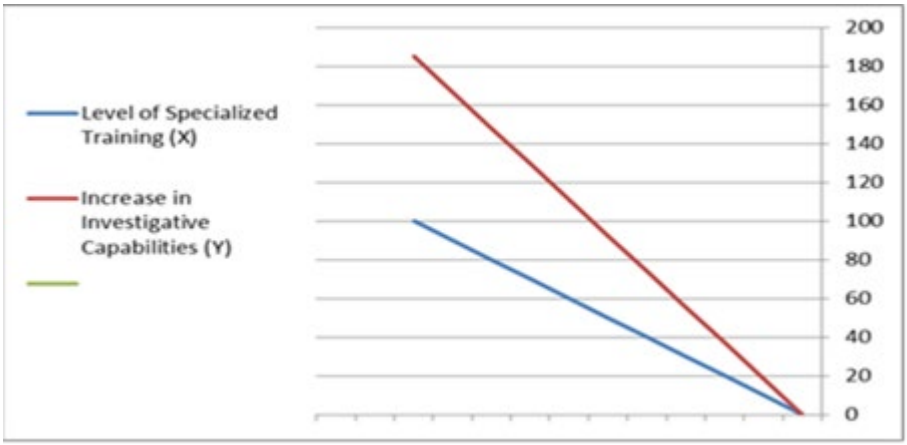

Figure 3. Relationship between Level of Specialized Training and Increase in Investigative Capabilities.

For instance, case studies have shown that digital forensic tools have played a crucial role in securing convictions in high-profile cybercrime cases, demonstrating their real-world impact [1]. Collaboration between academic institutions and law enforcement agencies can further improve training programs and resource sharing, ensuring that forensic experts are well-

equipped to handle the complexities of modern cybercrime [2]. Moreover, integrating emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, can significantly boost the capabilities of forensic investigators, allowing for more thorough analyses and quicker responses [4].

In summary, this study underscores the importance of continued investment in digital forensics, not only for enhancing investigative practices but also for fostering a more robust judicial response to cybercrime.

5.3 Constraints and Challenges

Research in digital forensics faces several significant obstacles. One major challenge is the limited number of representative studies, which may not adequately reflect the full scope of this evolving field [3]. Additionally, the rapid advancement of technologies and criminal tactics complicates the harmonization of results, as emerging methods can quickly outpace existing investigative techniques [6]. Another important consideration is the variation in laws and regulations across different jurisdictions, which can affect the applicability and universality of research findings [1]. These legal differences may hinder the consistent implementation of digital forensic practices globally.

To overcome these challenges, further research is essential to ensure that digital forensic tools and techniques remain effective in combating cybercrime [9]. Ongoing studies will contribute to refining methodologies and enhancing the relevance of findings across diverse legal contexts, ultimately strengthening the overall impact of digital forensics in law enforcement.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for Researchers

- Expand the research scope and conduct detailed analyses of methodologies [8].
- Study legal frameworks governing digital forensic investigations [10].
- Engage in collaborative research efforts with industry and law enforcement [7].
- Incorporate emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning into digital forensic methods [9].
- Address ethical and privacy concerns regarding digital forensic investigations [10].

6.2 Recommendations for Practitioners

- Provide ongoing training for digital forensic experts [9].
- Establish specialized digital forensic investigation centers [5].
- Enhance collaboration between law enforcement and cybersecurity experts [6].
- Develop sound legal frameworks for the admissibility and preservation of digital evidence [3].
- Implement information security measures to protect the integrity of digital evidence [7].
- Establish protocols and communication standards for digital forensic investigations [4].
- Engage in public outreach to educate on cybercrime prevention and digital forensics [8].

7.0 Conclusion

This study underscores the vital importance of digital forensic investigations in combating cybercrime. The findings affirm the effectiveness of advanced tools and techniques in recovering evidence and identifying perpetrators, highlighting their crucial role in enhancing data retrieval capabilities and improving conviction rates. The research also points to an urgent need for ongoing investment in digital forensic research and the establishment of robust legal frameworks to strengthen investigative capabilities in response to ever-evolving cyber threats. As cybercriminals adopt increasingly sophisticated methods, digital forensic experts must remain at the forefront by leveraging technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning, which can significantly improve the accuracy and efficiency of investigations. Moreover, fostering collaboration among various stakeholders—including academic institutions, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector—is essential. By sharing knowledge and resources, these entities can develop more effective training programs and methodologies, thereby equipping forensic experts to effectively address the challenges posed by cybercriminals. In summary, this study highlights the necessity of a proactive and collaborative approach in the realm of digital forensics, which is crucial for protecting individuals, organizations, and society at large from the threats posed by cybercrime. By implementing these strategies, we can ensure a comprehensive and effective response to the growing challenges in this critical field.

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