

The Psychology Behind Identity Theft: Understanding the Human Element in Cybercrime

Ebube Rebecca Okeke

Introduction

The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that about 28,000 individuals were victims of identity theft in 2022, with over 231,000 reports in fourth quarter of 2023 alone, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Furthermore, in the United state, victims of identity theft had a total loss of over \$189 million (Clare, 2024). These data reflect the prevalence of identity theft and its potential consequences

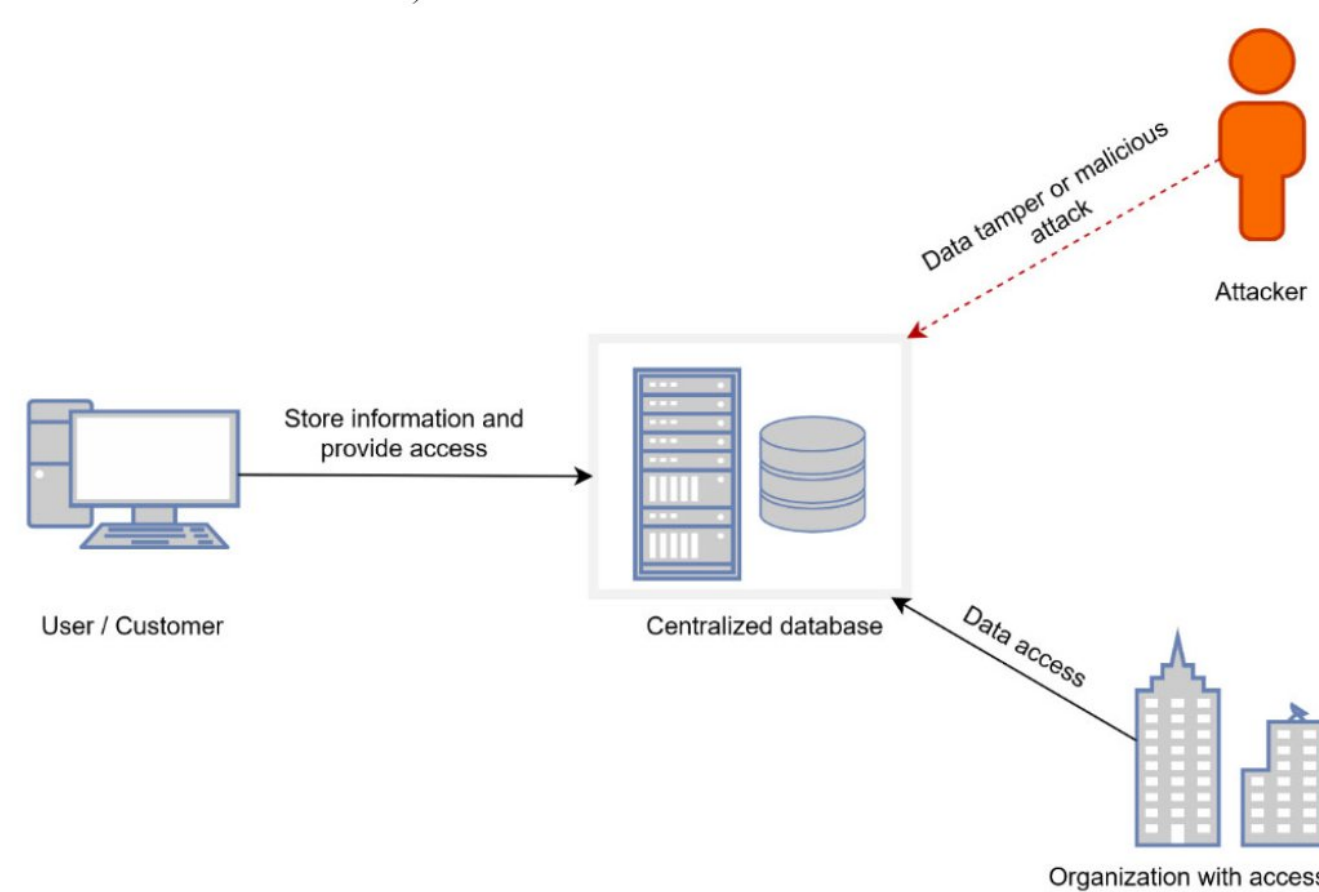


Figure 1: The Susceptibility of Centralized Database to Attacker (Shekar et al., 2022)

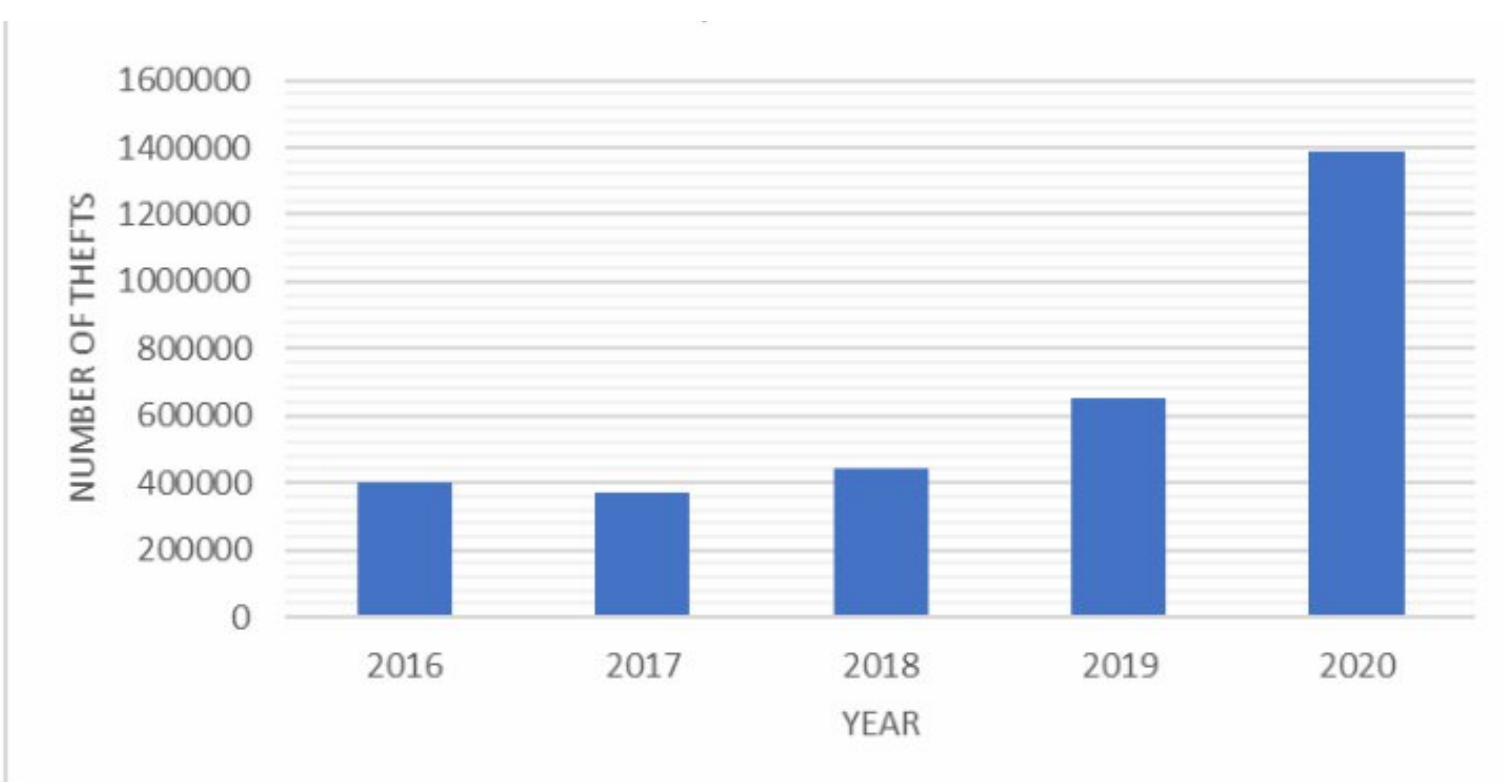


Figure 2: Identity Theft Rate, By year (Shekar et al., 2022)

Aims & Objectives

This study aims to explore the psychology behind identity theft as a critical human element in cybercrime.

The study aim is achieved through the following objectives

1. To investigate the psychological factors that influence individuals' susceptibility to identity theft.
2. To analyze the social engineering tools and techniques used by cybercriminals
3. To assess the impact of identity theft on victims and user trust in digital systems.
4. To identify and recommend strategies to reduce the prevalence and impact of identity theft.

Methods

This study adopted a systematic literature review methodology, as presented below.

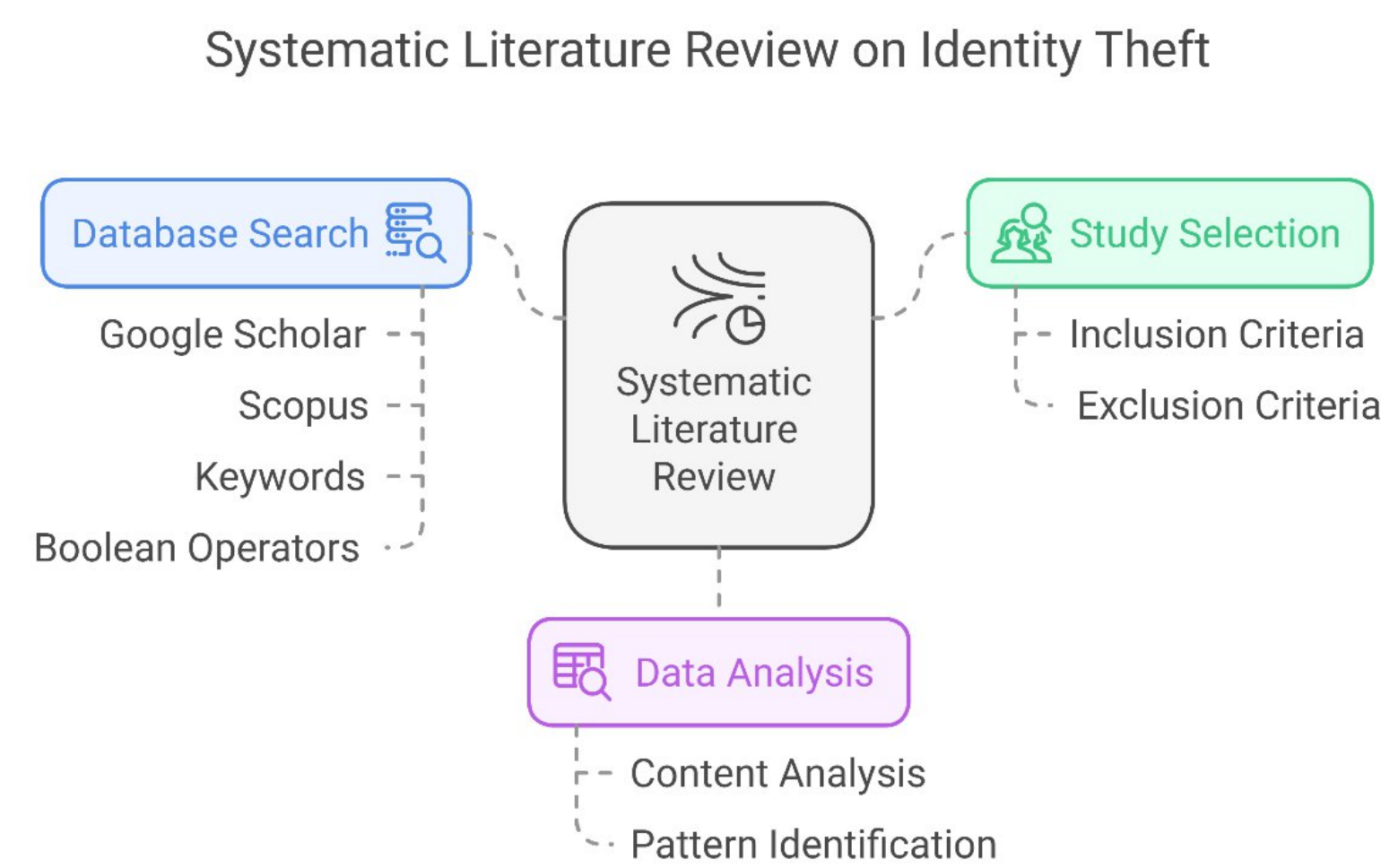
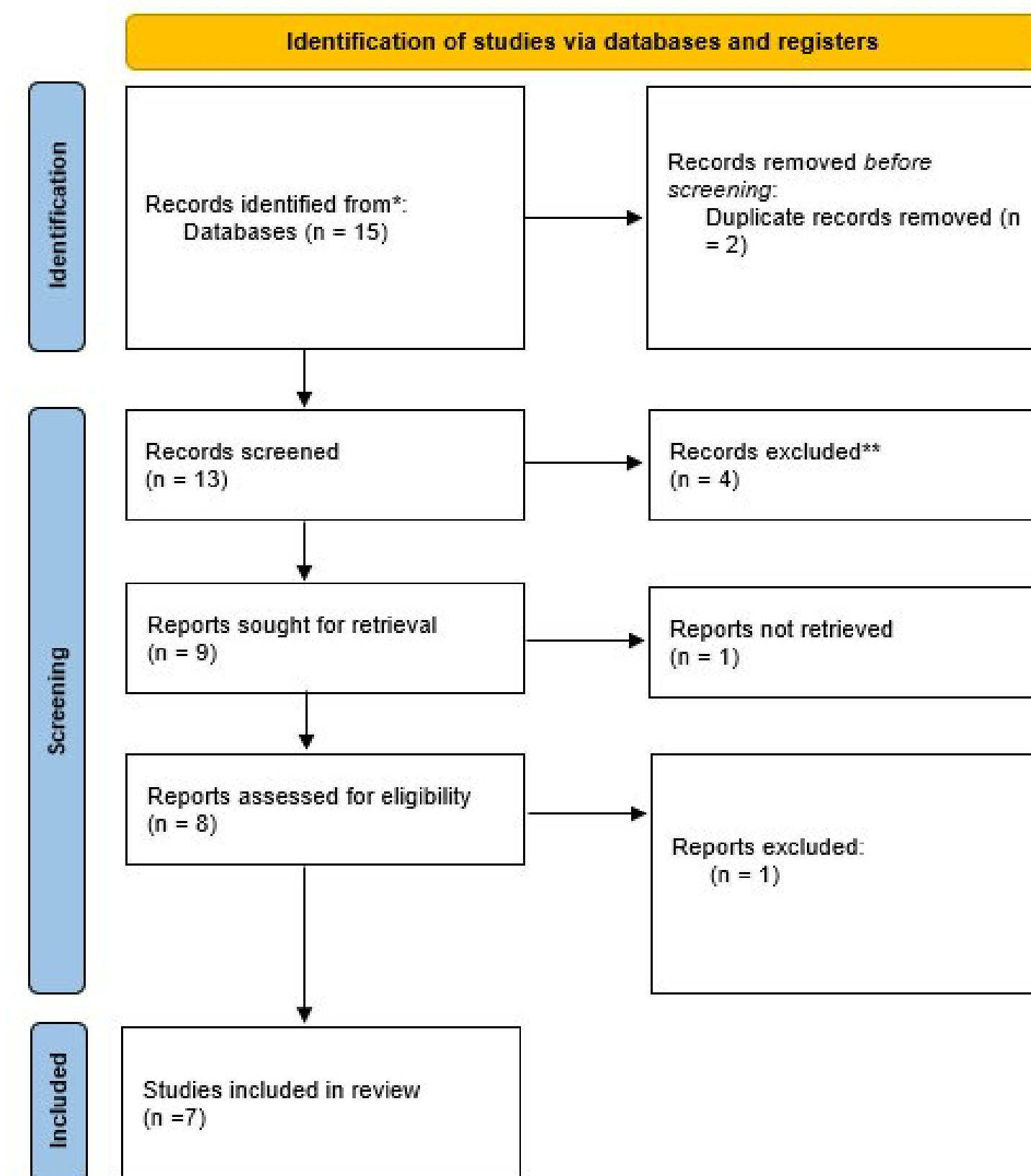


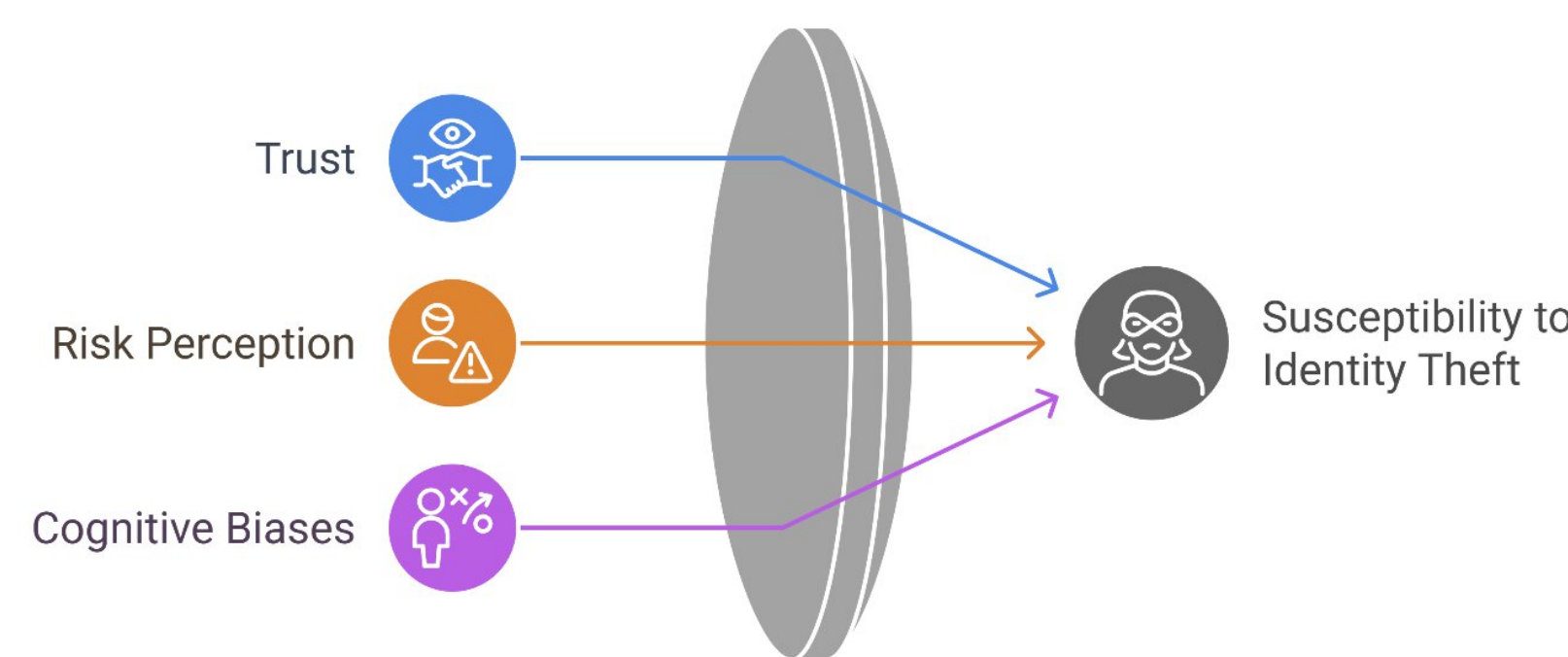
Figure 3: Methodology

Findings



1

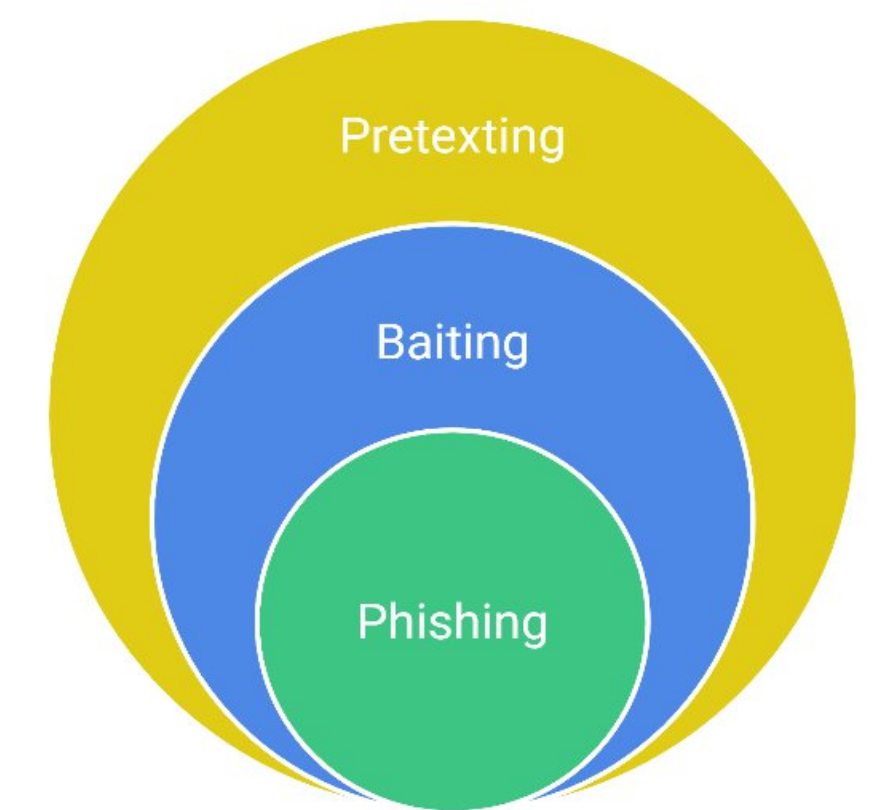
Psychological Influences on Identity Theft



2

Cybercriminals' Social Engineering Techniques

- Fabricated scenarios to obtain data
- Promises of goods to lure victims
- Deceptive emails to steal information

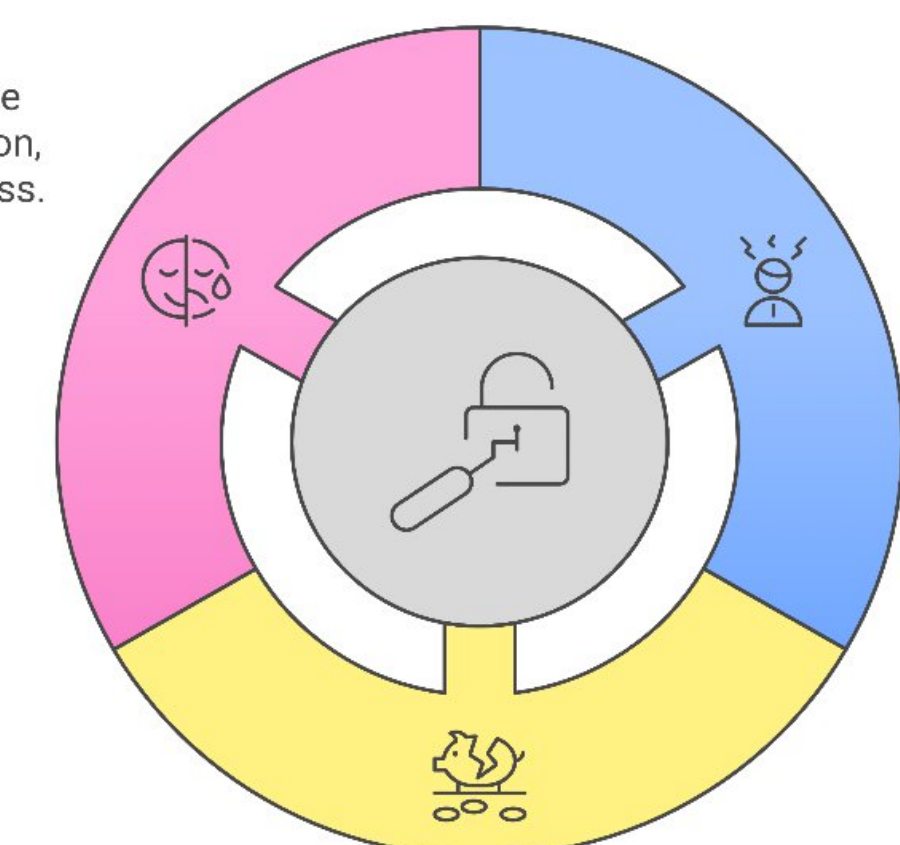


3

Impact of Identity Theft

Emotional Distress
Victims endure anger, frustration, and helplessness.

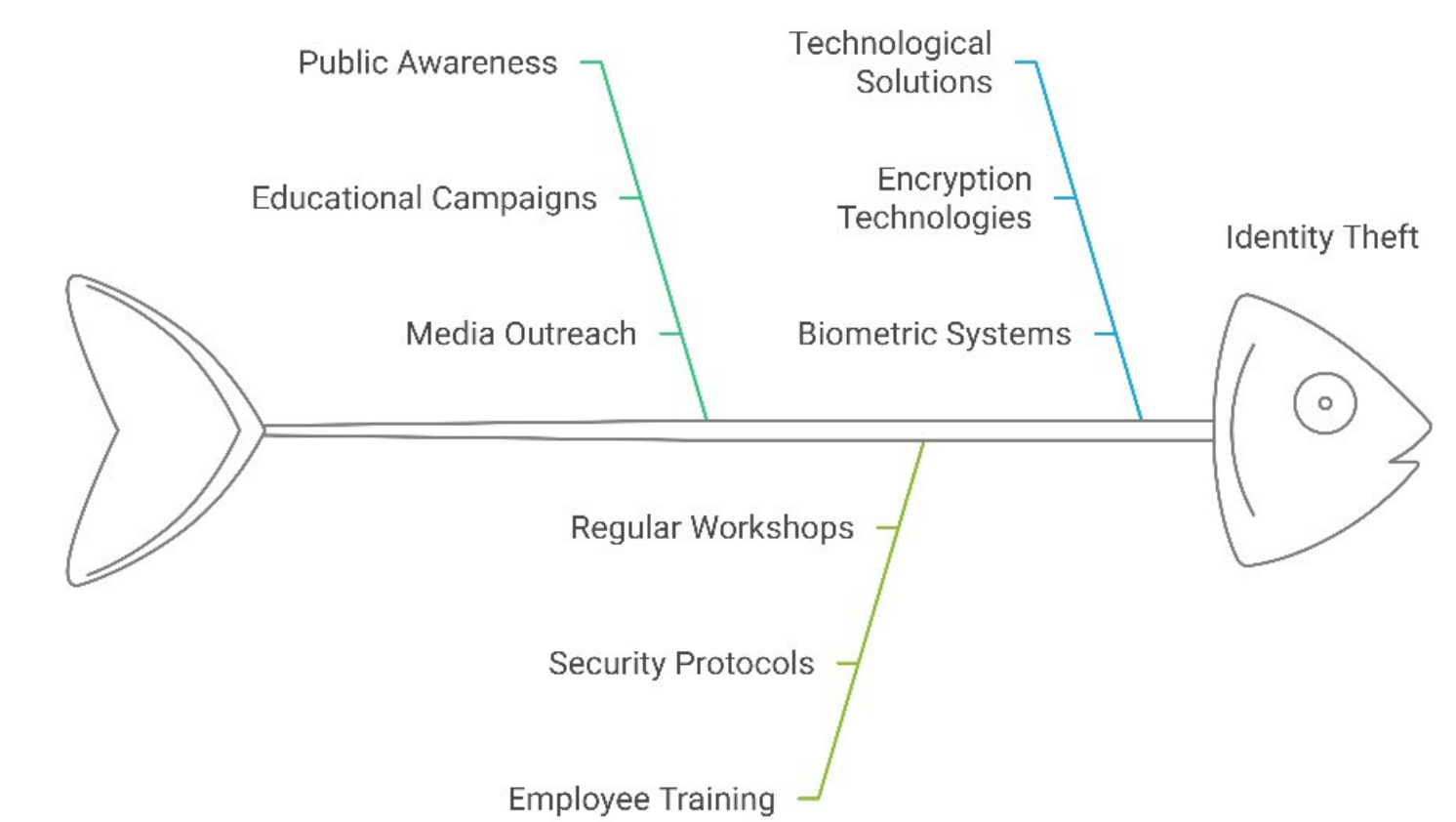
Psychological Harm
Victims experience anxiety, stress, and fear.



Financial Loss
Victims face monetary theft and potential bankruptcy.

4

Strategies to Combat Identity Theft



Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explores the comprehensive nature of identity theft. It highlights the urgent need for targeted strategies. Future studies should focus on adaptive interventions to address evolving threats and ensure safer digital ecosystems

