AI AND THE RISING TIDE OF CYBERCRIME IN ASEAN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract - The exponential adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and fintech innovation across ASEAN has transformed the financial eco-system, yet it has simultaneously amplified exposure to fraud, scams, and cybercrime. This conceptual paper examines emerging cyber-risk patterns and the dual role of AI as both a defensive and offensive instrument within ASEAN's digital economy. Drawing on recent 2024 – 2025 regional statistics, where Singapore recorded over 55,000 cybercrime cases ($1.1 billion losses), Malaysia 35,000 cases (RM1.6 billion losses), and Thailand losses exceeding THB 60 billion. The study reveals a sharp escalation in phishing, investment scams and malware-enabled fraud. Comparative analysis indicates that while high-income economies exhibit stronger regulatory readiness and cyber-resilience, developing nations continue to face competency gaps in detection, reporting, and AI-governed compliance. The paper advances a tripartite framework (AI-enabled detection, regional regulatory harmonization, and human capital development) to strengthen cybercrime governance and fraud analytics. It argues that policy integration across ASEAN, supported by RegTech eco-system and cross-border data collaboration is essential to mitigate AI-driven financial crime risks. Ultimately, this synthesis underscores the urgency of embedding cybersecurity awareness, forensic analytics, and ethical AI competencies within financial institutions to safeguard trust in the region's accelerating digital transformation.

Keyword - Artificial Intelligence, Cybercrime, Fraud Analytics, ASEAN, Fintech, Cybersecurity