Influence of Parental Roles on Adolescents' Involvement in Internet Fraud in Ede Local Government of Osun State

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Abstract

Internet fraud has become a growing concern, particularly among adolescents in Nigeria, driven by increased smartphone and internet access with its detrimental effects on the society. This study explored how parental roles influence adolescents' involvement in internet fraud in Ede South Local Government, Osun State. A mixed-method approach was used, with data collected from 250 adolescents aged 12-19 through multistage and snowball sampling. The Parenting Roles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PRDQ) was employed to assess parental involvement, focusing on communication, rule-setting, and monitoring of online activity. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysis. The findings revealed that active parental involvement, including frequent communication about internet fraud risks and consistent monitoring, was associated with a lower likelihood of adolescents engaging in internet fraud. Conversely, permissive parenting, marked by minimal rules and enforcement, was linked to higher participation in fraud. The study therefore highlighted the critical role of parenting in shaping adolescents' online behaviour. It stressed the importance of parental engagement in fostering responsible internet use and protecting adolescents from online risks, calling for targeted educational initiatives to equip parents with effective strategies for safeguarding their children in the digital age.

Keywords: Parental Roles, Internet Fraud, Adolescents, Adolescents Involvement

Introduction

Internet fraud represents a criminal offense targeting individuals or groups with the malicious intent to harm victims. These actions can take various forms, aiming to damage the victim's reputation, inflict physical or mental harm, or cause financial loss. Perpetrated through telecommunication networks like the internet and mobile phones, these offenses encompass a wide range of deceitful activities, from phishing and identity theft to scams and various forms of cybercrime aiming at financial gain, damaging reputations, or other malicious intentions (Gagandeep et al., 2024). A significant rise in internet fraud is observed due to the increased accessibility of devices like smartphones and computers, combined with widespread internet connectivity. The economic and social impacts of internet fraud are severe, costing billions globally and eroding public trust in digital systems.

In Nigeria, the issue has permeated various demographics, with young people notably drawn to these activities. Adolescents in particular see internet fraud, including hacking, as a means to gain financial independence or social distinction (Adeniran, 2020). The ease of access to hacking tools has lowered entry barriers, encouraging a growing number of youths to engage in these unlawful practices. While the internet has undeniably provided numerous constructive platforms, it has also become a breeding ground for various forms of fraudulent activities.

The pervasive nature of internet fraud poses a significant challenge for law enforcement and regulatory bodies worldwide, requiring constant vigilance and evolving strategies to combat these illicit activities (Ojedokun & Eraye, 2019). Internet fraud has deeply permeated Nigerian society, impacting individuals across various age groups. While this phenomenon is not exclusive to a specific age demographic, its prevalence among the younger population is notably pronounced (Ulo, 2023). Although individuals of all ages partake in these fraudulent activities, recent trends underscore the prominence of younger individuals as the primary perpetrators. This shift towards a younger demographic engaging in internet fraud presents a concerning societal challenge, requiring a comprehensive approach involving education, enforcement, and support systems to address the root causes and mitigate the prevalence among this particular age group.

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The alarming pace at which adolescents are drawn into fraudulent activities has sparked concerns regarding the future trajectory of the nation and its international reputation. The significant influx of young individuals engaging in these activities not only jeopardizes the country's future but also casts a negative shadow on its global image. The ever-expanding landscape of the internet in the twenty-first century has provided fraudsters with unprecedented opportunities to exploit and compromise victims' personal and financial data through diverse and sophisticated hacking methods (Osayi & Opara, 2022). This pervasive trend not only threatens the security and trust of individuals but also raises substantial challenges for national cybersecurity and international perceptions of the country's digital integrity. Urgent and strategic measures are imperative to curb this detrimental impact on both the nation's future prospects and its global standing. Fraudsters leverage the acquired information to finance various illicit endeavours, spanning from funding religious activities, political agendas, to supporting terrorist endeavours. Hence, it becomes crucial for both individuals and organizations to fortify their defences against the perils of internet fraud[13]. Nigeria grapples with pervasive issues like soaring unemployment rates, governance challenges, a struggling educational system, and widespread poverty. These socio-economic challenges have driven adolescents towards engaging in internet fraud as a significant means of livelihood (Eboibi, 2021).

The high involvement of young Nigerians in internet fraud raises pressing concerns regarding the country's future stability and international image. This trend not only reflects deeper socio-economic issues, such as unemployment and inadequate education but also threatens national security as fraudsters increasingly exploit digital vulnerabilities (Ogbeide & Akanji, 2021). Adolescents, mostly aged 18–24, frequently resort to fraud as a livelihood solution, given the limited opportunities available. The Nigerian government faces the complex task of implementing comprehensive interventions, including educational and community-based initiatives, to discourage such practices among youth. Addressing these challenges requires urgent attention to foster a culture of ethical online behaviour, bolster cybersecurity, and reduce the socio-economic drivers of internet fraud (Akor, 2019).

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Parenting is the profound and ongoing journey of nurturing and guiding a child through various developmental stages from infancy to adulthood (Morris, 2019). This process involves a multifaceted approach aimed at fostering the comprehensive growth and well-being of a child. It encompasses the deliberate effort of supporting not just the physical but also the emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions of a child's development. From the earliest stages of infancy, where the focus is on meeting basic needs and establishing secure attachments, to guiding a child through the complex challenges of adolescence and into adulthood, parenting involves a continuous dedication to the holistic growth and welfare of a child. It includes providing guidance, love, discipline, education, and creating an environment that encourages the child's exploration and understanding of the world around them (Ferguson, 2019).

Effective parenting involves a delicate balance of nurturing, guidance, and instilling values to help children develop into well-rounded and capable individuals. The style and behaviour employed by parents hold intricate and multifaceted impacts on a child's holistic development, adaptability, and resilience (Baumrind, 2019). However, it's essential to understand that while statistical significance might be observed, it doesn't automatically translate into practical or substantial significance in a child's life. Parenting styles, whether authoritative, permissive, or neglectful, significantly shape a child's emotional, social, and cognitive growth, influencing their ability to navigate challenges, form relationships, and develop coping mechanisms (Luo, Zhang, & Zhang, 2021). While studies may highlight statistical correlations between certain parenting behaviour and specific outcomes in children, the practical implications and real-life significance of these statistics might vary significantly. The subtleties of individual personalities, environmental influences, and the complex interplay of various factors make it challenging to universally apply statistical findings to every child's unique development

Parental role has been found to have a substantial impact on a child's development and well-being (Maccoby & Martin, 2020). Parenting styles encompass a range of behaviour and approaches that parents adopt in raising their children, such as being authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful. These styles can influence

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various aspects of a child's life, including their emotional development, social skills, self-esteem, and overall psychological adjustment.

Research findings emphasize that parenting styles marked by warmth, responsiveness, consistency, and balanced discipline significantly contribute to positive outcomes in children. These nurturing and structured parenting approaches have been linked to fostering numerous beneficial attributes in children. Specifically, such parenting styles are associated with improved emotional regulation, higher self-esteem, enhanced social skills, and increased resilience in coping with life's adversities (Luo et al., 2021).

The warmth and responsiveness exhibited by parents create a secure and supportive environment for a child's emotional development, while consistent and appropriate discipline instils a sense of structure and guidance. This combination lays a foundation for children to develop effective coping mechanisms, navigate social interactions, and build a strong sense of self-worth. Studies consistently highlight the correlation between these nurturing, consistent parenting styles and the development of crucial skills and traits that contribute to a child's overall well-being and ability to thrive (Wang & Chen, 2021).

On the flip side, parenting styles characterized by harshness or neglect can yield detrimental effects on a child's overall development. Practices such as inconsistent discipline, absence of emotional support, or outright neglect significantly contribute to negative outcomes. Children exposed to such parenting approaches often grapple with emotional and behavioural challenges, diminished self-esteem, and encounter difficulties in forging healthy relationships (Brown & Green, 2020). Inconsistency in discipline can lead to confusion and insecurity, hindering a child's ability to understand boundaries and expected behaviour. A lack of emotional support or outright neglect deprives children of the essential nurturing environment crucial for their emotional well-being, often resulting in a range of emotional and behavioural issues. These negative effects can persist into adulthood, impacting an individual's ability to manage emotions, interact with others, and maintain healthy, meaningful relationships (Smith & Davis, 2021). Studies consistently underscore the adverse impact of harsh or neglectful parenting styles on a child's psychological and social development, reinforcing the critical role of a supportive, nurturing environment in fostering positive growth (Martinez & Rodriguez, 2022).

The concept of parenting extends far beyond a mere collection of responsibilities; rather, it constitutes a complex tapestry of roles that are profoundly integral to the holistic development of a child. At its essence, parenting entails a comprehensive commitment to meeting the multifaceted needs of children, transcending the provision of mere sustenance, shelter, and clothing. While these foundational elements undoubtedly represent a critical aspect of parenting, they merely scratch the surface of the profound influence parents wield in shaping the trajectory of their children's lives.

Parents, in their role as primary guardians, are entrusted with the sacred duty of cultivating a secure and nurturing environment wherein a child can not only survive but truly thrive and flourish. Beyond the tangible aspects of safety, health, and education, parents play an instrumental role in fostering emotional well-being, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. It is within the folds of the family structure that a child's emotional foundation is laid, a foundation that profoundly impacts their social, cognitive, and emotional development (Martinez & Rodriguez, 2022).

Moreover, parents are not just providers but the architects of their children's moral and ethical frameworks. They serve as the inaugural models and educators, imparting a comprehensive worldview that encompasses values, beliefs, and behavioural norms.

Studies have contributed to understanding of the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent externalizing behaviours. Some key findings include:

Permissive Parenting: Permissive parenting is characterised by high affection and low structure, with few rules or expectations, as parents act more like friends than authority figures. While open communication and autonomy encourage some self-esteem and social skills, the lack of discipline and boundaries can lead to impulsive, demanding behaviours, poor self-control, and unhealthy habits in children (Anderson & Brown, 2020). Permissive parents provide emotional support but allow children to make their own choices without much guidance, increasing risks of negative habits and health issues such as poor diet and excessive screen time (Johnson & Lee, 2021).

Authoritarian Parenting: Authoritative parenting, characterised by a warm, caring relationship with clear rules and open communication, focuses on guidance rather than punishment, fostering self-confidence,

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responsibility, and independence in children (Smith & Wilson, 2020). This style involves setting high expectations while valuing children's feedback and uniqueness, promoting emotional resilience, self-regulation, and academic success (Jackson & Carter, 2021). Authoritative parents are supportive yet firm, using praise, rewards, and fair discipline to nurture a respectful and democratic parent-child relationship that contributes to children's overall social, emotional, and academic well-being.

Internet fraud among adolescents, including university students, is eroding the cultural values of trust and good character (*omoluabi*) in Southwestern Nigeria, creating a society increasingly marked by distrust and reluctance to collaborate. This trend reflects the deterioration of moral standards and highlights the societal consequences of unchecked fraudulent practices (Ajibade & Adebayo, 2020). Despite general research on parenting's impact on adolescent behaviour, there is a significant lack of studies specifically examining how parental roles affect youths' engagement in internet fraud, underscoring the need for targeted insights to develop effective preventative strategies (Olowookere, 2021). This study therefore seeks to investigate the influence of parental roles on adolescents' involvement in internet fraud.

Aim and Objectives

The main aim of the study is to investigate the influence parental roles on adolescents' involvement in internet fraud in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:
1. Examine the relationship between Parental Roles and adolescents' involvement in internet fraud.
2. Investigate the impact of Authoritative Parenting Style on adolescents' exposure to engaging in internet fraud.
3. Examine the relationship between permissive parenting and adolescents' likelihood of participating in internet fraud.

Research Questions
1. What is the nature of the relationship between parental roles (authoritative, permissive, authoritarian) and adolescents' involvement in internet fraud?
2. How does Authoritative Parenting Style influence adolescents' exposure to engaging in internet fraud?

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3. What is the relationship between permissive parenting and adolescents' likelihood of participating in internet fraud?

Significance of the Study

This research provides a foundation for developing policies to combat internet fraud in Ede, Nigeria, by offering insights into local dynamics and parental roles in preventing adolescent involvement. The findings will guide policymakers, community leaders, and local authorities in crafting targeted interventions aimed at preserving social integrity, economic stability, and communal harmony (Adegbite & Ogunleye, 2019). By understanding the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' susceptibility to fraud, this study will inform educational campaigns, support systems, and preventive strategies, fostering a safer digital environment for youth in Ede and reducing the impact of internet fraud across Nigeria (Bamidele, 2020).

Scope of the Study

This study examines how parental roles influence adolescents' engagement in internet fraud within Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria, focusing on adolescents aged 12–19 in an area with rising fraud rates and significant educational institutions.

Limitation of the Study

This study on parental roles and adolescents' involvement in internet fraud in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria, faces limitations such as restricted generalisability to other cultural contexts, potential sampling and social desirability biases, and the snapshot nature of cross-sectional design, which limits insights into causation (Owolabi & Akinlade, 2021). Furthermore, response bias in self-reports, cultural specificity, control over extraneous variables, and ethical considerations around consent and participant well-being further complicate the study's scope, making the findings context-specific and challenging to replicate in different settings (Ajayi, 2020).

Methodology

This chapter outlines the study's methodology, including research design, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis processes. A mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques was used to explore the influence of parental roles on adolescent involvement in internet fraud in Ede South Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria, with participants selected through multistage and snowball sampling. The Parenting Roles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PRDQ) served as the research instrument, validated through rigorous content and construct analysis, and reliability tested for internal consistency and stability over time using Cronbach's alpha and test-retest methods. The survey, administered to 250 participants, incorporated demographic and Likert-scale questions, and the data collected was analysed using Pearson product-moment correlation statistics to present relationships between variables.

Discussion of Findings
Research Question One: What is the relationship between Parental Roles (authoritative, permissive, authoritarian) and adolescents' involvement in internet fraud?

Table 1

Questions	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
How often do you talk to adolescent about the risks of internet fraud?	30%	34%	14%	10.7%	11.3%	100%
How much freedom does your adolescent have to use the internet?	15.3%	25.3%	26%	20.7%	12.7%	100%
Do you monitor your Adolescent's online activity?	27.3%	23.3%	20.7%	14.7%	14%	100%
Do you have any rules about your adolescent use of the social media?	22.7%	28.7%	20.7%	14.7%	13.3%	100%
						100%

Source: Field survey 2023
Research question one examines the relationship between parental roles (authoritative, permissive, authoritarian) and adolescents' involvement

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in internet fraud. The findings show varying levels of parental involvement in discussions and regulation of internet use. 30% of respondents frequently discuss internet fraud risks with their adolescents, while 34% do so often, and 14% sometimes. In terms of internet freedom, 25.3% of parents often give their children freedom, while 26% sometimes do, and 12.7% never allow such freedom. Regarding monitoring online activity, 27.3% of parents monitor very often, and 23.3% monitor often, while 14% never monitor. When it comes to setting social media rules, 22.7% of respondents enforce strict rules, 28.7% do so often, and 20.7% sometimes. These findings suggest that the majority of respondents believe a relationship exists between parental roles and adolescent involvement in internet fraud.

Research Question Two: How Parenting Styles Factors Influences Adolescent's Exposure to Engaging in Internet Fraud

Table 2

Questions	Very Much	Much	Little	Very Little	Undecided	Total
How much freedom does your adolescent have to use the internet?	16.7%	24%	25.3%	22.7%	11.3%	100%
Do you talk to your adolescent about the risks of internet fraud?	34%	27.3%	17.3%	10.7%	10.7%	100%
Do you monitor your adolescent's online activity?	28%	27.3%	17.3%	14.7%	12.7%	100%
Do you have any rules about your adolescent use of the internet?	24.7%	28%	21.3%	14%	12%	100%
						100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Research question two examines how parenting styles influence adolescents' exposure to internet fraud. The findings reveal varying levels of freedom, communication, monitoring, and rule-setting among parents. 16.7% of parents give very much freedom to their adolescents' internet use, while 24% give much freedom, and 25.3% give little

freedom. Regarding discussions on internet fraud risks, 34% of parents talk extensively with their adolescents, while 27.3% talk a lot, and 17.3% talk a little. Monitoring of online activity also varies, with 28% of parents monitoring their children's activity very much, while 27.3% monitor much, and 17.3% monitor little. When it comes to setting rules for internet use, 24.7% of parents have very strict rules, 28% have much strictness, and 21.3% have some rules. These findings indicate that parenting styles significantly influence adolescents' exposure to engaging in internet fraud, as the majority of respondents recognize the impact of these factors.

Research Question Three: Relationship Between Permissive Parenting and Adolescent's Livelihood of Participating in Internet Fraud

Table 3

Questions	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
How often do you set rules For your adolescent internet use?	28%	26.7%	20.7%	11.3%	13.3%	100%
How often do you enforce those rules?	29.3%	28%	12.7%	15.3%	14.7%	100%
How often do you talk to your adolescent's about the consequences of breaking the rules?	26%	29.3%	20%	12%	12.7%	100%
How often do you set rules For your adolescent internet Use?	25.3%	28.7%	19.3%	13.3%	13.3%	100%
						100%

Source: Field survey 2023

Research question three explores the relationship between permissive parenting and adolescents' likelihood of participating in internet fraud. The findings reveal that 28% of respondents frequently set rules for their adolescents' internet use, while 26.7% set rules often, and 20.7% set rules sometimes. Regarding enforcement of these rules, 29.3% of parents enforce them very often, and 28% do so often, while 12.7% enforce them sometimes. In terms of discussing consequences for breaking rules, 26% of parents talk about consequences very often, and

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29.3% do so often, while 20% talk about them sometimes. The data suggest a strong connection between permissive parenting styles, characterized by a lack of consistent rule-setting and enforcement, and a higher likelihood of adolescents engaging in internet fraud.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey highlights the significant impact of Parental Roles on adolescents' engagement in internet-related activities, including internet fraud and exposure to online risks. The diverse demographic composition of the sample provides a strong foundation for the study, which reveals that parental communication, rule-setting, and monitoring are key factors in shaping adolescents' online behaviours. The findings suggest that effective parental guidance can foster responsible online conduct and mitigate the risks of internet fraud. Additionally, the majority of adolescents demonstrated a negative view of internet fraud, indicating that family dynamics and parental practices influence their ethical attitudes and online behaviour. Overall, the study underscores the crucial role of effective parenting in ensuring adolescents navigate the digital world safely and ethically.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. To promote parental education and awareness programs to help parents understand responsible internet usage and the potential risks for adolescents in the online world.
2. To encourage open and ongoing communication between parents and adolescents, facilitating discussions about online risks and responsible internet behaviour.
3. Emphasize the importance of setting and consistently enforcing rules regarding internet usage to ensure that online activities align with family values.
4. To advocate for regular monitoring and supervision of adolescents' online activities, using appropriate technological tools and open dialogue to create a safe online environment.

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