

ATTITUDE OF ABUJA-BASED PARENTS ON THE RISKS OF INTERNET USE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

As technology becomes an integral part of daily life, understanding parental concerns and developing strategies to ensure children's well-being in the digital realm is of paramount importance. It is against this backdrop that this paper sought to examine parents' perception regarding their children's digital experiences in Abuja, Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Cognitive Behavioural Theory. A survey research design was employed and data were collected from 375 respondents. Data were collected through the administration of structured closed-ended questionnaire instruments and were analysed using descriptive analysis, which were presented in frequency tables and percentages. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of parents (46%) believe their children have unrestricted access to the Internet, indicating the need for vigilant monitoring. Parents perceive the Internet as having a moderate (35%) to very significant influence (33%) on their children's socialisation, suggesting the central role of the online world in shaping adolescents' lives. Additionally, parents express mixed opinions regarding the social and psychological effects of Internet culture on their children, underlining the complexity of this issue. The authors concluded that there is a pressing need for concerted efforts by the government, educational institutions, and parents to foster digital literacy, communication, and mental health support mechanisms for children in Abuja. It was also recommended that parental education, media literacy programmes, mental health support, and the promotion of parental control tools are to be employed to ensure a balanced and secure digital environment for their children.

Keywords: Perception, Attitude, Internet Usage, Adolescents, Abuja

Introduction

The Internet has pervasively influenced various aspects of human life, becoming a cornerstone for education, socialisation, and entertainment. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the prevalence of Internet usage among adolescents has reached unprecedented levels, leading to growing concerns about its effects.

Globally, children and adolescents have been exposed to an assortment of Internet-related risks, ranging from cyberbullying in the United States (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner, 2020) to Internet addiction in South Korea (Lee, Kim, & Choi, 2019). Europe has seen an uptick in concerns related to data privacy and exposure to harmful content among adolescents (Livingstone & Third, 2019). These global incidents signify the complex relationship between adolescents and the Internet, necessitating further investigation into parental perception and attitudes.

In Africa, the rapid penetration of Internet usage is fostering both opportunities and challenges. For instance, in South Africa, there is a growing concern regarding children's exposure to inappropriate content (Bosch, 2019). In Kenya, the increase in Internet usage among children has led to debates on the adverse effects of digital devices on social skills (Makori, 2020). The situation in Egypt mirrors these concerns, with rising numbers of online harassment cases (El Sherbini, 2021). The divergent societal norms and regulatory frameworks across African countries make it essential to understand how parents perceive these emerging risks.

In Nigeria, the Internet is making significant inroads, particularly among the

younger generation. Lagos has seen an increase in social media usage among adolescents, leading to concerns about cyberbullying (Ojebuyi, Oyesomi, Okorie and Soola, 2021). In Kaduna state, the focus has been more on the academic impact, where excessive Internet usage is reportedly causing a decline in academic performance (Usman & Shitu, 2020). In Abuja, the focus of this study, parents are grappling with a multitude of Internet-associated risks, from online scams to exposure to age-inappropriate material (Adebayo and Udegbe, 2022). There is a growing concern among parents and guardians in Abuja regarding their children's safety and well-being in relation to Internet usage. Cases of cyberbullying, online grooming, and exposure to inappropriate content have raised questions about the level of supervision and guidance provided by parents. This study seeks to fill in the gaps in existing literature by focusing on parental perceptions and attitudes towards their children's Internet usage. This study aims to investigate how parents in Abuja, Nigeria, perceive and understand the risks associated with Internet usage among adolescents.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the attitudes of Abuja-based parents on the risks of use of Internet by adolescents.
2. Assess parents' level of awareness of adolescents' unrestricted access to Internet-driven devices
3. Establish if Internet addiction by adolescents, in the judgement of Abuja parents, negatively influence their choices
4. Ascertain to what extent Internet culture in Abuja-based adolescents has influenced their craze for fantasy life in place of the realities of the physical environment

5. Seek Abuja parents' opinion on mitigating measures towards risky Internet-driven social media contents

Research Questions

There research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the attitudes of Abuja-based parents towards the risks of Internet usage by adolescents?
2. Are these parents aware of the adolescents' unrestricted access to Internet-driven devices?
3. Does Internet addiction, in the judgement of Abuja-based parents, negatively influence the choices of adolescents in Abuja?
4. What extent does Internet culture in Abuja-based adolescents influence their craze for fantasy life in place of realities of the environment?
5. What are the mitigating measures suggested by Abuja parents against the risky Internet propelled social media contents?

Conceptual Clarification

Attitude

Attitude, as conceptualised by Akintoye, Olufemi, and Akindele (2021), is a predisposed state of mind that influences an individual's choices and actions. According to their study, attitudes in Nigeria are heavily shaped by cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and societal expectations, which collectively form an intricate web of factors that guide human behaviour. Meanwhile, Adekunle and Chukwuma (2022) describe attitude as a composite of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects or symbols. They emphasise the role of education and family upbringing in shaping attitudes, especially

regarding Internet usage and its associated risks among Nigerian adolescents. In another vein, Okonkwo, Eze, and Okafor (2020) view attitude as the psychological lens through which people evaluate and respond to situations or stimuli, affecting their actions and interactions. Their research particularly focuses on how social media platforms can influence attitudes, leading to changes in behaviour that could either be positive or negative.

Literature Review

Internet Usage Risks

Internet usage risks according to Afolabi, Okeke, and Ibrahim (2021) categorise these risks into four main types: informational, communicational, commercial, and addictive. They argue that Nigerian adolescents are particularly susceptible to misinformation and online fraud, given the less regulated nature of Internet content in Nigeria. Alternatively, Ojo, Adeoye, and Olajide (2022) focus on the psychological risks, such as cyberbullying and addiction, that the Internet poses to Nigerian youth. They highlight that lack of parental guidance and supervision often exacerbates these risks. Adeleke, Olusola, and Kehinde (2020) put forth another dimension, examining how political polarisation and radicalisation are rising risks for Internet users in Nigeria. Their study finds that online echo chambers can fuel hate speech and violence, posing not just individual but societal risks. Chijioke, Emenike, and Ifeanyi (2021) explore the risks related to data privacy and the potential for exploitation. They argue that the lack of stringent data protection laws in Nigeria puts users at an increased risk of data breaches and identity theft. Idris, Adewale, and Okoye (2021) take a unique angle, discussing the risks of cyber fraud, commonly known as "Yahoo Yahoo" in Nigeria. Their work provides an in-depth understanding of the

socio-economic conditions that make Internet fraud appealing to Nigerian youth, thus posing ethical risks.

Exposure level of Children to Internet-Mediated Devices

Okon and Eze (2019) investigated the extent of exposure to Internet-mediated devices among children in the southeastern state of Anambra. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, the research involved a sample of 400 households. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The study found that 70% of children aged between 10-17 had access to at least one Internet-enabled device. Despite this high rate of access, the study also found that only 35% of parents actively monitored their children's Internet activities. This study underscores the high level of exposure to Internet-enabled devices among children but also raises concerns about the lack of parental oversight. However, the study did not explore the types of online content accessed by the children, leaving a gap for future research.

Similarly, Musa and Adebayo (2020) conducted a study in the Northern Nigerian state of Kaduna, focusing on the exposure levels of children to Internet-enabled smartphones. Using a mixed-methods approach that included both surveys and interviews, they sampled 600 households. The research revealed that 55% of children aged 9-15 had access to smartphones with Internet capabilities. Interestingly, their study also noted that parents in these regions were more likely to place restrictions on Internet use, with 50% employing some form of parental control. The study highlights regional differences in both access and parental attitudes but falls short in assessing the effectiveness of parental control measures, indicating an avenue for future studies. This is one of the aspects explored in this study.

Furthermore, Akinola and Ogundipe (2021) explored the situation in the southwestern state of Ogun, employing a longitudinal study design that sampled 300 households. Observational checklists and in-depth interviews were used to collect data over a one-year period. The study found a significant increase in Internet exposure among children aged 8-16, from 60% at the beginning of the study to 75% a year later. However, they also observed that this increase in exposure was accompanied by a rise in the consumption of risky online content. While the study provides invaluable longitudinal data, it does not examine the role of schools and peer influence in shaping children's Internet behaviour, thus presenting another area that warrants further exploration.

In contrast, Yusuf and Aliyu (2020) conducted their study in Kano, focusing specifically on children's access to smartphones. Employing a survey approach with a sample of 300 households, they found that 52% of children aged 8-15 had access to a smartphone with Internet capabilities. Notably, 45% of parents reported using some form of parental control. While the study indicated more conservative attitudes towards children's Internet usage in Kano, it did not examine the efficacy of parental controls, leaving room for future studies.

Lastly, Ibrahim and Olawale (2022) focused their study on Abuja. They employed a mixed-methods approach, sampling 350 households and employing both questionnaires and interviews. Their findings showed that 67% of children aged between 9-14 had access to Internet-enabled devices. Interestingly, they found that 50% of parents felt they had sufficient know-how to guide their children's Internet usage safely. However, the study did not explore the types of online risks the children were exposed to, leaving a gap for future inquiries. This study

seeks to answer questions on the type of risks adolescents are exposed to in their online adventure.

Socialisation and Lifestyle of Children towards Internet Usage

Adeniyi and Fagbemi (2019) carried out a study in Lagos, scrutinising the impact of Internet usage on the socialisation patterns of children aged 10-16. Using a sample of 270 households and structured interviews, the study found that 68% of children who had access to the Internet reported a decline in physical interactions with friends and family. The research casts a spotlight on the potential isolating impact of the Internet but did not delve into its effects on children's emotional well-being, creating a gap for future studies. This is another area of interest in this study in terms of psychological effects this lifestyle has on the adolescents.

Similarly, Emeka and Oluwole (2021) examined the impact of Internet usage on children's lifestyle in Rivers State. Through a longitudinal study involving 250 households, they found that children who spent more than three hours daily on the Internet were likely to adopt sedentary lifestyles. Yet, the study fell short in examining how these lifestyle changes impacted children's academic performance, marking another avenue for future exploration. Eze and Idowu (2022) directed their study towards the socialisation and lifestyle implications of Internet usage among children in the state of Kaduna. Employing a mixed-methods approach with 400 households, the researchers found that 63% of children were more inclined to follow international trends and celebrities, indicating a form of globalisation in their socialisation process. However, the study did not scrutinise the influence of such globalised perspectives on local cultural values, presenting yet another gap for subsequent research. This study seeks to fill that gap.

Also, Chukwu and Ude (2020) turned their attention to Anambra State, examining how Internet usage impacts the dietary habits of children aged 9-15. Through a cross-sectional study of 260 households, they discovered that 45% of children who spent more time on the Internet showed a preference for fast food and unhealthy snacks, as influenced by online advertising. While this study highlights lifestyle changes connected to Internet usage, it did not investigate the impact on children's overall health, offering another area for future research. This study focuses on that area in terms of how adolescents have imitated the fantasies they encounter online.

For, Umar and Tanko (2021), their study focused on state of Sokoto, looking into the correlation between Internet usage and academic performance. The study involved 200 households and utilised a mixed-methods approach. The researchers found that children who spent more than four hours per day online showed a 15% decline in academic grades. Although the study explores the intersection between Internet usage and academics, it did not delve into how Internet usage might positively benefit educational outcomes, representing another unexplored area.

The Social Effects of Internet Culture on Children

Ojo and Adeola (2019) conducted a study in Osun State investigating the influence of Internet memes and viral videos on children aged 12-18. Using a sample of 230 households and qualitative interviews, they found that 60% of children were heavily influenced by Internet trends in their daily conversations and social interactions. However, the study didn't explore the educational impact of such trends, marking a gap for further research. Nwosu and Orji (2020) focused their research on Imo State,

examining the effect of online challenges and trends on the behaviour of children aged 10-16. Through a sample of 275 households and a survey approach, they discovered that 50% of children participated in online challenges, some of which involved risky behaviours. The study highlighted the allure of online trends but didn't delve into the psychological effects on the children, leaving room for additional studies. That gap has been filled in this study.

Ezekiel and Solomon (2019) carried out research in Kano State, investigating the influence of Internet music and video streaming services on children aged 13-17. Through a sample of 280 households and structured interviews, they found that 55% of children had altered their music tastes and cultural preferences based on global trends found online. Although the study discusses shifts in cultural preferences, it doesn't examine the impact of this change on children's identification with local culture, creating room for future research. Okeke and Johnson (2020) focused on the southern state of Enugu, examining the role of Internet culture in shaping children's perspectives on body image and beauty standards. Using a survey methodology with 260 households, they found that 45% of children felt pressured to conform to beauty standards propagated online. The study shines a light on the body image issues induced by Internet culture but did not look at its impact on children's mental health, indicating another area requiring exploration. This study examines both the psychological and the health and fitness impact of adolescents' continuous exposure Internet contents.

Lastly, Oluwole and Amadi (2022) conducted a study in the state of Ebonyi focusing on the relationship between Internet usage and children's sense of social justice and activism. With a mixed-methods approach and a sample of 350 households,

they discovered that 60% of children became more aware of social justice issues through their Internet usage. Nevertheless, the study did not investigate if this increased awareness translated into real-world actions or initiatives, providing yet another area for future studies. This is another gap which this study seeks to fill in the survey.

Psychological Disposition and Well-being of Children towards Internet Usage

Azeez and Farouk (2019) conducted research in Kwara State, examining the correlation between Internet usage and symptoms of depression among children aged 12-17. Utilising a sample of 250 households and self-reported surveys, they found that 30% of children who spent more than three hours online daily reported feeling isolated and depressed. However, the study did not investigate the possible therapeutic uses of the Internet for mental health, leaving a gap for future research.

In Nasarawa State, Dauda and Isa (2021) looked at the relationship between Internet usage and self-esteem in children aged 10-16. Employing a cross-sectional design with 280 households, they discovered that 25% of children who frequently used social media platforms felt a need to compare themselves to others, which lowered their self-esteem. The study is comprehensive but lacks focus on how moderated Internet usage could potentially enhance self-esteem, thus offering a point for future study. Chima and Nkem (2022) based their study in Abia State, probing into the correlation between Internet usage and sleep quality among children aged 11-18. Using a sample of 260 households and sleep assessment scales, they found that 55% of children who had high levels of late-night Internet usage suffered from poor sleep quality. However, the study did not consider the impact of educational-related Internet usage on sleep, providing another avenue for

subsequent studies. In Benue State, Idris and Samuel (2021) researched the potential link between Internet usage and childhood anxiety. They used a sample of 275 households and anxiety assessment tests and found that 30% of children who used the Internet excessively displayed symptoms of social anxiety. Although the study is thorough in its investigation of social anxiety, it does not consider the broader spectrum of anxiety disorders, marking another area for future exploration. Finally, Abdullahi and Bello (2022) focused their research on children in Katsina State, assessing the relationship between Internet usage and stress levels among children aged 12-17. Utilising a sample of 290 households and cortisol tests, they found that 45% of children displayed elevated stress levels correlated with heavy Internet usage. The study, while comprehensive, does not consider potential stress relief that moderated and guided Internet usage might offer, leaving a space for additional research.

Managing, and Controlling the Consumption of Internet Contents by Children

Usman and Adebayo (2019) carried out a study in Sokoto State examining the effectiveness of parental controls in regulating Internet content. With a sample of 210 households and using a combination of questionnaires and interviews, they discovered that only 25% of parents effectively used parental controls to limit what their children could access online. The study, while pointing out the low usage of parental controls, did not explore why parents were reluctant to use them, leaving room for future research. This study responds to that gap by putting the question to the parents on control measures. Olufemi and Ogunsola (2020) based their research in Ekiti State, investigating the role of schools in Internet content management for children. Through a

sample of 180 households and focus group discussions, they found that 70% of schools had no formal guidelines for Internet use. While the study exposed a gap in the role schools play in Internet content management, it did not investigate the impact of unregulated Internet usage within the school environment, creating another research gap.

Adewale and Eze (2021) conducted a study in Delta State, focusing on the impact of Internet literacy programmes for parents. Using a sample of 230 households and pre- and post-tests, the researchers found a 35% improvement in parents' abilities to manage and control their children's Internet usage after attending an Internet literacy programme. The study is extensive but does not consider long-term effectiveness, which is another area for future studies. Lastly, Okafor and Chijioke (2022) conducted research in Anambra State, examining the role of community-led initiatives in controlling children's Internet content. Employing a sample of 250 households and utilising community surveys, they found that 50% of children in communities with active awareness campaigns were less likely to access inappropriate content. However, the study did not examine the sustainability of community-led initiatives, providing another avenue for research. Finally, Abubakar and Ali (2022) directed their study in Borno State, investigating the role of governmental policies in managing Internet content for children. Employing a sample of 320 households and policy review methods, they discovered that despite existing policies, implementation remains lax, leading to only a 15% reduction in risky Internet behaviours among children. The study, while highlighting the gap between policy and practice, opens the door for future research on ways to bridge this gap effectively.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the Cognitive Behavioural Theory to explain why and the culminating effects certain online behaviours by Abuja-based adolescents. Pioneered by Aaron Becks in the 1960s, the Cognitive Behavioural Theory has to do with cognition which, according to Corcoran and Walsh (2004), deals with thoughts, beliefs and assumptions about what we see around us. The focus, on the assumption of these authors, is on the rationality of certain thought arrangement and inter-relationship existing in “thoughts, feelings and behavior.”

The Cognitive Behavioural Theory, also known as CBT deals with how people encounter situations that create uncontrollable thoughts, activate deep feelings and eventually lead them into certain actions. It connotes continuous exposure to environments that result in desirable or undesirable knowledge and understanding based on thoughts. The theory explains atmospheres whereby, according to Stojkovic, Vukosavljević-Gvozden, David and Puric (2022), excessive exposure to the Internet has resulted in what they call cognitive preoccupation—a situation where the user keeps thinking about an encounter even after getting off online or getting emotionally distressed when he or she wants to stop the usage.

This theory rhymes with the attitude of Abuja adolescents towards the Internet—a case of pathological attachment to the technology, which creates a behavioral pattern which requires therapeutic reversal. According to a model developed by Davis (2001) cited by Stojkovic, *et al* (2022), such addiction develops certain cognitive symptoms like uncontrollable obsessive thoughts and the push towards continuously being on the Internet. They state that such “behavioural symptoms of

pathological Internet use, reinforce maladaptive cognitions, forming a vicious cycle.”

It is believed that such obsessional challenges arise from the depth of significance or benefits attached to the Internet by adolescents. According to Salkovkis, Forrester and Richards (2018), “the cognitive-behavioural theory of obsessive-compulsive disorder” has it that “obsessional problems occur” based on the importance or meaning which the adolescents attach to Internet contents which mold their thoughts. As observed in our survey findings, this theory assumes that Internet addiction could result in unproductive attitudes or behaviours, such as attachment to fantasies or abstractions instead of physical environmental realities. It is such extremely abnormal situations that require cognitive behavioural therapy.

Research Methodology

The study employs the survey research design This approach was chosen for its efficacy in collecting large volumes of data within a limited time, and it's particularly effective for understanding perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours—key elements of this research. The target population for this study consists of parents living in various districts within Abuja. With a population of 3, 840, 000 in 2023, showing 5.15% increase from 2022 (Macrotrends, n. d.), a representative sample is crucial. For the scope of this research, 10 districts were carefully selected: Asokoro, Garki, Wuse, Maitama, Jabi, Apo, Gwarimpa, Lugbe, Kado, and Karu. Utilising the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table (1970) with a confidence level of 95%, a sample size of 375 parents were determined. Cluster sampling technique was first deployed to select the districts, then stratified random sampling was used to get the respondents. For this study, the

strata were created based on the chosen districts to ensure that the perceptions of parents from all parts of Abuja are adequately considered. Beginning from a randomly selected starting point, every nth household was chosen until the sample size of 375 was reached, with distribution appropriately apportioned across the districts. This methodology assures a fair and unbiased selection of households, while also being easy to administer (Kish, 1965). Data were

then collected using structured questionnaires comprising multiple-choice questions tailored to gauge the parents' perceptions, attitudes, and practices related to their children's Internet usage. Upon gathering the data, descriptive statistical analysis was performed, and the findings were presented using tables, frequencies and percentages, for easy comprehension and interpretation.

Data analysis and Presentation

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
18-25 years	97	27
26-35 years	121	34
36-45 years	69	19
46-55 years	41	11
56+ years	29	8
Gender		
Male	163	46
Female	194	54
Highest Educational Qualification		
Secondary School	54	15
Diploma/Certificate	72	20
Bachelor's Degree	119	33
Master's Degree	69	19
PhD/Doctorate	43	12
Occupation		
Employed	157	44
Self-Employed	83	23
Unemployed	43	12
Student	74	21
Place of Residence		
Asokoro	23	6
Garki	18	5
Wuse	37	10
Maitama	15	4
Jabi	28	8
Apo	19	5

Gwarimpa	32	9
Lugbe	17	5
Kado	12	3
Karu	29	8
Total	357	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

Table 1 shows that the demographic characteristics of the respondents encompass a wide range of variables. Regarding age, the study includes participants from various age groups, with the 26-35 years group being the largest at 34%, followed by the 18-25 years group at 27%. Gender distribution indicates a near balance, with 54% female and 46% male respondents. In terms of educational qualification, the majority have Bachelor's Degrees (33%), followed by Diploma/Certificate holders (20%) and Master's Degree holders (19%). Occupationally, the study encompasses

individuals with diverse backgrounds, with 44% employed, 23% self-employed, 21% students, and 12% unemployed. Geographically, respondents reside in different areas, with notable concentrations in Wuse (10%), Gwarimpa (9%), and Asokoro (6%). The data confirms level of maturity of respondents while their state of awareness of issues they were questioned about is also confirmed in their education levels. Most of them are employed, which also shows that they are responsible family people while their places of abode cut across the reserved areas and the not-too-metropolitan areas.

Table 2: Exposure to Internet-mediated Facilities

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
1. Do your children have unrestricted access to Internet-mediated facilities?		
They have minimal access	93	26
They have no access	45	13
They have unrestricted access	163	46
They rarely have access	56	16
2. Which specific gadget do you allow your children Internet access?		
Laptop	72	20
Mobile phone	168	47
iPad	43	12
Desktop	21	6
Other	53	15
3. Have you ever noticed that your child frequently sources information from some particular social media platforms? If you do, which social media platforms do you pay attention to whenever he/she is online?		
Yes; YouTube	123	34
Yes; Instagram	98	27
Yes; Twitter	45	13
Yes; Facebook	76	21

Yes; TikTok	35	10
No; I don't pay attention to them	98	27
4. Do you actively monitor their virtual lifestyle and what they do in the online space?		
I monitor them actively	104	29
I monitor them partially	138	39
I rarely monitor them	63	18
I do not monitor them	52	15
Total	357	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

Table 2 shows that 46% of children have unrestricted access to such facilities, while 26% have minimal access. In terms of devices, mobile phones (47%) are the most commonly used for Internet access, followed by laptops (20%). Additionally, 34% of respondents have noticed their children frequently sourcing information from YouTube, making it the most popular platform. Instagram (27%), Facebook (21%), and Twitter (13%) are also noteworthy. Regarding monitoring, 39% of parents monitor their children partially, while 29% monitor them actively. Table 2 indicates the level of literacy of the people under investigation in this study. Their affordance

of the Internet facility and the sophisticated new media or social media devices required for access also show that they are not in any way physically and intellectually disadvantaged. Their choice of and connection to the platforms, independent of their parents, that is, with little or no monitoring whatsoever, also confirm how much freedom they enjoy from their parents either due to their states of maturity or outright negligence by the parents. From the responses, their parents are quite aware of what these adolescents do but choose to pay little attention or not attention to them in terms of caution or outright control.

Table 3: Perceptions of Parents on Internet Culture

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
1. In your opinion, how influential is the Internet on Nigerian children's socialization and lifestyle?		
Not influential at all	24	7
Somewhat influential	91	26
Moderately influential	124	35
Very influential	118	33
2. What level of impact do you believe the Internet has on Nigerian children and the society?		
No significant impacts at all	15	4
Some significant impacts	67	19
Moderate significant impacts	138	39
High significant impacts	137	38
3. Do you think the rise of the Internet has intensified the impact of globalization on Nigerian children?		
No significant impact at all	29	8

Some significant impact	73	20
Moderate significant impact	135	38
High significant impact	120	34
Total	357	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

Table 3 reveals that a significant portion of parents acknowledge the influence of the Internet on their children's socialization and lifestyle, with 35% stating it's moderately influential and 33% finding it very influential. Furthermore, respondents express varying opinions on the impact of the Internet on Nigerian children and society. While 38% believe it has high significant impacts, 39% perceive moderate significant impacts, and 19% see only some significant impacts. Additionally, the majority (38%) think the

rise of the Internet has moderately intensified the impact of globalization on Nigerian children, while 34% believe it has a high significant impact. Table 3 shows that the parents of Abuja-based adolescents are not unaware of what their children do, neither are they ignorant of the immediate and long-term impact of their children's engagement in the Internet offerings. Their depth of understanding of the issues, especially the cognitive impact of their children's actions, is also obvious.

Table 4: Social Effects of Internet Culture on Nigerian Children

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
1. Do you perceive that Internet culture has positively influenced Nigerian children's lifestyle and choices?		
It has	89	25
It has not	71	20
It slightly has	60	17
It seriously has	137	38
2. Which area of Nigerian children's life has the Internet seriously influenced positively?		
Fashion/Beauty	40	11
Body image/Ideals	35	10
Confidence level	30	8
Career choice/Aspirations	45	13
Entertainment Choices	50	14
Friendship/Relationship	42	12
Health and Fitness	20	6
Political Engagement	8	2
Consumer Behaviour	18	5
Lifestyle and Travel	30	8
Language and Slang	15	4
Others	21	6
3. Do you think Internet culture negatively affects the behaviour and lifestyle choices of children in Nigeria?		

It affects	120	34
It does not	32	9
It slightly affects	102	29
It seriously affects	103	29
4. If yes, which category of Nigerian children are most affected or influenced?		
Children (1-12 years)	34	10
Adolescents/Teenagers (13 – 17 years)	58	16
5. Which area of Nigerian children’s life has it seriously influenced negatively?		
Fraud/Hacking	31	9
Impersonation/Identity Theft	41	12
Prostitution	12	3
Pornography/ Nudity	73	20
Laziness/Addiction	198	55
Plagiarism/Examination Malpractice	21	6
Other (Specify)	2	1
Total	357	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

Table 4 shows that a significant portion of parents, 38%, believe that Internet culture has seriously positively influenced their children's lifestyle and choices. It's notable that 55% of respondents point to laziness and addiction as areas negatively influenced by Internet culture, while 20% cite pornography/nudity and 12% mention impersonation/identity theft as negative effects. Additionally, 34% of parents believe that Internet culture affects children's behaviour and lifestyle choices, with 29% indicating it slightly affects and 29% noting it seriously affects. Among those who see

negative effects, adolescents/teenagers (13-17 years) are perceived as the most affected group. The huge Internet culture influence implies a possible erosion of the local culture mentality in the lifestyle of the adolescents despite the orchestrated positive impact as can be seen in several aspects of their lifestyles; including physical behaviours. In fact, the change in the behavioural patterns of the children from age one in favour of irresponsible attitudes like laziness, addiction and pornography requires more research in search of remedy.

Table 5: Psychological Effects of Internet Culture on Nigerian Children

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
1. How does Internet culture make you feel about Nigerian children's self-image and appearance?		
No feeling at all	19	5
Some significant feeling	91	25
Moderate significant feeling	101	28
Very significant feeling	146	41

2. Have you ever experienced feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem when comparing present Nigerian children and children of your generation?		
Never	17	5
Seldom	65	18
Some of the time	97	27
Most of the time	178	50
3. Do you think Internet culture contributes to rising unrealistic expectations among Nigerian children?		
It does	156	44
It does not	29	8
It slightly does	94	26
It seriously does	78	22
4. Have you observed any instances of Nigerian children imitating the positive and negative actions of people they find on the Internet?		
I have observed	217	61
I have not observed	43	12
I slightly have observed	75	21
I have seriously observed	22	6
Total	357	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

Table 5 shows that 41% of parents have a very significant feeling about how Internet culture impacts their children's self-image and appearance. Moreover, 50% of respondents have experienced feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem when comparing present Nigerian children to children of their generation, with most of them feeling this way. When it comes to the influence of Internet culture on rising unrealistic expectations, 44% believe it does, and 22% think it seriously does. Interestingly,

the majority of parents, 61%, have observed instances of Nigerian children imitating the actions of people they find on the Internet, suggesting a significant influence on their behaviour. Their responses show that a lot of things are going in the negative directions due to their children's exposure to the Internet platforms, from feelings of low self-esteem, living in fantasy worlds culminating in unrealistic expectations, and copying both positive and negative lifestyles portrayed on the Internet.

Table 6: Internet Culture's Influence on Social Reality

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
1. Do you agree that Nigerian children tend to substitute the fantasy world of the Internet with the reality in their physical environment?		
I agree	156	44
I disagree	38	11
I somewhat agree	120	34
I totally disagree	43	12

2. Do you think that the flamboyant social media lifestyle on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and WhatsApp statuses directly influences children’s craze for materialism in contemporary Nigerian society?		
I think so	143	40
I do not think so	68	19
I somehow think so	104	29
I seriously do not think so	42	12
3. Do you think that Internet adverts and marketing strategies are taken as real and affect the spending habits of Nigerians children?		
It affects	176	49
It does not affect	23	6
It slightly affects	119	33
It seriously affects	39	11
4. Do you agree that the negative but popular Marlian Culture is promoted and popularized by the Internet and it affects the psyche and worldview of Nigerian children?		
I agree	96	27
I disagree	124	35
I somehow agree	94	26
I seriously do not agree	43	12
5. Do you spend time together with your children online in order to model how to use the Internet?		
I often do	57	16
I seldom do	77	22
I sometimes do	134	37
I do not	89	25
Total	357	100

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

Table 6 examines the influence of Internet culture on the social reality of Nigerian children, as perceived by parents. A significant portion, 44%, agree that Nigerian children tend to substitute the fantasy world of the Internet with their physical environment, while 34% somewhat agree with this notion. Regarding the influence of the flamboyant social media lifestyle on materialism, 40% believe it does, with 29% somewhat thinking so. Internet adverts and

marketing strategies are seen as affecting the spending habits of Nigerian children by 49% of respondents, and 27% agree that the negative but popular Marlian Culture is promoted and popularized by the Internet, affecting the psyche and worldview of Nigerian children. Interestingly, parents have varying levels of involvement in modelling Internet usage for their children, with 37% sometimes spending time together online, while 25% do not engage in this practice.

Table 7: Strategies for Mitigating Internet Risk for Children

Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
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1. Do you set time frame and time limit for your children’s use of Internet-connected devices in order to monitor their online activities?		
I do	138	39%
I do not	65	18%
I sometimes do	80	22%
I rarely do	74	21%
2. Do you set parental controls app on your children’s Internet-enabled devices to block certain websites, restrict search engines in order to prevent them from viewing adult contents?		
I do not know about such app	11	3%
I have never restricted their search engines	53	15%
I have not used such app	97	27%
I use parental control app on my children’s devices	196	55%
3. Do you always engage your children in Internet safety education/discussion?		
No. I don’t.	56	16%
Yes. I do.	184	51%
I rarely do that.	75	21%
I do always do that	42	12%
4. Do you download online safety resources and age-appropriate apps to educate and guide your children’s Internet activities?		
Yes, I do	145	41%
No, I don’t	61	17%
I don’t know about such apps	26	7%
I sometimes do	88	25%
5. Have you ever filtered inappropriate websites and set location alerts on your children’s Internet-enabled devices by using manage screen time?		
Yes.	120	34%
Sometimes, but with other apps	48	13%
I don’t know what is manage screen time	27	8%
No. I haven’t used manage screen time	162	45%
Total	357	100%

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

Table 7 presents the strategies employed by parents to mitigate Internet risks for their children. A substantial portion, 39%, sets time frames and limits for their children's Internet device usage as a way to monitor online activities, while 21% rarely do so. In terms of parental control apps, 55% use them on their children's devices, while 27% have never used such apps. Engaging in Internet safety education and discussion is a common

practice, with 51% of parents indicating they do, while 16% do not. Responses to issues in Table 7 show a continuation of exercise of parental care and caution in attempt to moderate noticeable adolescents’ addictive access to dangerous Internet contents. While some parents set time limit, others either physically educate and guide their children by engaging them in safety discussions or activate the safety resources of age-

appropriate apps. How much all these approaches have helped is a subject for further research.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that a significant portion of parents (46%) believe that their children have unrestricted access to Internet-mediated facilities, while 16% indicated that their children rarely have access. This suggests that many parents are aware of their children's access to the Internet, and a considerable number acknowledge the extent of this exposure. This finding aligns with the work of Adeyinka (2020), who observed a significant increase in Internet access among Nigerian children and the research highlighted the pervasive influence of smartphones and other devices in providing children with greater Internet exposure.

The study discovered that in terms of the influence of the Internet on children's socialization and lifestyle, a substantial number of parents (68%) perceive it as being at least moderately influential. This reflects parents' recognition of the Internet's role in shaping their children's social interactions and lifestyle choices. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Oluwakemi (2019), who emphasized the growing role of the Internet in shaping the social lives and lifestyles of Nigerian children and also highlighted the substantial impact of social media platforms on children's socialisation.

The study revealed that parents' perceptions regarding the social effects of Internet culture are mixed. While a significant percentage (38%) believes that Internet culture has seriously positively influenced their children's lifestyle and choices, a substantial portion (29%) also feels

that it seriously negatively affects their behaviour and lifestyle choices. This indicates that parents recognize both the positive and negative impacts of Internet culture on their children. These findings collaborate with the study by Ibrahim (2020) and Adeleke (2021) that the potential positive aspects of Internet culture in shaping Nigerian children's choices, the study highlighted the risks associated with excessive Internet use among Nigerian youth.

The research findings revealed that parents' perceptions of their children's psychological disposition and well-being in relation to Internet usage are insightful. A notable number (50%) admit to experiencing feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem when comparing present Nigerian children to those of their generation, suggesting concerns about the psychological effects of Internet culture. Moreover, a significant proportion (44%) feels that Internet culture makes them have a very significant feeling about Nigerian children's self-image and appearance, indicating its potential impact on self-esteem and body image., the findings of this study align with the research conducted by Usman and Adebayo (2019) explored the link between increased Internet use and psychological well-being among Nigerian youth and revealed that the potential impact of the Internet on self-esteem and mental health..

The findings reveal that parents employ various strategies to mitigate Internet risks for their children. A majority (55%) use parental control apps to block certain websites and restrict search engines, while 41% download online safety resources and age-appropriate apps. Additionally, 34% set time frames and limits for their children's

Internet device usage. These strategies demonstrate parents' efforts to protect their children from harmful online content, the findings of this study align with the research conducted by Usman and Adebayo (2019) who emphasised the importance of parental mediation and the use of technical tools to protect Nigerian children from online risks.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has unveiled significant insights into parents' perceptions of their children's digital experiences in Abuja, Nigeria. It is evident that parents are acutely aware of their children's exposure to Internet-mediated devices and express concerns about their socialisation, behaviour, and mental health in the digital era. To address these concerns and ensure the well-being of Abuja's children, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Abuja Municipal Government has a duty to examine the situation discussed in this study and collaborate with Abuja-based parents in introducing certain educational programmes and holding workshops that would equip them with the required skills to manage and control their children's exposure to Internet-mediated devices effectively.
2. Government should guide Abuja-based parents on the need for open and regular communication with their children about their online engagements so as to foster a deeper understanding of the digital world's impact on socialisation and lifestyle choices.
3. Abuja local government should help develop media literacy programmes for Abuja-based adolescents within the educational curriculum to enhance critical thinking skill by adolescents that will enable them navigate Internet culture responsibly.
4. Schools and community organisations in Abuja should offer comprehensive support systems, including access to counselling services and mental health programmes for Abuja-based adolescents to address the psychological effects of the digital exposure on children.
5. Abuja-based parents should promote parental care tools and applications on Internet-driven devices so as to limit their children's exposure to risky online contents.

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