

## Parental Support and Juvenile Involvement in Internet Fraud

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**ABSTRACT:** *The researcher investigated parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in the Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. The Relative Deprivation Theory was used to explain why parents might support internet fraud. Hence, the theory is very cogent, as it explains the fact that a parent who feels relatively deprived might vent their frustration by encouraging their offspring to seek an alternative route (internet fraud) to achieve material wealth. The study used a descriptive survey research design. All SS 1–2 students who registered in public secondary schools in the Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State make up the target population. The sample consisted of 480 students, 160 from each of the three constituencies (Aniocha/Oshimili, Ika, and Ndokwa/Ukuwani), who were specifically chosen from the three constituencies using stratified random selection techniques. A questionnaire on parental support and Juvenile involvement in internet fraud was used for data collection. At a 0.05 level of significance, the T-test statistic was utilized to evaluate the stated hypotheses. Findings from the study reveal that there is a significant difference in parental materialism support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud. Recommendations were made that parents should not place much emphasis on materialism but rather encourage and foster positive and socially acceptable behavior, such as honesty, contentment, discipline, and so on, rather than sending their juveniles to HK (the hustle kingdom) to make money through internet fraud.*

**KEYWORD:** parental support, juvenile, involvement, internet fraud, materialism.

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### INTRODUCTION

Parents exert a great deal of influence on character formation from childhood through the juvenile period. They tend to mimic the behavioral patterns of their parents or caregivers at any given point. Parents that have criminal natures will find it absurd to nurture a juvenile to behave like a saint in a larger society. It is often said that "charity begins at home" or "you can't give what you don't have." In the opinion of Olaogun (2012), the manner in which a child is raised and disciplined will determine the value system of that child. For instance, when the child is not being reprimanded for wrongdoing, such a child will grow up with an

orientation and perception of crime as an opportunity to always survive difficult situations or escape from life's realities without handwork.

Furthermore, an erroneous parental support system could result in their failure to transmit the cherished values (hard work, honesty, contentment, and so on) of society to their children, and this will invariably increase if the parents themselves possess criminal tendencies in one way or another. This is where the child's home background plays a vital role in determining the child's involvement in internet fraud and other deviant behavioral dispositions. As of today, do parents still inculcate sound ethical training in their children, like in the days of old? Njoku (2006) argued that, when parents or caregivers adopt bad morals such as materialism, greed, indiscipline, and favoritism, the resultant effect is internet fraud and other criminal acts that have befallen nations such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia, and Rwanda. A sound moral upbringing of juveniles ultimately produces good and sustainable societies, while a bad value system produces weak and unsustainable societies.

Nonum and Nwankwo (2020) contended that when juvenile internet use is left unchecked, the risk associated with accessing the web becomes alarming. Ljubojev et al. (2017) also added that parents are the most important factor in the education of children, and as such, parents need to be aware of their children's behavior on the Internet so they can ensure its usage is beneficial to their children. According to Longe et al. (2009), crime threatens social order, and internet fraud is a subset of crime that is committed by the use of computer technology, either alone or in conjunction with real-world acts and actors. Parental support for internet fraud is a new trend in Nigerian societies; this correlates with many other factors such as violent behavior, bullying, and internet usage.

There is, however, a paucity of information with regards to how parenting support contributes to involvement in cybercrime (Nonum & Nwankwo, 2020). The traditional African parental support values frown at illegality, especially stealing. The African adage that goes "I will rather become a slave than steal", is a pointer to the fact that in traditional times, stealing of any sort was unacceptable. But in modern times, crimes such as internet fraud and robbery are pronounced, and proceeds of such crimes are warmly received by the family; even the monarch endorsed this act by awarding chieftaincy titles to most youth without verifying their source of sudden wealth or other religious institutions (Ulo, 2022). The traditional values of integrity, diligence, and honor have been replaced by money. With this erosion of values and concomitant political uncertainty, economic turmoil, and a high rate of youth unemployment and underemployment, it is unlikely that there will be a complete stop to internet fraud in the country.

The adoption of materialistic values by most parents might compel them to unconsciously and deliberately provide the necessary environment that will make it convenient for juveniles to get involved in internet fraud (Ulo, 2022). Materialism is an orientation that ascribes much importance to the acquisition of material possessions but also implies the belief that possessions are a means to greater happiness and life satisfaction, as well as a measure of success and a tool for social comparison. Materialism has been treated as a negative value connected to possessiveness, envy, a lack of generosity, greed, and jealousy (Golberg, Gorn,

Peracchis, & Bomossy, 2003). Elgbadon and Adejuwon (2015) reported that materialistic values in families will significantly predict internet fraud tendencies among youths in Lagos and Ibadan. Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2004) reported a similar finding in their study. They reported a high level of materialist value, which has been found to mediate between the individual's orientation towards material values and a collective orientation towards family and religious values. The clamor of youth for material acquisition is one of the factors that further predisposes them to internet fraud. Many scholars have attributed the heightened internet fraud rate among youths in Nigeria to unemployment, peer influences, poverty, socio-economic status, parental support, and the get rich quick syndrome (Adebayo, 2013; Ajaegbu, 2012; Kostadis, 2017). There is yet to be a consensus among scholars that parental support is connected to juvenile involvement in internet fraud.

Over time, juveniles have been engaging in criminal acts and other deviant behaviors as a result of peer influence as well as parental support. However, many studies indicated that deviant peers had less influence on adolescents who had close relationships with their parents (Coombs, Paulson, & Richardson, 1991). There are indications that family values and practices in our environment are changing; this is in sharp contrast to traditional African societies, where much emphasis is placed on good ethical behavior. The role of parental support within the context of these changing family values and practices, coupled with the increasing involvement of juveniles in internet fraud, calls for more critical study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to investigate parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta North senatorial district, Delta State. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Investigate parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta North senatorial district of Delta State.
2. Examine parental support for materialism and juvenile involvement in internet fraud. Delta North senatorial district of Delta State

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significance difference in parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta state.
2. There is no significance difference in Parental support for materialism and juvenile involvement in internet fraud.

### **Relative Deprivation Theory**

The 1949 work 'The American Soldier', by sociologist Samuel Stouffer, set on stage the theory of relative deprivation (Delmont, 2022). The theory's tenet holds that frustration and discontentment occur when individuals or groups evaluate themselves as being unfairly deprived compared to other individuals or groups. The inferiority feeling that emanates as a result of a calculated cognitive comparison to others whom they consider should have remained in a similar status position as them (Stouffer et al., 1949). The theory therefore argues that individuals who feel relatively deprived due to economic disadvantage could be the core motivators for crime. Such individuals compare themselves to others based on some valued dimension (income or material possessions) and find they are worse off than others.

The recognition of their deprivation (the cognitive component of relative deprivation) can be a powerful motivator for accompanying feelings such as frustration (the affective component of relative deprivation) to reduce their deprivation.

For the purpose of this work, the writer sees relative deprivation as the frustrations fueled by the feelings of inferiority that an individual exhibit when comparing their social conditions to those of others. Another thrust of relative deprivation is that individuals may compare themselves to others (egoistic relative deprivation) or their group to other reference groups (fraternal or collective relative deprivation). In that vein, egoistic relative deprivation may motivate individual action, while fraternal deprivation may motivate collective action. Adopting Stouffer's propositions, the writer attributed the rise in crimes such as internet fraud, robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism to a "gap" in society.

Relative deprivation is the feeling that you are generally "worse off" than the people you associate with because you have compared yourself to them. However, the theory is relevant to explain parental support for juvenile involvement in internet fraud as a major underlining cause of internet fraud among juveniles in Nigeria. Most juvenile parents are either underemployed or unemployed, struggling on a day-to-day basis to meet up with the economic reality of modern times, coupled with soaring inflation. And also feel betrayed by various government policies and programs that have promised to better their lives over a long period of time. Also, comparing their financial and material realities of themselves and with their children to those of their equal children making progress materially or otherwise, they tend to motivate their wards into taking part in internet fraud.

Summarily, under such a premise, they might want to encourage their wards to get involved in internet fraud and use the proceeds for life's betterment. In retrospect, civil servants who have been in service for a lengthy period have not been able to afford their essential needs, but politicians can afford whatever kind of lifestyle they decide to live. Hence, the theory is very cogent, as it explains the fact that a parent who feels relatively deprived might vent their frustration by encouraging their offspring to seek an alternative route (internet fraud) to achieve material wealth.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research is used to find out the opinions of individuals on various trending issues. In this case, it was employed to ascertain parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud.

### **Population of the Study**

All SS 1-2 students who registered in public secondary schools in the Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State make up the target population.

**Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample consisted of 480 students, 160 from each of the three constituencies (Aniocha/Oshimili, Ika, and Ndokwa/Ukuwani), who were specifically chosen from the three constituencies using stratified random selection techniques.

**Research Instrument**

A questionnaire created by the researcher and approved by three specialists from Delta State University's Faculty of Social Sciences served as the study's instrument. Parental Support and Juvenile involvement in internet fraud in the Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State were the subjects of the questionnaire.

**Method of Data Collection**

The respondents who filled out the 480 instruments received them with the help of ten research assistants. The completed instruments were instantly returned.

**Method of Data Analysis**

At a 0.05 level of significance, the T-test statistic was utilized to evaluate the stated hypotheses.

**RESULTS**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta State.

**Table 1:** T-test Analysis of parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D	DF.	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Parental support	240	43.25	4.25			
Juvenile involvement	240	43.47	3.63	478	-.981	0.327

Table 1 revealed that the parental support mean score was **43.25** with standard deviation of **4.25** and the juvenile involvement had a mean score of **43.47** with standard deviation of **3.63**. The table also showed that the calculated t-value of **-.981** and a p value of **0.327**. Testing at an alpha level of **0.05**, the p value is higher than the alpha level, so the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant difference in parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta State is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in parental materialist support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta State.

**Table 2:** T-test Analysis of parental materialist support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D	DF.	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Parental Materialism Support	240	42.10	4.08			
Juvenile Involvement	240	44.49	3.44	478	-6.960	0.000

Table 2 shows that parental materialism support had a mean score of **42.10** with standard deviation of **4.08** and juvenile involvement had a mean score of **44.49** with standard deviation of **3.44**. The table also revealed a t value of **-6.960** and a p value of **0.000**. Testing at an alpha level of **0.05** the p value is less than the alpha level. Hence the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in parental materialist support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta State is rejected. The result indicated that there is a significant difference in parental materialist support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings, as revealed in the first hypothesis, show that there is no significant difference in parental support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta State. This finding implies that not all parents are in total support of their children's involvement in internet fraud as a way of getting quick wealth. Most parents still cherish the value they place on hard work as a means of acquiring wealth. This finding is in line with the findings of various scholars, such as Adebayo (2013), Ajaegbu (2012), and Kostadis (2017), that there is yet no consensus that parental support is connected to juvenile involvement in internet fraud. A sound moral upbringing of juveniles ultimately produces good and sustainable societies, while a bad value system produces weak and unsustainable societies. Also, Ljubojev et al. (2017) upheld this finding that parents are the most important factor in the education of children, and as such, parents need to be aware of their children's behavior on the Internet so they can ensure its usage is beneficial to their children.

The finding from the other hypothesis revealed that there is a significant difference in parental materialism support and juvenile involvement in internet fraud in Delta State. This implies that parents who have a materialistic orientation could go to any length to motivate and provide a convenient environment for their children to get engaged in internet fraud. There are instances where some parents purchase phones and laptops and enroll their juveniles with internet fraudsters (HK, Hustle Kingdom) for them to learn the skills they use in defrauding their victims. This finding is in line with Ulo's (2022) observation that in modern times, crimes such as internet fraud and Internet robbery are pronounced, and proceeds of such crimes are warmly received by the parents with high materialist value; even monarchs endorse this act by awarding chieftaincy titles to most youth without verifying their source of sudden wealth or other religious institutions. More so, the work of EIgbadon and



Adejuwon (2015) reported that parental materialistic values in the family will significantly predict internet fraud among juveniles.

## CONCLUSION

The research concluded that not all parents and caregivers are supportive of their juvenile wards getting involved in internet fraud as a means of actualizing their material needs. Parents with strong materialist values are willing to give all the necessary support for their juvenile wards to thrive in the internet scam venture. This could range from social, psychological, and spiritual supports to enablers for their children to survive in the game.

## Recommendations

The following recommendation was made:

1. Parents should be encouraged to give good moral support to their wards and not compare them with parents with no regard for moral values. This can be achieved by organizing workshops and seminars to train parents on sound ethical measures.
2. The secondary school curriculum should be redesigned in such a way that juveniles could use internet technology to enhance their skills and make a legitimate living from it.
3. Parents should not place much emphasis on materialism; rather, they should encourage and foster positive and socially acceptable behavior, such as honesty, contentment, discipline, and so on, rather than sending their juveniles to HK (the hustle kingdom) to make money through internet fraud.
4. The government of the day should halt looting the people's resources and turn a new leaf by implementing policies that will cater for the warfare of the masses and human capital development. Economic hardship in the land might tempt parents to lure their juveniles into internet fraud as an alternative to survival.

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