

Chapter 5

How Nigerian Junior Secondary School Students Perceive Internet Child Exploitation

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ABSTRACT

The internet has altered the way we interact with other people, making the world a global village. Since the explosion of the internet, many aspects of our lives have not only been eased but aided with more harmful consequences. The secrecy of the internet has resulted in its swiftly becoming a breeding ground for illegal activities that continue to grow as internet child exploitation (ICE), a form of child abuse by their peers or adults using the internet. However, the threats children are confronted with are still indefinite. To determine this in Nigeria, a total number of 20 Nigerian children between the age range of 11 and 17 years from five junior secondary schools were interviewed using measures of internet child abuse. The study revealed that elements of internet child exploitation exist such as sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, nudity, and wasting judicious time on chatting and playing video games. These may eventually have harmful consequences on children.

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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Globalization is an advancement that has extremely changed humanity in contemporary history. It is perceived as a new period that makes nations face enormous changes in their social, educational, economical, political and cultural ways. This is apparent as it comes into our society with novel concepts and values bringing new outlooks and dilemmas for the globalizing nations. Given this, the Internet offers a fascinating new way for children to engage with the world through the click of a mouse and making friends halfway around the world. This revolution has created a global village and the recognition of the mobile phone by children has been a worldwide phenomenon recently. It is now an indispensable aspect of children's daily lives and is for the bulk, the most popular form of electronic communication. Actually, the mobile phone has transformed from a technical to a social tool. Children use the mobile phone in constructive ways to organise and maintain their social networks. Even though, there are also harmful impacts on children peer relationships that can comprise seclusion and cyber bullying. Likewise, the mobile phone has lead to transformed dynamics in the family. To put simply, the Internet offers numerous prospects as well as threats for children. The danger children are exposed to differ in diverse contexts. Even though Internet risk has received research attention in recent years, not much is known about the individual child and national disparity in engaging in risky behavior such as sexting (Baumgartner, Sumter, Peter, Valkenburg, & Livingstone, 2014). Most of the studies about internet child exploitation are conducted in the United States and European countries. Not much has been conducted to test whether the findings from the US and Europe can be generalized in Nigerian context.

Consequently, this article on internet child exploitation builds upon a report from the evidence on Nigerian Junior secondary school children about what worries them on internet, based upon qualitative case study across two (2) states in Northern Nigeria, with 20 children aged between 11 and 17, and indirectly the parents involved in supporting the child's internet use. In their own phrases, children responded to questions on accessibility, frequency, activities and threats on internet. The aim of the present study, therefore, was to apply the universal Internet risk, in order to describe the level of internet child exploitation among Nigerian children.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the context, the study was guided by the research questions below:

1. What do children in Nigeria say about how they access the internet?
2. What do Nigerian children (internet users) do online?

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