

# *Adolescents' Internet Morality and Deviant Behavior in Online Communication*

Lixu Zhang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>International Business School, Guangdong University of Finance & Economics, 510310, China  
a. leo@student.gdufe.edu.cn

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** At present, the concern about adolescents' internet behavior is generally increasing around the world. The relationship between their deviant behavior and morality and social factors is worth studying. This article investigated the relationship between internet deviant behavior and internet morality and social factors among adolescents by questionnaire. This article found that:(1) Adolescents have more positive internet morality and less deviant behavior; (2) The internet moral cognition and internet will of adolescents can reverse infer the role of deviant behavior, and the more positive the moral representation, the less deviant behavior; (3) The more positive the social relationship, the less deviant behavior occurs, and the neighbor/roommate relationship has a more significant effect on deviant behavior. Through the study of adolescent internet moral behavior, educators can better judge from what aspects can better prevent adolescent internet deviant behavior and create the internet moral level as adolescent social relations and internet deviant behavior mediating variable model, put forward more internet moral level as the mediating variable research lay the foundation.

**Keywords:** Adolescent, internet morality, social factor, social environment.

## 1. Introduction

Adolescents are exposed to relevant electronic products and the internet environment during their growth while the continuous development and progress of the Internet industry. It shows an upward trend in using electronic products and it comes a younger-age trend. Some research has shown that adolescents have high adaptability and can learn to use the internet more quickly [1]. Researchers found that the internet was full of messy information [2]. In the vortex of the internet, for the immature adolescent [3], the poor self-control will lead to deviant behavior when prematurely exposure to illegal and harmful information [4]. At present, there is still more research space for the study of adolescent internet deviant behavior. This article aims to study the relationship between internet deviant behavior and internet morality and social factors among adolescents.

From the angle of moral psychology, adolescents' internet morality is divided into internet moral emotion, internet moral cognition and internet moral will. The major forms of deviant behavior include internet excessive behavior, internet pornographic behavior, internet cheating behavior, hacker and visual invasion etc [5]. This article used the form of a questionnaire to explore how moral aspects are related to different internet deviant behaviors, and the influence of the social environment on internet morals.

## 2. Method

The study included samples from Guangzhou city, Shenzhen city, Changsha City, Chenzhou city, choosing the students in first and second school from grade five to grade eleven (11-18 years old), the questionnaire was directly distributed in the form of class survey, the average of age distribution was  $15\pm 2.15$ . The research totally collected 326 valid questionnaires, including 116 were male (account for 35.58%) while 210 were female (account for 64.42%). This investigation process complies with relevant laws and regulations and fully informs the legal guardian of the adolescent, and agrees with the consent of the adolescent.

## 3. Measures

### 3.1. Internet Moral Research Scale

This research used three measurement scales and both of them are five-point integral method : The Internet Moral Research Scale includes three dimensions, with a total of 30 items, from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree): 5 internet moral emotion, 5 internet moral cognition, and 10 internet moral will, the internet moral will is subdivided into two dimensions: positive and negative.

### 3.2. Scale for Adolescent Internet Deviance, SAID

The scale includes three basic dimensions, with a total of 35 items: 20 internet excessive behaviour items, 9 internet pornography behaviour items, and 5 internet cheating behaviour items, from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time) [6].

### 3.3. Youth Social Relationship Scale

The scale has three items, with a total of 13: 4 family relationships (parents), 5 community relationship (neighbors) / dormitory relationship (roommates), 4 school relationship (intra-class relationship and teacher-student relationship), from 1 (enthusiastic) to 5 (terrible).

In this study, the regression analysis of the age and gender level, and the significance analysis of the different behaviors, and the direct and indirect effects of different social relations of teenagers on the network bias behavior. The research first conducted regression analysis on age and gender level to explore their influence on internet deviant behavior; then, a significance analysis is used on the performance of three different internet moral to investigate their influence level; Finally, the internet moral level can be used for intermediary variable between social environment and deviant behaviour. This research used significance analysis to study the direct and indirect effects of different social relationships on internet deviant behavior.

## 4. Results

Table 1: Mean score and standard deviation of adolescent internet moral level.

variable	mean	Standard deviation
The internet moral level	2.83	0.65
The internet moral will	3.16	0.72
The internet moral will ( positive )	3.98	1.06
The internet moral will ( negative )	2.35	0.95
The internet moral emotion	2.46	0.84
The internet moral cognition	2.52	0.73

It can be seen from research that the internet moral level of adolescents tends to be at the middle value, and the internet moral emotion and internet moral cognition are consistent with the overall trend. However, on the internet the moral will of adolescents is significantly higher than the overall level, and at the same time, the negative will be also low, and the overall level is at the lowest value. However, the polarization of internet moral behavior was polarized, with positive intention (M=1.06) and negative intention (M=0.95) being the most prominent.

In general, the internet moral level of adolescents tends to be at the middle level, but they show a more positive will to the internet moral. However, among this, adolescents have large differences and heavy polarization. (see table 1)

Table 2: Mean score and standard deviation of adolescent. internet deviant.

variable	mean	Standard deviation
The internet deviant behaviour	1.22	0.41
The internet excessive behavior	1.32	0.47
The internet pornography behavior	1.22	0.44
The internet cheating behavior	1.11	0.41

In the research, the overall number of internet deviant behavior of adolescent is small, and only a tiny number of adolescents have a relatively extreme internet deviant behavior in the internet behavior.

Table 3: Analysis of standard deviation of adolescent internet moral level.

age (M±SD)	The internet moral will	The internet moral will ( positive )	The internet moral will ( negative )	The internet moral emotion	The internet moral cognition
11(n=3)	2.96±0.19	4.50±0.43	1.42±0.52	2.33±0.42	2.07±0.76
12(n=22)	3.23±0.50	4.44±0.87	2.02±0.79	2.49±0.79	2.35±0.75
13(n=20)	3.25±0.77	4.36±1.02	2.14±1.07	2.23±0.84	2.31±0.69
14(n=36)	2.95±0.93	3.74±1.38	2.17±0.93	2.17±0.74	2.35±0.78
15(n=134)	3.21±0.61	4.03±0.98	2.39±0.82	2.46±0.75	2.59±0.62
16(n=77)	3.23±0.77	3.82±1.01	2.64±1.03	2.74±0.92	2.70±0.79
17(n=9)	3.03±1.05	4.03±1.24	2.03±1.30	2.33±1.12	2.36±1.10
18(n=25)	2.96±0.83	3.71±1.18	2.20±1.02	2.22±0.96	2.22±0.72
F	1.05	1.897	2.532	2.434	2.435
p	0.396	0.07	0.015*	0.019*	0.019*

\* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01

In general, The internet behavior of adolescent is relatively good, and can maintain good internet behavior habits when using the Internet. (see table 2)

Age difference is not significant in internet moral will and internet moral intention (positive)(p>0.05), which means age difference shows consistency for internet moral will and internet moral will (positive), and there is no difference. Meanwhile, age different is significant in internet moral will (negative), internet moral emotion and internet moral cognition (p <0.05), which means that age is different in internet moral will (negative), internet moral emotion and internet moral cognition.

Specifically, age difference shows 0.05 level significance for internet moral will (negative) (F=2.532, p=0.015), and the group mean score with more obvious differences were “16>11;16>12;16>13;16>14;16>18”; age difference shows 0.05 level significance for internet moral

emotion ( $F=2.434$ ,  $p=0.019$ ), and the average score of groups with more obvious difference were “16>13;16>14;16>15;16>18”; age difference shows 0.05 level significance for internet moral cognition ( $F=2.435$ ,  $p=0.019$ ), and the average score of groups with more obvious differences were “16>12;16>13;16>14;15>18;16>18”.

In summary, age difference is not significant in internet moral will (positive), while its difference shows significant in internet moral will (negative), internet moral emotion and internet moral cognition. (see table 3)

Table 4: Analysis of standard deviation of adolescent internet deviant behaviour.

age(M±SD)	The internet deviant behaviour	The internet excessive behaviour	The internet cheating behaviour	The internet pornography behaviour
11(n=3)	1.03±0.05	1.08±0.14	1.00±0.00	1.00±0.00
12(n=22)	1.18±0.25	1.28±0.47	1.20±0.29	1.06±0.18
13(n=20)	1.12±0.13	1.23±0.27	1.10±0.21	1.01±0.03
14(n=36)	1.11±0.14	1.20±0.26	1.10±0.16	1.02±0.09
15(n=134)	1.20±0.27	1.30±0.33	1.22±0.33	1.07±0.26
16(n=77)	1.18±0.23	1.30±0.39	1.16±0.28	1.08±0.16
17(n=9)	1.21±0.19	1.38±0.30	1.24±0.34	1.02±0.05
18(n=25)	1.75±1.10	1.79±1.09	1.77±1.10	1.70±1.19
F	8.138	4.724	7.298	9.536
p	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**

\*  $p<0.05$  \*\*  $p<0.01$

All age difference is significant for internet deviation behavior, internet excessive behavior, internet cheating behavior and internet pornographic behavior ( $p < 0.05$ ), which means that all have differences.

Specifically, age difference shows 0.01 level significance for internet deviant behaviour ( $F=8.138$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and the mean score of groups with more obvious differences were “18>11;18>12;18>13;18>14;18>15;18>16;18>17”; age difference shows 0.01 level significance for internet excessive behavior ( $F=4.724$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and the average score of groups with more obvious differences were “18>11;18>12;18>13;18>14;18>15;18>16;18>17”; age difference shows 0.01 level significance for internet cheating behavior ( $F=7.298$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and the average score of groups with more obvious differences were “18>11;18>12;18>13;18>14;18>15;18>16;18>17”; age difference shows 0.01 significance for internet pornography ( $F=9.536$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and the average score of groups with more obvious differences were “18>11;18>12;18>13;18>14;18>15;18>16;18>17”. In summary, age difference shows significant differences in internet deviation behavior, internet excessive behavior, internet cheating behavior and internet pornography behavior. (see table 4)

Table 5: The relationship between internet moral level and internet deviant behavior.

variable	The internet moral will	The internet moral emotion	The internet moral cognition
The internet excessive behaviour	-0.199**	-0.07	-0.113*
The internet cheating behaviour	-0.244**	-0.122*	-0.153**
The internet pornography behaviour	-0.183**	-0.031	-0.091

\*  $p<0.05$  \*\*  $p<0.01$

All the three items of internet moral will, internet excessive behavior, internet cheating behavior and internet pornography behavior, those difference show significantly correlated, and the correlation coefficient value is respectively -0.199, -0.244, -0.183, which means that there is a negative relationship between the internet moral will and the internet excessive behavior, the internet cheating behavior and the internet pornography behavior.

All the internet moral emotion and internet cheating behavior are significant, and the correlation coefficient value is -0.122, which means that there is a negative relationship between internet moral emotion and internet cheating behavior. At the same time, there will be no significance between internet moral emotion and internet excessive behavior, internet pornographic behavior.

Internet moral cognition and internet excessive behavior, all the two items of internet cheating behavior are significant, and the correlation coefficient values are -0.113 and -0.153 respectively, all of which are less than 0, which means that there is a negative correlation between internet moral cognition and internet excessive behavior, and the two items of internet cheating behavior. While, there is no significance between internet moral cognition and one item of internet pornography, and the correlation coefficient value is close to 0, indicating that there is no correlation between internet moral cognition and one item of internet pornography. (see table 5)

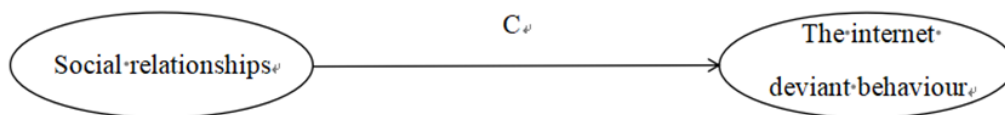


Figure 1: Mediating variable model (using “The internet moral level” as the mediation variable).

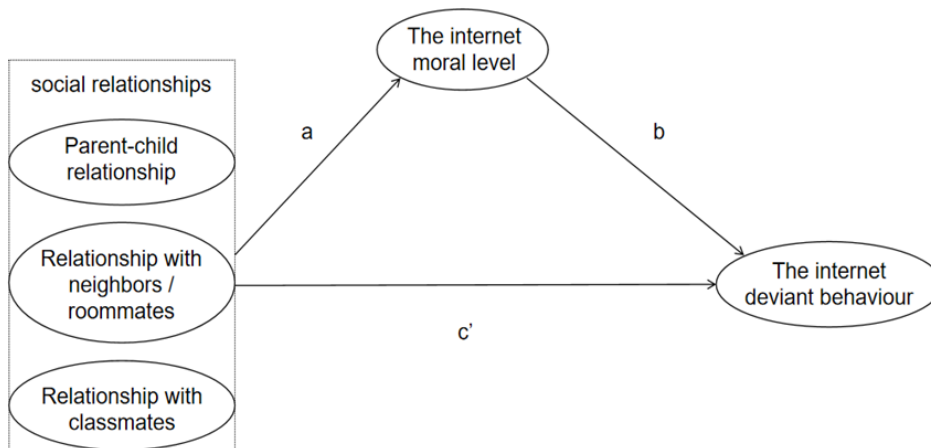


Figure 2: Mediating variable model-(using “The internet moral level” as the mediation variable).

In the initial survey, research consistently used the simplest model that only investigating the relationship between age and the Internet. However, with the deepening of the research, in the initial small number of questionnaire tests, researchers found that in the process of filling in the questionnaire, some teenagers would mention in the chat after filling out the questionnaire that they often had excessive behavior on the Internet due to their bad relationship with there parents. Therefore, the study also collected the social relationships of adolescents and established a mediation model with the internet moral level as the mediating variable. (see Figure 1. and Figure 2.)

Table 6: Summary of the mediating effect size results.

item	conclusion	c effect	a*b mediated effect	c' direct effect	account rate
well relationship with your parents => internet moral will => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	0.018	-0.014	0.029	0%
well relationship with your parents => internet moral emotion => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	0.018	0.007	0.029	0%
good relationship with your parents => internet moral cognition => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	0.018	-0.004	0.029	0%
well relationship with your neighbors or roommates => internet moral will => internet deviant behavior	totally mediating	-0.031	-0.02	-0.014	100%
well relationship with your neighbors or roommates => internet moral emotion => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	-0.031	0.004	-0.014	0%
well relationship with your neighbors or roommates => internet moral cognition => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	-0.031	-0.002	-0.014	0%
well relationship with your classmates => internet moral will => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	-0.042	0.004	-0.039	0%
well relationship with your classmates => internet moral emotion => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	-0.042	-0.009	-0.039	0%
well relationship with your classmates => internet moral cognition => internet deviant behavior	non- significant	-0.042	0.002	-0.039	0%

According to the table, with and only when the neighbor / roommate relationship is used as the independent variable, the internet moral will as the mediating variable is completely significant. Which means, the mediating variable model for the internet deviant behavior holds if and only if the internet moral will acts as the mediating variable. (see table 6)

## 5. Discussion

The overall level of internet morality is increasing with age, and the internet deviant behavior in each age is more concentrated in the internet excessive behavior, and various deviant behaviors increase

with the growth of age, but among them, as adolescent gradually mature and have higher social awareness, the internet extreme behavior will decrease with the increase of age [7,8].

When looking at the relationship between the internet moral level and the internet deviant behavior, the more positive internet moral cognition and will, the less deviant behavior performance. However, whether adolescents show deviant behavior in the internet environment is not significantly associated with the emotional level of internet morality. Moral perception and behavioral intention have a greater impact on controlling for deviant behavior in adolescents.

In general, adolescents' internet morality is positive, and there are significant correlation between internet moral cognition, emotion and will; adolescents' internet deviant behavior is not serious, and internet excessive behavior decreases with the increase of grade; the internet moral will and cognition have reverse prediction effect on internet deviant behavior. The more positive the internet morality of adolescent is, the less the internet deviant behavior shows. In addition, in the influence of adolescent social relationship on the internet deviant behavior, only the relationship between adolescent and neighbors / roommates can influence the internet deviant behavior by influencing the internet moral will. at the same time, the internet deviant behavior is also a manifestation of adolescent deviance behavior [9,10].

## 6. Conclusion

This article can better according to the internet moral level and adolescent internet deviant behavior relationship analysis and research how to better promote the health of the adolescent internet behavior. Therefore, it also can better guarantee the health of adolescent physical and mental development.

According to the research results, the following suggestions are put forward on how to better improve the internet deviant behavior of adolescent: (1) the internet moral level of adolescent affects the internet deviant behavior, and in the process of adolescent development, more attention should be paid to the cultivation of internet moral. Due to the influence of age level on the mental development of teenagers, schools should pay more attention to and actively guide adolescents to better understand the internet moral phenomenon and behavior according to different stages of development; (2) Based on the research of mediating variable model, adolescents should pay more attention to the relationship with neighbors and roommates, and the community and schools should better guide the relationship between neighbors and roommates, actively guide and adjust the corresponding.

This research focuses on the school adolescents, who fail to cover the whole adolescent group and still have more social factors that can change the network moral level of adolescents, which is expecting more research in the future.

## References

- [1] Prensky, M. (2012). *Digital natives, digital immigrants. On the Horizon. MCB University Press, 1, 1-6.*
- [2] Levinson, E., & Surratt, J. (1999). *Is the internet the most important educational event since McGuffey's reader? Converge, 2 (4), 60-62.*
- [3] Lei, L. (2009). *Developmental Psychology. Beijing: Renmin University of China Press.*
- [4] Lei, L., & Li, DM. (2008). *Adolescents' deviant behavior online. Journal of Chinese Information Technology Education. 10, 5-11.*
- [5] Li, D. M., Lei, L., & Zou, H. (2008). *Characteristics and prospects of the adolescents' deviant behaviors on internet. Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology. 16 (1), 95-97, 70.*
- [6] Li, D. M. (2008). *An empirical and theoretical research on adolescents' online deviant behaviors. China Ph.D. Thesis full-text Database. Capital Normal University.*
- [7] Goff, B. G., & Goddard, H. W. (1999). *Terminal core values associated with adolescent problem behaviors. Adolescence, 34: 47-60.*
- [8] Thomson, R., Murachver, T. & Green, J. (2001). *Where is the gender in gendered language? Psychological Science, 12 (2), 171-175.*

- [9] Avcı, R., & GÜÇRAY, S. I. S. (2013). *The Relationships among Interparental Conflict, Peer, Media Effects and the Violence Behaviour of Adolescents: The Mediator Role of Attitudes towards Violence*. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 13(4), 2005-2015. doi: 10.12738/estp.2013.4.1950
- [10] Huesmann, L. R., & Guerra, N. G. (1997). *Children's normative beliefs about aggression and aggressive behavior*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(2), 408-419. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.72.2.408