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GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION

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ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
APWG	Anti-Phishing Working Group
CERT	Computer Emergency Response Team
COVID	Coronavirus
CCTNS	Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CISO	Chief Information Security Officer
CCPWC	Cybercrime Prevention against Women and Children
DDoS	Distributed Denial of Service
FIR	First Information Report
HTTP	Hypertext Transfer Protocol
IBID	Ibidem
IT	Information Technology
IT Act, 2000	Information Technology Act, 2000
IPC	Indian Penal Code
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IoT	Internet of Things
MoC	Memorandum of Cooperation
NCW	National Commission for Women
PC	Personal Computer
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SLP	Special Leave Petition
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UN	United Nations
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
UT	Union Territory
WP	Writ Petition

CHAPTER 1
ONLINE EDUCATION IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT

Source: Author

ONLINE EDUCATION IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Online education has become the de-facto mode of education during COVID-19. The pandemic, the large number of infections, and the subsequent lockdowns ensured that schools and colleges were closed. Countries and governments did not want students, being young and the young building blocks of the nation, to be exposed to the deadly virus.

New versions of the Delta variant of the virus coming in, the pandemic does not seem to be subsiding. In this context, all schools and educational institutions have been forced to adopt online education for disseminating education.

In the Indian context it has been seen that most of the schools and colleges were not prepared to deal with online education. The reason for this was that the national lockdown was announced very suddenly with the result that most of the schools and colleges did not have enough time or the bandwidth to do appropriate planning for providing online education.

Hence, different schools started adopting their own distinctive methodologies for providing online education and the approaches adopted by different educational institutions were not very consistent.

DEFINITION AND FEATURES OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Before we move forward, it is important to understand what the definition of online education is and what are its salient features.

The term "online education" has been defined by many experts as:

"Online education is a form of education where students use their home computers through the internet. For many non-traditional students, among them all those who want to continue working full time or raising families, online graduation and courses have become popular in the last decade.[1]"

"Online education is electronically supported learning that relies on the internet for teacher/ student interaction and the distribution of class materials."[2]

Above definitions make it clear that online education has various salient features:

- Constitutes dissemination of information and imparting knowledge using technology.
- Comprises of adopting the benefits of technology for reaching out to students and for making them understand complicated concepts using simpler methodologies enabled by the internet.

1 https://www.indiaeducation.net/online-education/articles/what-is-online-education.html (Last accessed on 05.06.21).
2 *Ibid*

- Research shows that on average, students retain 25-60 per cent more material when learning online compared to only 8-10 per cent in a classroom. This is primarily because students are able to learn faster online; e-learning requires 40-60 per cent less time to learn than in a traditional classroom setting because students can learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, skipping, or accelerating through concepts as they choose.[3]
- E-learning eliminates logistical costs such as expenditure incurred on travel and the accommodation of learners and instructors.[4]
- E-learning is green learning which helps reduce the need for paper thus helping in conserving forests.[5]
- Provides an advancement in quality in terms of creating a level playing field for all students.
- Prepares children for their digital future as technology will be an important part of their day-to-day lives.
- Provides personalized learning and helps in creating smart students, provides more avenues for self-motivation and learning opportunities and potential of higher encouragement among students.
- Enables children to have access to resources and stakeholders 24/7 in a connected learning ecosystem where self-directed study and flexible choices are important highlights.
- Helps students and teachers optimally utilize their time as a lot of time which was spent in going to school and back is now saved.
- Online education has the distinct advantage of using various technological tools to explain complicated concepts to the students.
- Allows children to have hybrid flexible timings rather than going to school for a minimum stipulated period. Children have flexibility in how they use their time by engaging in online education.
- Online education has enabled children to go beyond the norms as they have access to unlimited topics and various subjects.

GROWTH, FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT ONLINE EDUCATION

Parents today face unique challenges. COVID-19 has completely changed the paradigm as far as parenting is concerned. Before the pandemic, it was a different world where traditional principles of parenting which had evolved over the so many centuries, held good. Those were the days when children routinely went to school. They engaged in extracurricular activities and participated in other activities like sports.

However, over the years, online education has increased substantially. The pandemic acted as a catalyst in further increasing the reach of online education.

Let us look at various facts and figures that give us a broad indication of how online education has grown:

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3 http://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-2640-role-of-online-education-in-current-scenario-for-any-university.html (Last accessed on 08.06.21).

4 https://hilo.hawaii.edu/campuscenter/hohonu/volumes/documents/Vol07x17TheRiseofOnlineEducation.pdf (Last accessed on 08.06.21).

5 https://blog.commlabindia.com/elearning-design/factors-for-growth-of-elearning-infographic (Last accessed on 08.06.21).

- COVID-19 resulted in schools being shut across the world. Globally, over 1.2 billion children have been out of the classrooms. As a result, education has changed dramatically with a distinctive increase in e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely using digital platforms.[6]
- According to UNESCO, since the outbreak of COVID-19, some 1.37 billion students in 138 countries worldwide have been affected by school and university closures. Nearly 60.2 million schoolteachers and university lecturers are no longer in the classroom.[7]
- Even before COVID-19, there was high growth and adoption of education technology, with global EdTech investments reaching US$18.66 billion in 2019 and the overall market for online education projected to reach US$350 billion by 2025.[8]
- Giving a global perspective, UNESCO notes, "Half of the total number of learners — some 826 million (82.6 crores) students — kept out of the classroom by the Covid-19 pandemic, do not have access to a household computer and 43 per cent (706 million or 70.6 crores) have no internet at home, at a time when digitally-based distance learning is used to ensure educational continuity in the vast majority of countries."[9]
- A report by Snyder et al., (2018)[10] shows that the percentage of students taking one or more online undergraduate classes increased from 15.6 per cent in 2004 to 43.1 per cent in 2016. E-learning provides flexibility, enhancing access, and increasing the choices in the range of specializations apart from cost effectiveness and efficacy; it also provides more flexible time management.

The factors responsible for the explosive growth of the e-learning industry in India are:

- Closure of educational institutions (schools and colleges)
- Closure of coaching and training institutions
- Penetration of smartphones across urban and rural areas
- Easy accessibility to internet across urban and rural areas of the country
- 700 million internet users in the country
- Affordable internet/data services
- The National Education Policy sparked a momentum for the digitization of the education system.[11]

COVID-19 AND THE GROWTH OF ONLINE EDUCATION

COVID-19 and the national lockdowns ensured that schools and colleges were closed at the time of writing. As the COVID-19 virus continued to impact people across the world, nations, states, and governments, policymakers, school ecosystem stakeholders as also parents came to the conclusion that it was best not to expose children to a new set of infections and it would be best if the schools remained closed.

Today, across the world online education has been adopted as a defacto model of imparting education.

The pandemic had a massive impact on our day-to-day lives. Not only did it push us into an era of personal comfort but more significantly, it also ushered in a new revolution in online education. Consequently, all educational institutions, schools, universities, and institutions switched to the online education mode. Even when things come back to complete normalcy, it is expected that online education will continue to play a very important role.

6 https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/ (Last accessed on 05.06.21).
7 https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/education/how-lockdown-reveals-actual-state-of-e-education-in-india/75803841 (Last accessed on 05.06.21).
8 https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/ (Last accessed on 05.06.21).
9 *Ibid*
10 https://www.guide2research.com/research/online-education-statistics (Last accessed on 05.06.21).
11 https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/sanjay-shukla/outburst-of-e-learning-industry-in-india-amidst-covid-19-crises-28559/ (Last accessed on 06.08.21).

Online classes have become the default normal. Consequently, more and more children have started (without any choice) spending more time on the internet. The exposure to screen time has increased and most of the children's activities are conducted in an electronic format. These include not just school classes but lot of other interactions, social media, learning new courses, taking new initiatives, communication, and exchanges all of which entail more and more time before the screen.

E-learning is among those few industries that witnessed exponential growth during the pandemic not only in India but across the world as the lockdowns took the world into their grips since the beginning of February 2020.[12]

This newly emerged scenario means that parenting has now entered new era as well. Prior to COVID-19, parents still had relatively more control over the time that their children spent online and the exposure of their eyes to screen light.

However, now with almost all parts of the world getting access to the internet and with constant long hours on the internet, parenting in the context of today's world is beginning to face new challenges. In India, these challenges have been more pronounced as the shift from the actual world to the e-world for children and youngsters was dramatic. This had massive consequences not just for their psyche and their personalities but also the way they evolved and are continuing to evolve as individuals.

Further, unprecedented and unsupervised access to the internet suddenly brought in new challenges, issues, and problems from the perspective of children, students, and parents.

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12 https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/sanjay-shukla/outburst-of-e-learning-industry-in-india-amidst-covid-19-crises-28559/ (Last accessed on 08.06.21).

PROJECTED FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT THE INCREASE IN ONLINE EDUCATION

Online education is expected to grow by leaps and bounds in the coming times if the current projected figures are to be believed. Some of the projections are:

- The e-learning market was already expected to increase significantly in 2020 and beyond. Projections for the US market were set at a **15.64 per cent** growth, exceeding **US$ 48 billion**. In Europe, the market was forecast to grow by **US$ 36.25 billion** with a **15 per cent CAGR** over the 2019-23 period.[13]
- The global education technology market size was valued at **US$ 89.49** billion in 2020 and is expected to witness a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of **19.9 per cent** from 2021 to 2028.[14]
- The K-12 online education market in China was projected to grow at a CAGR of **19.28 per cent** during 2017-21.[15]
- The online education market in India is poised to grow by **US$ 14.33 billion** during 2020-24, progressing at a CAGR of 21 per cent.[16]
- The fastest-growing market is the Asia Pacific region, with e-learning revenues are expected to grow at an annual rate of 20 per cent. The online education market in India is poised to grow by **US$ 14.33 billion** during 2020-24, progressing at a CAGR of 21 per cent.[17]
- The e-learning market in India was worth US$ 247 million in 2016, which is expected to grow to about **US$ 1.96 billion** by 2021. That is a compound annual growth rate of **52 per cent.**[18]
- The global education technology market size was valued at **US$ 89.49 billion** in 2020 and was expected to witness a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of **19.9 per cent** from 2021 to 2028.[19]

13 https://www.strategyr.com/market-report-e-learning-forecasts-global-industry-analysts-inc.asp#:~:text=The%20E%2DLearning%20market%20in,12.2%25%20over%20the%20analysis%20period. (Last accessed on 06.08.2021).
14 https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/education-technology-market (Last accessed on 08.06.21).
15 https://www.holoniq.com/notes/global-education-technology-market-to-reach-404b-by-2025/ (Last accessed on 08.06.21).
16 *Ibid*
17 https://www.elearn2grow.com/2021/07/16/elearning-stats/#:~:text=eLearning%20in%20Asia,at%20a%20CAGR%20of%2021%25 (Last accessed on 08.06.21).
18 https://eduxpert.in/online-education-india/#:~:text=education%20in%20India.-,Interesting%20facts%20about%20Online%20education%20in%20India,annual%20growth%20rate%20of%2052%25 (Last accessed on 06.08.21).
19 https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/education-technology-market (Last accessed on 06.08.21).

CHAPTER II - READINESS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION

Source: Author

READINESS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION

Online education has been there for some time. In fact, the long-distance education mode started using technology and could be seen as a precursor of online education. However, with the coming of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), online education moved to the next level of growth.

It was ultimately COVID-19 which propelled online education on to a different level of growth altogether. COVID-19 compelled stakeholders to be ready for online education. Different stakeholders adopted their own methodologies for online education.

A major challenge was readiness for online education because of disparities in access. These disparities could be due to access to electricity and the internet and access to computers and communication devices.

Disparities in access are visible in India in particular. A digital divide is evident across class, gender, region, and place of residence. Among the poorest 20 per cent households, only 2.7 per cent have access to a computer and 8.9 per cent to internet facilities. In case of the top 20 per cent households, these figures are 27.6 per cent and 50.5 per cent respectively.[20]

Teachers too faced challenges in getting ready for providing online education.

A large number of teachers had never taught in an online environment. Teaching a course online ideally requires preparation such as designing a lesson plan and preparing teaching material such as audio and video content. This posed new challenges for many teachers.

Further, the entire paradigm of online education has connected costs for attending online classes like the cost of getting internet access. No wonder then that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how rooted structural imbalances are between the rural and urban areas, males and females, and the rich and poor, even in the digital world.[21]

INFRASTRUCTURE READINESS

The infrastructure that is required for seamless online education is an issue that has overwhelmed stakeholders; this is likely to be more relevant with time. COVID-19 showed that most of the schools and universities were not well equipped to deal with online education. However, with time they started enhancing and augmenting their technical resources so as to provide all kinds of online education.

Schools hired web servers, video conferencing platforms, learning management systems, and other applicable tools to enhance their capabilities for offering the latest cutting-edge online education.

Today, more and more schools and colleges are improving their infrastructure readiness for online education.

Trends and Potential Trends in Infrastructure Readiness

For infrastructure readiness for online education, it is imperative that online education platforms have an easy-to-use interface. They must offer a touch of personalization and must be available

20 https://scroll.in/article/960939/indian-education-cant-go-online-only-8-of-homes-with-school-children-have-computer-with-net-link (Last accessed on 30.09.21).

21 *Ibid*

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offline also. The advancements of different online education platforms in cloud based platforms are demonstrating their relevance distinctively. Adding interactive elements to online platforms is an attractive factor for students which encourages them to explore new vistas of online education.

Online interactivities include quizzes, audio files, videos, simulations, and gamification. The tools must also allow students to make notes and share them with their peers or teachers, bookmark pages, search for information, and highlight text.

It is also important that there are appropriate assessment mechanisms through online quizzes and assessments to make online education more topical and relevant. In this regard, protecting data rights becomes important from the perspective of online education stakeholders.

The platforms should give you complete control of the content. To protect your content from unauthorized use and downloading, you can encrypt the eBook with DRM protection.

Digital education be it online/virtual/e-learning has distinctive advancements over actual physical learning.

As online education is getting more mainstream in our lives, educational tech experts and companies are coming up with new solutions and technical advances for their online learning stakeholders.

Most of the current online education systems use a strong learning management system and also video conferencing platforms which can enable the efficient delivery of online education services.

Further, more and more stakeholders are now using the cloud and various other collaboration tools for online education.

DIGITAL LEARNING RESOURCES' READINESS

Digital learning readiness is very significant for online education. In fact, the more ready the relevant stakeholders are in the context of providing digital learning tools, facilities, and accompanying ecosystem, the better prepared they will be in effectively delivering online education services.

The practical experience of working during the pandemic has shown that stakeholders need to adopt diverse strategies to make digital learning

readiness for online education more robust, sound, and secure.

Almost all the stakeholders are using various digital learning resources for disseminating online education. The practical working of online education is compelling more and more online education stakeholders to increase their digital learning resources' readiness. There is a need for expanding the scope and ambit of digital learning resources in various educational institutions.

Further, there is a need to constantly update digital learning resources to make them topical and relevant in accordance with the requirements of online education and the students' community.

Consequently, we have been seeing a massive increase in the number of cases where cyber criminals and cyber security breachers are breaching cyber security of an online education ecosystem and its technical resources. Hence, stakeholders must recognize the growing significance of cyber security in the context of online education and make their digital learning environment more secure, robust, and resilient so that it can withstand potential attacks on cyber security and cyber security breaches.

Stakeholders will also have to focus on the cyber security of the digital learning ecosystem and infrastructure because the Golden Age of Cybercrime has already been ushered in with COVID-19. We are beginning to find that cyber criminals are targeting online education and online education stakeholders for cyber-criminal activities, intentions, and designs.

Digital Learning Resources and their Impact

As on date, various digital learning resources are available. These digital learning resources have a major impact on online education. The more deep, broad, and comprehensive these digital learning resources are, the better the quality of online education is going to be in the future.

Deep and diverse digital learning resources will provide a variety of choices to students, apart from flexibility in picking and choosing appropriate learning resources for updating their online education skillsets.

TECHNICAL SKILLS' READINESS

For online education to be successful, it is important that all stakeholders' technical education skills are at a reasonable working level. We need to appreciate that a large chunk of students is tech savvy, but they are not trained to deal efficiently and optimally in using online education resources.

Current levels of technical skills for online education need to be upgraded. Some students are well equipped to deal with online education, while others are still struggling with the requisite technical skillsets. Hence, appropriate steps must be taken for enhancing capacity building or enhancing the current levels of technical skills required for online education among students.

Hence, there is a need for enhancing technical skills' readiness of students for online education. It is important that the stakeholders in online education teach the minimum level of technical skillsets which are required for students to make use of the benefits and advantages of online education.

Online education is here to stay. Hence, the sooner we realize its significance the faster we will be able to come up with an appropriate mindset and new approaches for future technical skills. This will be beneficial for online education.

CHAPTER III - PARENTAL ROLE IN ONLINE EDUCATION

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KEEP IN MIND FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S ONLINE EDUCATION

Source: Author

PARENTAL ROLE IN ONLINE EDUCATION

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KEEP IN MIND FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S ONLINE EDUCATION

IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS' ROLE IN ONLINE EDUCATION

Online education is a new paradigm and parents were not prepared for online education. Traditionally, parents were clued in to the actual world education. Consequently, the routine of sending their children to schools and colleges daily was ingrained in their mindsets.

Parents today know that the new ground realities of online education are different. Hence, it is important for parents to adopt different strategies in the context of online education.

Parents must understand that online education means that the importance of their parental role has been enhanced. They need to adopt new mindsets, new approaches, and new methodologies for ensuring that their role is comprehensive, complete, and effective in the context of online education.

It is important for parents to keep in mind the following points while performing their parental roles during COVID-19 and beyond:

- Promoting online education through encouragement, motivation, and communication
- Providing academic support, supervision of learning, and assessment of progress
- Facilitating access to devices, platforms, connectivity, and solving technical issues
- Securing physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being of their children
- Ensuring children's online safety, privacy, and responsibility
- Creating an environment at home that is conducive to online learning
- Other considerations

PROMOTING A MINDSET THROUGH ENCOURAGEMENT, MOTIVATION, AND COMMUNICATION

- Encouraging children to use the tools for online learning as a means for enabling digital transformation in their lives. Parents have to sensitize their children that the internet will play an important role in the present and future and hence they will have to adopt new methodologies of transformation to equip them with digital readiness skillsets to be prepared for the new digital ecosystem.

- Encouraging children wholeheartedly to adopt technical skills' readiness not only for online education but also for their digital prospects.
- Inculcating a constructive attitude among their wards. Parents should not become over critical in terms of online classes or their efficacy. Instead, it is better to highlight the benefits of online education.
- Encouraging children to adopt a positive attitude vis-à-vis newly emerging ground realities. Parents must inculcate a positive culture in their children and encourage them to stay positive even when they face technical difficulties while engaging in online learning.
- Inculcating the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn while engaging in online learning.
- Sensitizing their children that though the pandemic may be over, online education will have a long lasting presence in our lives. So online classes should not be treated as a temporary arrangement.
- Encouraging children in online education. It is good for children's morale and is the parents' responsibility.
- Taking constructive decisions for providing self-motivation and self-discipline for online learning. Parents must adopt constructive and goal-oriented approaches.
- Avoiding being authoritative in one's approach while dealing with children in the online learning era.
- Parents have a direct impact on their children's education, especially in an online learning setting. Being a coach and reinforcing values through hardships can empower their children and ensure that the impact is positive.[22]
- Inculcating the ability to have a holistic approach to online learning.
- Encouraging the children to do well. However, the wards should not be bogged down because of unnecessary pressure of excelling in class.
- Sharing your personal experiences for enhancing children's holistic skillsets. Talking to your children about your own work and goals is a good place to start. Telling them about the difficult projects you are working on, new skills that you are trying to master, and the challenges you have faced.[23]
- Spending quality time with your children.
- Must not give a false sense of perception to your wards that they can skip their classes as everything in the class will be repeated once schools reopen. Motivating your child to attend the classes in the same spirit as he/she attended school.
- Do not criticize online classes or the school's efforts. Instead point out the positives. Be empathetic and understanding about the classes and the school's efforts.
- No unrealistic expectations from your children and their teachers that magically the child will receive everything that's educationally necessary through the internet.
- Must focus on the MCE mantra (Motivation, Communication & Encouragement) while assisting children in online education.

PROVIDING ACADEMIC SUPPORT

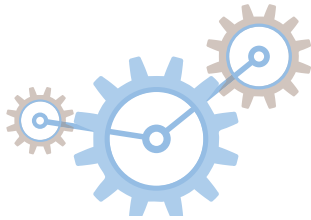
Online education is a different ballgame. In the physical school or college ecosystem, students went to schools and colleges. If they had any doubts they could get them clarified by their teachers and professors to proceed with their studies.

However, once the students have to be at home and given the limitations of online education, it is possible that a lot of students may not be able to get all their doubts fully cleared. Hence, the academic inputs provided by parents for online education become important. Parents can provide academic

22 https://achievevirtual.org/blog/parent-resources/parent-engagement-with-student-online-learning-is-important/ (Last accessed on 06.08.21).
23 *Ibid*

support in the following ways:

- Being more patient and friendly with your children concerning online education. Repeatedly asking them whether there is any academic issue that they are facing in online education.
- In case a child points out any academic issues, parents need to take appropriate steps to address them. If parents can assist their children in resolving the issues then they are required to do so. In case, an academic issue is such that the parents are not in a position to assist their children, they need to interact with the teachers and professors.
- Parents can sensitize the teachers about the practical problems that the children are facing in online education thus contributing in solving the academic issues being faced by their children.
- A number of quizzes and assessment tools are available. Parents should encourage their children to use these for assessing their skillsets.
- Technology is a good way of communicating. Yet, technology has never been equivalent to physical one-to-one interactions. Hence, all the physical one-to-one interactions within schools and colleges had the capacity of enabling students to clear their doubts. Now with no face-to-face interactions in online education, it becomes important that students are more aware of the intrinsic limitations of the online education ecosystem.
- Providing appropriate handholding support to your wards. Parents need to serve as coaches and support their children through the online learning process.
- Parents must communicate with their children and teachers to have a holistic perspective about the goals.



FACILITATING ACCESS TO DEVICES, PLATFORMS, CONNECTIVITY, AND SOLVING TECHNICAL ISSUES

Parents have the added responsibility of ensuring that their children have the requisite technical devices and infrastructure to get the maximum benefits of online education.

- Children need to have appropriate communication devices -- mobile phones and laptops and an appropriate internet connection so that they can connect for online education and also make use of its benefits to the fullest.
- In case any of the communication devices or the internet connection are not available, this can have a prejudicial impact on the child who does not have complete access to the benefits of online education. Parents have to keep in mind appropriate technical parameters and infrastructure which are essential for enjoying the benefits of online education.
- Assisting children in crossing hurdles posed by various technical difficulties in case of online challenges.
- Providing access to support devices which can help children solve technical problems via calls, emails, or live chats. Paying attention to the instructor during the process of solving issues.[24]
- Parents can be sensitized about the nuances and practical working in online learning tools so that if the children face any difficulties the parents can assist them.
- Parents play a role in selecting the right devices:
  - Parents have an important role in assisting the children in selecting the right devices for online education. The child requires a big screen because studying on small screens like mobiles can have a detrimental effect on their eyes. According to ophthalmologists people

24 https://www.embibe.com/exams/online-learning-challenges-and-solutions/ (Last accessed on 06.08.21).

are having more eye problems and youngsters' vision is deteriorating.

- Parents can advise their children to go for bigger screens such as laptops or tablets as these are better for their eyes. Anti-glare screens need to be used so that the glare can be reduced to the barest minimum.

- Parental role in selecting right connectivity:
  - Online education is all about being connected to the educational ecosystem. Hence, good connectivity is a necessity. Parents must be able to guide their children about the best options for them to take advantage of and benefit from online education. They need to go for broadband connections with faster speeds so that children can have access to online education resources without any interruptions or hindrances.

- Parental role in selecting the right platform:
  - A number of platforms are available for online education. Different stakeholders are adopting different technological platforms depending on their needs.
  - In case a child is selecting an online course as part of online education, then parents can sensitize the child about the pros and cons of the relevant platform being used for online education. Parents should do independent research and reading online to find out the best platforms for their children for their online education and then provide appropriate inputs.
  - Parents have no role in terms of guiding their children in selecting the platforms as children studying in schools or colleges have their own dedicated platforms. However, parents can still guide their children on how they can best use the relevant platforms which have been selected by their schools and colleges.

SECURING CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Online education can be a lonely process. During the pre-COVID-19 times, a child was exposed to his/her peer groups while going to school and there was a lot of interaction, talking, and exchange of ideas and communication. The child went to school, interacted with other students, remained in the school's environment, and was exposed to various stimuli. All these contributed to the overall emotional development of the child.

Such communication channels provide a constructive outlet for students' energies. However, students are deprived of all these interactions and one-to-one connectivity in online education. Hence, the chances of their feeling bogged down as a result of online education, cannot be ruled out.

There are numerous emotional issues and concerns about online education. A child may feel lonely, depressed, or may feel the need of having one-to-one interactions with the other students and teachers.

Hence, when a child engages in online education, he/she must be aware of the intrinsic characteristics of the online education ecosystem. Parents must give enabling emotional support to their children in case they feel lonely, depressed, or lost in online education. Parents need to sit with their children and inform them of the positives of online education. They also need to handhold the children and comfort them that everything is fine and with the passage of time, the child will be able to come out of practical emotional issues and challenges being faced online education.

Parents must play a far more supportive role than ever before in their children's online education. More support has to be provided by being an emotional radar for the children. There are chances that the children will feel lost, will not have interest, and will also not interact in the online education ecosystem.

Parents are also worried about their children in online education. As per Pew Research's statistics on families of K-12 students:[25]

- Sixty-three per cent of the parents are worried that their children are spending more time in front of a device.
- Sixty per cent of the parents are worried about their children's ability to sustain interpersonal interactions.
- Fifty-nine per cent of the parents are worried about the psychological health of their children.

As the pandemic drags on, it is clear that not all kids are fine. According to a survey by Gallup, nearly 3 in 10 parents said that their children were experiencing emotional or mental anxiety because of social distancing and school closures.[26] E-learning has forced students to reset the way in which they learn and adapt to new techniques overnight. They are more stressed while studying from home. This pressure and nervousness is a consequence of their not feeling in charge of the circumstances.

"Many children have become bored with online classes. In certain schools, online classes are very monotonous. Hence, what these students are doing is switching off the camera and are doing other activities. It's like a time pass for them. Not only mental health, but they are also facing some health problems like eye strain, headaches and fatigue from seeing the screen for such a long time."[27]

Some of the ways in which parents can support their children's physical, mental, and emotional health as they engage in online learning are:

- Do not become angry or irritable at your children whenever they are discussing any issue pertaining to online education. Such an approach could be disastrous for the overall development of the child and could push the child into his/her shell and create emotional issues and challenges in the coming times. Parents have to be extremely careful and be role models for their children in online education.
- Spend more time with your wards engaging in online education. Parents need to have heart-to-heart chats with them by giving examples like case studies to engage their attention. Children need to feel that though they are studying in the online education mode and are not able to go to school, they can look up to their parents for support, guidance, and supervision.
- Share your practical experiences and what you have learnt in life with your children so that these experiences provide the basis for their emotional well-being. Children need to have a feeling that their parents are with them under all circumstances and in case they have any problem or issue, they can report back to their parents. They should have confidence that their parents will have the requisite wherewithal to deal with the emotional and well-being aspects of online education.
- Parents must be mindful of the emotional challenges that their children are facing during the pandemic. Parents must talk to the children on a regular basis. They must ask them whether they are facing any emotional constraints, issues, or challenges in online education. Parents need to sensitize their children that online education, by virtue of its own technological paradigm, is bereft of physical one-to-one interaction.
- Provide an emotional radar for the emotional well-being of the children while engaging in online learning. Parents must realize that online classes will have an impact on the mental health of the children as children are no longer exposed to peer-to-peer learning, social learning, and new friendships and relationships, which they would have under the normal schooling system. If a child is showing unusual behaviour or psychological difficulties, then the parents must take advice from experts or professionals.
- Traditional school days provided students with a lot of structure which is hard to replicate in online learning. For some students, the flexibility of learning online is a natural fit. However, for

25 https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/10/29/most-parents-of-k-12-students-learning-online-worry-about-them-falling-behind/ (Last accessed on 05.06.21).
26 *Ibid*
27 *Ibid*

others, especially young learners, managing this increased autonomy is a challenge. Students participating in e-learning need to build their own routines and effectively manage their time to stay on track. Having a well-thought-out, specific daily schedule is key, and parents can help not only in building such a plan but also in making sure that it is followed.[28] Parents must try to keep their children focused. Hence, parents need to encourage their children to have a fixed routine. Maintaining a pattern as a habit might help students develop concentration. A routine encourages students to be focused, which boosts their self-esteem in the long term. Even if they are at home, parents can assist youngsters by ensuring that they have set timetables.[29]

- Because of the pandemic, lots of children have lost the distinction between daytime and night time. Consequently, their patterns have been disturbed. Parents must encourage their children to have their routine sleep early and not stay awake the entire night as following this schedule could ruin their next day. Parents need to encourage their children to rework their schedules. Parents can engage in open discussions with their children on this.

- Parents must be sensitized about the fact that the increased exposure to screen time could lead to more headaches, eye pain, strain, lack of motivation, and loneliness significantly impacting their children's health.

- Due to the lockdown, there has been lack of physical activities among children which can impact their sensory and motor approaches. Parents should encourage their children to engage in indoor exercises to remain fit and healthy. Parents must encourage their children to engage in physical exercises and yoga so that their energy can potentially be used effectively in a more constructive manner. During virtual sessions with students, teachers can urge them to do a quick exercise before focusing on their work.

- Family dinners are a time for parents to put away their own gadgets and talk to their children. Ask them how they are doing, watch out for any change in behaviour, and have frequent conversations with your children.

- Given that online learning presents long hours of exposure to the screen, parents need to encourage their wards not to look at the screen for long hours. Such an exercise will help in providing relief to the eyes. Parents must encourage their children to do offline reading. Because exposure to screen time has increased a lot, parents must take small but concrete steps to increase non-screen time. For this, they can inculcate the habit of reading offline as part of their day to day activities. Parents must encourage their children to engage in other hobbies which do not require them to look at the screen like art and painting.

- Adopt more creative approaches while being with the child. Engaging in different activities at home is an important factor contributing to children's overall emotional and mental well-being.

- Provide family assistance and motivation to the children during the various stages of online learning. Parents need to show care and sympathy in tackling their children and imposing restrictions in a gentle manner.

- Observe changes in behaviour in young students due to anxiety, including frequent fights, rejections, antagonism, resistance, or retreat. It is not uncommon for some students to fall behind. The importance of family assistance and motivation during this stage cannot be overstated. Students' reactions to traumatic situations are different. Several youngsters can be angry or clinging, whereas others may require additional supervision, they may struggle with self-care, falling asleep, or wanting to eat. Complex and unknown habits are normal reactions and parents can assist by demonstrating care and sympathy, as well as gently imposing restrictions if necessary.[30]

- Parents need to reassure, set routines, and regulate their children for a secure physical and emotional environment. Parents must reassure

28 ibid
29 https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column-10-most-important-things-for-parents-to-do-during-online-classes-2858768 (Last accessed on 05.06.21).
30 https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic (Last accessed on 05.06.21).

their children regarding the family members' safety and well-being and explain to the children that it is their responsibility to protect their children's welfare.

- Support the children by actively listening, creating new routines that create a feeling of predictability in an uncertain world, and nurturing self-esteem and self-care by playing, talking, and eating with the children.[31]

- Children should be motivated to engage in more everyday activities in addition to the required and non-negotiable online lessons. Modifications can be made orally or in writing. Children can be inspired to engage in activities like drawing and sketching, dancing, and music. These will both rejuvenate them and provide a reprieve from screen time.

- Parents must reassure their children that they do not need to be anxious about the future. They need to have an optimistic thought process to encourage their children to keep their focus clear and their goals well defined.

- At a time when a lot of parents themselves have to balance their work life and home related duties during the pandemic, parents have to realize that they have become role models for their children. Hence, they have to be clear that they do not take steps at home which could have a negative impact on the mental growth of their children.

- Adults must also continue with routines which can provide youngsters a feeling of security and consistency. Finally, grownups must encourage children's regulatory growth. Whenever teenagers get worried, their bodies activate the stress hormone to help them cope. It is essential to both affirm the sentiments and motivate the children with programmes that enable individuals to self-regulate to control these emotions. Furthermore, ensuring that parents satisfy the fundamental requirements is critical, including their children's physical and psychological health.[32]

ENSURING CHILDREN'S ONLINE SAFETY, PRIVACY, AND RESPONSIBILITY

Studies have found that children are engaged in more online learning than before.[33] Online education has exposed children to all kinds of risks in the online space including risks from paedophiles and other cyber criminals and cyber security breaches. Parents can help their wards build a security culture in online learning. Safety of children is the topmost priority when they are in the online ecosystem. Parents must also sensitize their children about the various challenges on the internet. These are:

- Specifically sensitize your children about inappropriate content, cyber bullying, and cyber trolling as also constant presence of online predators in the online ecosystem. It is a good idea for parents to sensitize their children to adopt safe cyber hygiene methods.

- Encourage your children never to share personal information online. It must be made clear to the children with whom and why they are sharing any information, including personal information online.

- Parents can monitor the time that their children spend on smart phones and tablets. Parents must not give unrestricted access to their credit cards to their wards.

- Today children are increasingly being targeted by online predators. Hence, parents must be specifically watchful of some key symptoms in the children when they are targeted by online predators. Further, parents should take their children seriously in case they report any uncomfortable online exchange.

- Consider setting parental controls on your Wi-Fi. You can block access to inappropriate or adult content and set time limits which can help rein in excessive Minecraft sessions.

- Encourage your children to protect their privacy online and also to keep their confidential data offline.

31 *Ibid*
32 *Ibid*
33 https://nationalonlinesafety.com/wakeupwednesday/what-is-online-safety (Last accessed on 17.08.21).

- Parents must be encouraged to take the website reliability check. Further, they must be sensitized about the need for strong alpha-numeric passwords and use of two-factor authentication to protect their accounts.
- Parents must also be encouraged to avoid suspicious links online and keep their devices and systems updated.
- Sensitize your children about accessing free or public Wi-Fi as it could have lot of malware and the contaminants therein. Parents must encourage their children to secure their internet connections with virtual private networks (VPNs) and cyber security software.
- Parents must sensitize their children about the digital dust and footprints that they leave behind online. During the pandemic and beyond, the importance of digital footprints has become more significant. These digital footprints can be used by both state and non-state actors for targeting children.
- Parents can read more about the privacy settings of various applications and help their children set privacy settings for ensuring maximum privacy. Parents can play an important role in guiding the children to use social media carefully.
- Inculcate values to protect privacy online. Since online safety is crucial, parents must encourage children to sign-off from all the accounts when they go offline.
- Given the fact that phishing has given the most prominent cybercrimes in today's time, it is imperative that parents protect and help their children and encourage them to detect phishing.
- For parents and families, and for anyone working with children and young people, it is not easy to keep up with what is going on. With a huge increase in device ownership and use of online services, it is important to ensure that you and your children are safe when enjoying the potential of technology. For secure internet usage, parents can configure parental restrictions on the internet.
- Parents have an added responsibility of maintaining interactive channels with their children during the pandemic. They need to discuss how to be safe while using the internet with their children.
- Encourage the children to follow appropriate family rules in terms of what content should or should not be online.
- As role models, parents must ensure that while their wards are engaging in online learning, they must not do acts, deeds, or things, in their conduct or demeanour, which could be detrimental to their children's behaviour.
- Realize the benefits of monitoring. Today's children do not like to be monitored but if parents can persuade them on friendly terms, they are likely to adhere to certain minimum norms. Parents need to understand that today's children are very different and they require constant monitoring. Today's children are not just "children" they are "millennial children." They are smart, they are technologically advanced, and they are confident and sometimes can be overconfident too. Hence, lack of supervision can also lead to mischief and naughty acts.

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT AT HOME THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO ONLINE LEARNING

- Provide a dedicated area for online learning at home. Think about your child's personality and needs as a starting point to create a workspace tailored for him or her and be sure to have direct conversations with your child about where and how he or she will be most comfortable completing online coursework.[34]
- It is always a good idea for parents not to intervene during online classes and let their children focus on their online learning without disturbance.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- The pandemic has thrown up unprecedented challenges including loss of jobs, money, and businesses. Parents need to understand their children's role as stress busters in their lives. It is essential to understand that appropriate

34 *Ibid*

communication with the children will ease tensions. Parents must be compassionate and nice to younger children.

- Encourage children to engage in positive communication online. Parents must teach their children the importance of behaving politely online.
- Parents must themselves inculcate self-discipline. They should be able to voluntarily leave their devices. When parents are stuck to their devices, this erodes the connectiveness between family members.
- Inculcate good ethical values in your children and avoid having unrealistic expectations that they will learn everything in the online space.
- Parents care the most about their children's health and well-being. This means that parents need to guide them in the virtual world and in the real world.

Source: Author

CHAPTER IV
ONLINE SAFETY

Source: Author

ONLINE **SAFETY**

SALIENT FEATURES

In the physical world, when children go to schools and colleges, there is a known world with which they have to deal. They deal with known peer groups, known teachers, and other known educational stakeholders.

In the context of the online education ecosystem, the paradigm has changed completely because in online education students engage with others in the online ecosystem. Most of the time the internet provides a level of anonymity to its users. Consequently, children may not completely know the real identity of the person with whom they are interacting. Hence, children need to be sensitized about the need for online safety.

Online safety protects the **people** using the internet from harm by the devices and networks (third parties) through awareness, education, and information and technology. It is called an appropriate approach to personal safety when using digital technologies. Online safety is being aware of the nature of the possible threats that you could encounter while engaging in activities through the internet -- security threats, protecting and managing personal data, online reputation management, and avoiding harmful or illegal content. It is not about scaremongering, it is not about criticism and chaos, instead it is about focusing on the positive and enriching side of digital life while recognizing its challenges and how best to approach them.[35]

Parents' role in ensuring Online Safety

Parents must realize that once they are encouraging their wards to go for online education, it is their responsibility to sensitize them about the need for online safety.

- A child needs to be told that he/she does not need to trust every bit of information that he/she sees online till such time that they have independently corroborated the authenticity and veracity of the information by an independent search on various search engines.
- Parents must ensure that the devices which are given to their children for online education are secure. Hence, the devices must be equipped with good antivirus programmes. They also need to have appropriate firewalls to potentially safeguard the children and their devices from unauthorized cyberattacks.
- Parents must sensitize their children about the growing importance of cyber safety and encourage them to include cyber security as a part of their day-to-day lives.

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35 https://swgfl.org.uk/online-safety/what-is-online-safety/ (Last accessed on 31.08.21).

- Children need to be told that cyber security is a shared responsibility. A lot of the time children have very wrong perceptions about cyber security and online safety. Most of the time they think it is the government's responsibility to ensure cyber safety or online safety of children. However, they need to be sensitized that while the government is doing its bit in terms of cyber security, everybody has to contribute.

- Children must be told that cyber security is like a big chain and the chain is as strong as its weakest link. Hence, everybody must contribute to strengthening the social cyber security chain. Parents need to discuss various cases that are reported in the public domain where there is a breach of online safety and consequently, children are exposed to various undesirable elements including cyber criminals, paedophiles, and other unwanted elements.

CHALLENGES FACED BY PARENTS

One of the biggest challenges faced by parents in online education is that they often have no clue about what is happening with their children in the online education ecosystem. COVID-19 has seen the beginning of the Golden Age of Cybercrimes. The kinds, categories, manifestations, and avatars of cybercrimes as also their economic impact have increased ushering in the Golden Age of Cybercrimes. Cybercrimes include cyber stalking, cyber nuisance, cyber harassment, cyber defamation, trolling, and a variety of other cyber-criminal activities.

- Parents should take more interest in what their children are doing on their devices. During the lockdowns, most of the children were frustrated and consequently sought to vent their frustrations by going to not just pornographic websites but also engaging in a large number of cyber-criminal activities including cyber bullying, cyber trolling, and cyber harassment.

- More and more children who are studying at home are quickly learning that they have a connection with cybercrime. There have been numerous cases where children have become victims of cybercrimes because they do not have appropriate digital maturity to conduct their affairs in the digital ecosystem.

- COVID-19 introduced two key elements in our day-to-day lives which did not exist earlier -- fear and panic. These propelled users to come up with completely different and distinct response mechanisms. Parents must be more watchful of the emotional and other needs of their children while being in online education.

- Parents need to give the impression to the children that they are the topmost priority and hence they will do everything in their power and possession to enhance not just their knowledge but also their capabilities and skillsets.

Parents are required to do a very delicate balancing act between their personal and professional lives and also cater to the needs and demands of their children in the context of online education.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY PARENTS

One of the biggest difficulties faced by parents is how to balance their professional lives, the demands of Working from Home and catering to the needs of their children engaged in online education. Work-life balance has gone for a toss. Being at home, parents end up doing far more work while also working from home. Frustrations have started creeping in the parents' lives.

Lot of parents are experiencing rage. Any small incident and they burst out in anger. Such issues and difficulties faced by parents need to be addressed by the parents themselves. Parents have to understand that these are transient times and they have to be responsible enough not only to carry the burden of their personal and professional headaches but also cater to the demands and needs of their children in the context of online education.

A lot of times we find that families who only have one device share it for doing office work and for online education of the children. The paucity of devices in such homes has led to some unique problems. Parents have to realize that online education is the new ecosystem and therefore, they have to supplement their children's needs and requirements

by giving them appropriate tools including devices and platforms as also technologies for harnessing the best benefits of online education.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES THAT PARENTS CAN ADOPT

The increasing instances of cyber stalking and cyber trolling in India point to the perils of children being exposed to an online learning ecosystem without adequate training, sensitization, and awareness. Parents need to adopt effective strategies in the online education ecosystem, some of which are:

- Parents do not need to be interfering. They must give space to their children. Children being at home must have a feeling that they have their own personal space, their digital space is respected, and their parents do not unnecessarily try to intrude on this.
- Parents must sensitize the children about the need for incorporating cyber security as a part of their lives and therefore parents must increasingly encourage their wards to adopt cyber security and cyber hygiene processes, procedures, and methodologies.
- Parents must inform their children that the economic costs of cybercrimes are growing on a constant basis. In 2020 the world lost more than US$ 6 trillion due to cybercrimes and cyber security breaches. Parents must sensitize their children that it is predicted that by 2021, the world will have lost more US$ 8 trillion.[36] Hence, children must adopt cyber hygiene methodologies, processes, and procedures while engaging in online education.
- Parents must encourage their children to have a regular backup of their data including data for online education because their devices are likely to be more prone to cyberattacks and being attacked by all kinds of computer contaminants, malware, and viruses. Hence, parents must inform their children about the increasing utility of frequent backups.
- Make children aware about the growing menace of ransomware where increasingly not just organizations and companies but also governments and individuals are being targeted by ransomware attacks. It has been reported that in every 11 seconds, one company in the world is becoming a victim of a ransomware attack. In a scenario like this, children must be sensitized that they could potentially become victims of ransomware attacks and therefore, they must take appropriate safeguards not just to protect their data but also follow safe methodologies, practices, and procedures while engaging in online education.

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36 https://cybersecurityventures.com/annual-cybercrime-report-2017/ (Last accessed on 31.08.21).

- Children must also be told not to specifically engage in any activities in the online education ecosystem which could tantamount to cybercrimes because cybercrime is a criminal offence which is defined as a serious offence under the prevailing Indian cyberlaws in the Information Technology Act, 2000. Chapter XI of the Information Technology Act, 2000 details the various cybercrimes covered. These cybercrimes have been made punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend from three years up to life imprisonment and a fine which may extend from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 10 lakh or both.

- It is pertinent that the children are sensitized about the growing importance of cyberlaws. They need to appreciate that all the acts that they perform in the electronic ecosystem, whether they use computers, computer systems, computer networks, computer resources, or communication devices as also data and information in an electronic form, have increasingly been covered within the ambit of Indian cyberlaws in the Information Technology Act, 2000.

- Children need to be sensitized about the growing importance of cyber resilience. Cyber resilience is a new phenomenon but it is taken for granted that every person is going to be hit. However, it is not important that people are hit by cybercrimes. The important thing is how quickly they or a legal entity can come back to a state of normalcy after being hit by a cyberattack, cybercrime, or a cyber security breach. Hence, children must be sensitized to incorporate cyber resilience as a part of their lives.

- Children should be encouraged not to be too fearful or panic once they get attacked. However, they must have appropriate strategies, practices, and processes in place for cyber resilience as part of their day-to-day lives.

- Children tend to take the internet for granted and tend to have this assumption that nobody is watching them on the internet. Most of the times, children are clueless that their online activities have legal ramifications. Children are oblivious of the fact that every activity they do online leaves behind digital dust or a digital footprint. These footprints are available on various computer servers, logs, and other locations which can be used by both state and non-state actors for the purposes of not just identifying the children but also for potentially targeting them for becoming victims of various kinds of cyber-criminal activities. Consequently, we have started seeing a massive increase in cybercrimes targeted against children globally and also in India.

- Children need to be sensitized about the growing paradigm of the internet which has two unique features. The internet never sleeps and it never forgets. These characteristics were judicially recognized by the Delhi High Court in a landmark judgment in the case of X v/s Union of India (W.P. (Crl.) No. 1082/2020),[37] in which the Delhi High Court held:

> The internet never sleeps; and the internet never forgets! The true enormity of this fact has dawned over the course of hearings conducted in the present matter, when it transpired that despite orders of this court, even the respondents who were willing to comply with directions issued to remove offending content from the world-wide web, expressed their inability to fully and effectively remove it in compliance with court directions; while errant parties merrily continued to re-post and re-direct such content from one website to another and from one online platform to another, thereby cocking-a-snook at directions issued against them in pending legal proceedings.

- Lack of appropriate cyber maturity among children means that most of the children do not understand the intrinsic character of the internet. The expectation that there is complete anonymity on the internet does not have any solid foundation. Consequently, children need to be sensitized that they should be very careful while they upload, publish, or transmit any content online because once they publish any content online, it becomes available to large number of people and it is accompanied by a large number of electronic footprints. The

37 X v. Union of India, Delhi High Court (2021), https://indiankanoon.org/doc/190535334/ (Last accessed 08.07.21).

information can be used for targeting children with legal consequences. Hence, children need to be sensitized holistically about the legal, policy, and regulatory ramifications that various aspects of cyberspace have.

- Most of the online education ecosystem is currently based on the videoconferencing mode; children must also be sensitized about the growing cybercrimes in videoconferencing including jacking and bombing. These offences take place when somebody intrudes into an online meeting for the purposes of disrupting it or for displaying obscene content to prejudicially impact the meeting. Jacking and bombing are distinct offences under different laws in different countries. Children must be sensitized not to engage in any such activities while attending online classes or they could face legal consequences.
- Children must be encouraged to recognize the growing significance of cyber security as a part of their day-to-day lives. Hence, they must be encouraged not to share their user IDs and passwords with anyone. They must also be encouraged not to use their friends' user IDs and passwords because when you use another user ID or password without permission, it is tantamount to a crime under Section 66 read with Section 43 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. Such an act could expose the child and his parents to legal action for damages by way of compensation up to Rs 5 crore under Section 43A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- Parents must discuss emerging cybercrime cases that are reported in the public domain with their children and seek their healthy inputs. While discussing cyber security breaches and other cybercrimes reported in the public domain, parents can consciously start attracting the attention of children to the legal ramifications of such activities. The more they discuss this with children, the better equipped the children will be to deal with the challenges of cyberspace and the more the children will be prepared not to engage in such cyber-criminal activities, which could lead to exposure to potential legal consequences.
- Parents need to be more sensitive to the needs, hopes, aspirations, and responses of their children. The coming of the digital world has brought in completely new elements into children's behavioural patterns which did not exist earlier. Life before COVID-19 had an amalgamation of physical activities and some elements of digital activities. However, COVID-19 meant that most physical activities were put on hold while digital activities by and large took a more prominent position in the lives of children and youngsters.
- Parents need to be sensitive that their children are now exposed on a 24/7 basis to the internet through e-learning and digital learning. They have huge exposure to information which they did not have earlier. This means that while their exposure to knowledge has been huge, their ability to seek particular information is still at various levels of development and because the quantum of information on the internet can be overwhelming, a lot of children can be overwhelmed by it.
- Parents need to handhold their children into getting them to know that they do not need to be overwhelmed by the huge volume of information online and they must prepare themselves for effectively tackling the information that is available online and come up with effective strategies on how to deal with the overkill of information exposure that they are facing. This is not going to be easy since a lot of children and youngsters potentially have this implicit assumption and faith that they know far more about the internet and technologies than their parents. Hence, a kind of arrogance is often visible in the thought processes of numerous children who believe in their technological superiority as compared to their parents.

Parents have to be alive to the presence of important strategies and have to start taking appropriate steps in terms of sensitizing their children that these strategies need to be adopted for them to deal with all kinds of electronic information that is available in the online ecosystem. Hence, parents' current approach needs to be completely revisited and re-engineered and reinvented. Parenting today needs to have a new approach. Parents need to be mindful of the stresses and strains that today's children and youngsters are facing because of engaging in e-learning and because of sitting at home and being exposed to unprecedented unsupervised access to the internet.

SOLUTIONS TO BE ADOPTED BY PARENTS

The practical solutions to be adopted by parents in the context of online education involve various elements:

- First, parents need to be sensitized about the distinctive issues, challenges, and nuances in the online education ecosystem. They must sensitize themselves about these in the use of cyberspace and the online education ecosystem.
- Parents must equip their children with appropriate skillsets so that they can avoid becoming victims of cybercrimes and cyber security breaches while engaging in online education.
- Parents must proactively prepare their children for the digital future where all kinds of digital challenges will emerge on a day-to-day basis for which children need to acquire digital skillsets to protect themselves and their data from potential ramifications from various state and non-state actors.
- Children must be encouraged to constantly update their digital skillsets. The COVID-19 period has shown that we are entering a New Cyber World Order. The book *New Cyber Order Post Covid-19*,[38] highlights how the world is going to enter the New Cyber World Order once the fight against COVID-19 and its subsequent waves ends. States will become very powerful, where cybercrimes will be the new default option and cyber security breaches will be a new constant companion. In this context, children must be sensitized about growing importance of the New Cyber World Order and be encouraged to inculcate appropriate digital skillsets to be fully prepared to deal with the distinctive issues and challenges thrown up by the New Cyber World Order.
- Children must be told that they must be constantly alive, alert, and vigilant about their digital interests and they must adopt due care, caution, and diligence while doing any activity in the online ecosystem.
- Another key consideration that parents need to keep in mind is that they need to be sensitive to the historical context of current age parenting. Parents need to appreciate that current age parenting must be flexible and keep in mind the historical context of COVID-19. This once in a century pandemic has necessitated the need for parents to have a holistic approach about parenting. Parents need to understand that these are special times and therefore they need to have special approaches to deal with various issues and aspects of parenting.
- Parents themselves are being propelled to use the internet for a variety of their day-to-day activities. In a scenario like this, it is always a good idea for parents to start approaching a topic on technology and ask their kids about it. The idea is not to play act, but to effectively try to learn from some of the new approaches that the children have learned in their digital interactions.
- Once children get the feeling that they and their parents are in the same boat as far as facing the digital challenges thrown up by cyberspace are concerned, there is going to be far more bonding among parents and children. In fact, children will take it on themselves to sensitize their parents on what they need to do or not to do to avoid become victims of cybercrimes.
- When parents and children are at home and increasingly using their devices, there is a need for both parents and children to be away from the devices. Hence, enhancing the quantum of quality family time spent together becomes important.
- Parents must be alive to the concept of an internet free weekend. However, given today's new changed ground realities it is not possible to be completely free from the internet. But parents should still try to have six hours of internet abstinence every week. Having a six hour internet fast is a good strategy to squeeze in some quality family time.
- Parents can consciously start encouraging their kids to play games with family members. These could be indoor games like Carrom Board, Ludo,

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Scrabble, Card games, Puzzles, and Hide and Seek. Playing these interactive one-on-one indoor games will enhance children's confidence and will instil the need for close interaction with their family members in their mindsets.

Such interactions will be significant balancing factors in the overall growth of the children's mindsets and their psyches.

ISSUES, ASPECTS, AND CONSIDERATIONS THAT PARENTS NEED TO KEEP IN MIND

Online education means that parents have to completely change their mindsets as far as education is concerned. Online education will be a lifetime companion for them and for their wards in the coming times.

Hence, parents must increasingly focus on the positive benefits of online education.

Further, they must encourage their children to adopt appropriate skillsets to deal with various challenges and issues as they go about negotiating their digital routes and their digital lives in coming times.

Parents need to keep in mind that they themselves will have to have a very open and futuristic mindset. In case they have a traditional mindset about online education, it will not be sufficient. Online education as a paradigm is constantly growing and hence there is a need for parents to understand that this paradigm is evolving with each passing day and they need to have a more open-minded approach in dealing with online education.

Parents also need to understand that the colours and ramifications of online education will keep changing with time and they and their wards must be flexible enough to deal with the challenges of online education.

Further, parents must constantly read about new trends in online education so that they can share them with their wards. Today's nuclear family is today's digital nuclear family where every parent's responsibility is not just to provide for appropriate means and mechanisms for children to have access to online education but also to constantly sensitize them about new trends, developments, issues, and aspects that are emerging in the digital space which the children need to know.

Children and parents both need to handhold each other for expanding their knowledge and their perspectives pertaining to the digital ecosystem in the coming times.

EMERGING TRENDS, PARADIGMS, AND ISSUES IN ONLINE EDUCATION

Online education is not static. It is constantly evolving and shifting. Consequently, people need to adopt more futuristic and flexible approaches in the context of online education. Online education will keep evolving very quickly. Its nature, colour, and context will keep on changing. Hence, it is important that parents and children adopt online education in a holistic manner.

Parents will be expected to become superhuman beings. They will not only have to cater to their own day-to-day practical problems including professional issues, but they will also have to become digital friends, philosophers, and guides to their wards. They will have to handhold their children in ensuring that they do not become victims of cybercrimes and cyber security breaches. They will also have to learn from the children the new digital skillsets that they are learning.

CONCLUSION

This Handbook gave broad overview of how online education has completely changed the paradigm of education in the context of COVID-19 and how parents now need to have a new mindset while dealing with the distinct issues, challenges, and aspects thrown up by online education.

Online education has evolved and will continue to evolve with each passing year. Hence, parents need to be aware of various distinct nuances, issues, and aspects pertaining to online education. They need to sensitize their wards about the

different manifestations of online learning and they themselves need to adopt more futuristic, holistic, and flexible approaches for dealing with the various issues, aspects, challenges, and problems in online education.

Parents need to be alive to the fact that COVID-19 represents an irreversible break from the past. It has ushered in a completely new era of digital changes which is unprecedented. The pandemic has brought in some irreversible changes in not just cyberspace but also in the way parenting must be done. Parents need to be aware of COVID-19's contribution to the evolution of the next stage of parenting.

Parents must realize that the old world of physical education is now history. Digital education and online education are now integral components of our lives and even as the world comes back to normalcy post COVID-19, online education will still be an important component of the entire educational ecosystem.

Parents and children must not only be sensitized about different aspects of online education but they also must hold each other's hands to face the distinctive challenges and issues posed by online education. Online education will keep on growing. Parents and children need to have open minds to deal with its issues and challenges.

Both parents and children need to learn from each other in this new digital journey of online education. The quicker they hold each other's hands the better it will be not just for parents and the children but also for the purposes of furthering the cause of online education.

Source: Author

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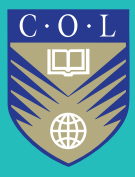

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