

CYBER PARENTING IN DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

The digital age has been transformed into one surrounding social media and networking. The digital era is characterized by technology which increases the speed and breadth of knowledge turnover within the economy and society. [1] Parents are facing a new parenting challenge involving the use of the internet which earlier generations of parents did not have to confront. Although there are various techniques and technologies which can be adopted by parents to guide, protect and supervise their children's use of the internet, many parents feel ill equipped to do so. [2] Digital parenting is an important theme these days because most children use digital devices and the internet on a daily basis. Now a day almost every child from a certain age uses a digital device connected to the internet, meaning parents have to deal with a whole new aspect of parenting – 'digital parenting'. They have to decide what is good or bad for their children when it comes to using digital devices, how much control is appropriate and how to ensure children are safe in the digital environment. It is necessary to observe and make sure that they act responsibly and safely. [3]

Keywords: *Cyber / Digital parent & Era, Digital Parenting Style, Digital threats, Guideline of smart parenting in digital era, Parental control tools (technology solutions for digital parenting).*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cyber / Digital parent & Era:

Time frame in history that the use of digital technology became prevalent and of common use throughout the world. [1] We went from an age where we had computers in the living rooms... We now have computers in our pockets... [3]

Kids who are born at this age / era do not need to learn technology. They open their eyes in the face of it and by the time they are toddlers they know how to swipe and take pictures from these smart phones and other digital devices. As these devices have facilitated many things, they also come with various troubles & questions – IS IT SAFE??? [4] there are many cyber security software companies which have been developed with the purpose with regards to the safety of their children and it's not just about protecting them on the internet; these apps are meant to keep an eye on their whereabouts to find them in time of need, to provide them with tools to reach out for help, and more. [5] The internet is both a great social and learning tool and full of potential dangers. Without proper parental support and guidance, the chances of children being exposed to these dangers increase. Yet this can cause tension and distress between parents and children. [2] Thankfully, when technology causes distress, it

is technology that comes to the rescue as well. There are numerous apps and tools which have been developed with the sole purpose of giving parents peace of mind with regards to the safety of their children. [5]

1.2 Background –

1.2.1 Impact of technology on society:

Technology and human life cannot be separated; society has a cyclical co – dependence on technology. We use technology; depend on technology in our daily life and our needs and demands for technology keep on rising. Humans use technology to travel, to communicate, to learn, to do business and to live in comfort. However technology has also caused us concerns, its poor application has resulted into the pollution of the environment and it has also cause serious threat to our lives and society. This calls for proper use of technology. The biggest challenge facing people is to determine the type of future we need to have and then create relevant technologies which will simplify the way we do things. It is impossible to explore how each new advanced technology has impacted our lives and how it will impact the future. Technology impacts the environment, people and the society as a whole. [6]

Today children in developed societies are born into a world where fast internet connection is the norm. However, the internet arrived in parents' lives only in the last 10 to 15 year, and the speedy connection facility came on the scene even more recently. Furthermore, the time which children now spend playing computer games and in online leisure activities has significantly reduced their outdoor activities (Wong, Law, & Ho, 2007). Threats related to internet use have been widely discussed in the literature. The internet's influence on the 'social life of users has become a major area of study (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). Excessive internet usage may result in internet addiction (Goldberg, 1995; young 2004) including addiction to internet games and social networking websites. Online child abuse (Dombrowski, Gischlar, & Durst, 2007; Gillespie, 2007) has become a major concern. In general, parent's methods of supervising their children involved setting rules about usage, active involvement in discussing the internet experience with their children, sharing experiences of using the internet, and close monitoring, parents also needed to understand more about children's perceptions of online risks and help them to develop coping strategies (Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009). [2] Smartphones offer specific challenges to parents as the decreasing size of smart handheld devices means their use is less obvious and easier to conceal, and the ability to regulate internet access by technological filters is determined by the user's digital literacy knowledge and skills (Vincent, 2015). [7]

1.2.2 Digital parenting style –

There are three separate and distinct digital parenting styles. These three styles are: limiting, enabling and mentoring. To the average parent, this doesn't mean much – but it should. Thing is, you fall into one of these three camps, and depending which camp that is, you could be doing things all wrong.

Are you a limiter, enabler or a mentor of your child's digital experiences?

a. Enablers –

Enablers allow their children to use devices freely. Usually there are a number of different devices (and device types) in these homes, and everyone probably has their own screen. In 'enabling' homes, kids are usually pretty tech-savvy and are responsible for setting their own rules around screen time.

This approach is common among parents of teenagers, especially if you are a digital enabler; you have a very relaxed attitude towards device use in your home. As far as you're concerned, time spent online is beneficial to your child's growth and learning experiences, whether that's through playing mine craft, learning to code or simply playing around with apps and on the internet. You think that trying to limit use will only cause drama and limit your child or teen's learning experiences.

b. Limiters –

Digital limiters are the exact opposite of enablers. Instead of giving free reins on tech use, limiters instead focus on limiting device and technology interactions as much as possible. Parents in this group are very fearful of the negative side – effects of device use, worrying that screens will shorten their children's attention spans, stunt social development and cause physical, mental and psychological issues. Limiters are most likely to be parents of children around the preschool age.

If you are a digital limiter, you probably are very concerned about the negative side effects of device use. You have heard that devices prevent quality sleep, because cognitive issues and can lead to vision problems. You grew up without devices, and turned out just fine, so why can't your children? The more time spent outside, reading or exploring hobbies away from tech, the better.

c. Mentors-

Digital mentors fall in a sweet spot between digital limiters and digital enablers, understanding that children's technology habits need to be balanced and guided. Mentors know that devices are here to stay, and shunning their use will do no good. Most parents of elementary school aged children adopt a mentor approach.

If you are a digital mentor, you are keen on being involved in your child's device use habits. You likely have screen time rules in place, especially at bedtime and during family meals.

Conversations about online safety happen on a pretty regular basis, and you make an effort to connect with your child through technology, whether that's by playing games together or using text or messaging apps to chat and connect with your kids.

Which approach is best and why?

Limiting and enabling digital parenting approaches are not beneficial for children. An enabling approach, while easy, does not help kids and teens develop healthy device habits. Taking a hands-off approach with technology prevents kids and teens from learning the etiquette, rules and boundaries around device use early on.

A limiting approach is, simply put, not realistic. Technology is a part of our society, and undeniably a part of your child's future. It forms the basis of how we communicate and learn. Ironically, despite the fact that parents in this group are most concerned about the negative risks associated with technology, children of limiters are the most likely to participate in inappropriate online activities; they are more likely than children of enablers and mentors to watch porn, post inappropriate content online and even attempt to impersonate peers online.

Mentors are best at helping their children develop healthy device habits. This approach allows children the freedom to explore and learn online, while still developing a healthy and balanced digital appetite. Embracing children's online lives by opening lines of communication and setting healthy boundaries is the approach most likely to raise 'digitally responsible' children. [18]

1.2.3 Digital threats (Children online potential risks):

- Cyber bullying
- Grooming
- Inappropriate websites
- Viruses, hacking and security
- Risk of gaming

1.2.3.1 Cyber bullying –

The rising tide of bullying in India has parents, psychologists and counselors very concerned for the welfare of students. Many parents consider bullying a threat to their children's academic future. Despite signs of primary bullying, middle school bullying and high school bullying in Indian schools, teachers and school staff are often slow to act in protecting their students.

Understanding Bullying Behavior:

Despite varying definitions around the world, the overall connotation of bullying is the same. In India, bullying is characterized by “intentional, aggressive behavior towards another individual involving an imbalance of power.” This repeated behavior may come in the form of verbal insults, teasing, name-calling, mockery, physical assault, sexual assault, hurtful gestures, social exclusion or cyber-attacks. Sometimes bullies act alone; other times, they are joined by friends with similar mindsets. Other times, classmates join in simply to go along for the ride.

Repercussions of Bullying:

When it comes to bullying, both perpetrators and victims suffer. In some cases, bullying effects can last a lifetime. According to psychologist Anuja Kapur, “The long-lasting psychological impact of bullying stems directly from short-term impacts that children experience as the result of being consistently bullied.”

Students who have been bullied extensively may experience -

Depression, Anxiety, Isolation, Fear, Low self-esteem

Childhood bullying issues may cause victims to develop health problems that affect their sleep, work or social habits later on in life. In cases of long-term bullying, a child or teen may require professional counseling to overcome bullying effects so they can move on. Without professional help, negative long term effects may make it difficult for victims to live a productive life. [8]

1.2.3.2 Grooming –

In an era when children are becoming digital natives and using and understanding technology from an early age, safety risks that have existed for some time could also, if we fail to take the necessary precautions, now affect them. Minors have also come into the sights of criminals, who have developed into a threat that makes children their main target. Such is the case with grooming.

What is grooming:

Although this is not a new term (it has been entering the lexicon since at least 2011), it is important to give a definition so that responsible parents who help their children to safely use the internet can understand it. Grooming describes the act of an adult contacting a minor over the internet in order to gain their trust and

friendship, with the ultimate aim of abusing them in various ways. In order to gain a child's trust, these people will use false profiles or identities, meaning that grooming can occur through most forms of digital media that enable interaction between two or more people. Among the most common ways for this to happen is through social networking, email, text messages, chat rooms, or online gaming sites that allow communication between users. Although this would appear to be a new type of cybercrime, this activity also occurs outside the internet. The main feature of grooming, however, is the relationship that is established through any means currently offered by technology.

For example, an adult can seduce minors through attention or affection, by listening to their problems; all the way up to giving them gifts (once they have contacted them through digital means). They subsequently attempt to lower inhibitions, gradually incorporating sexual content into their conversations, showing them sexually explicit material and seeking face-to-face contact. [9]

1.2.3.3 Inappropriate websites –

It's possible that children may come across things online which are inappropriate for their age and stage of development. You can use filters to block this content and prepare your child by showing them the best ways to avoid it.

What sort of inappropriate content might child see?

Inappropriate content includes information or images that upset your child, material that's directed at adults, inaccurate information or information that might lead or tempt your child into unlawful or dangerous behavior.

This could be:

Pornographic material, Content containing swearing, Sites that encourage vandalism, crime, terrorism, racism, eating disorders, even suicide, Pictures, videos or games which show images of violence or cruelty to other people or animals, Gambling sites

Unmoderated chat rooms – where there's no one supervising the conversation and barring unsuitable comments. It can be difficult to monitor what your child is viewing as they can access this material through any internet enabled device, including mobile ones such as a phone or tablet. Sometimes your child may stumble upon unsuitable sites by accident, through apps they've downloaded to their mobile device or through links they've been sent by friends, chatting to others online, or even through inter-device communication systems such as Bluetooth. [10]

1.2.3.4 Virus, Hacking, Security –

A security hacker is someone who seeks to breach defenses and exploit weaknesses in a computer system or network. Hackers may be motivated by a multitude of reasons, such as profit, protest, information gathering, challenge, recreation, or to evaluate system weaknesses to assist in formulating defenses against potential hackers. The subculture that has evolved around hackers is often referred to as the computer underground – Wikipedia

1.2.3.5 Risk of gaming –

Many online games have communication features which allow their users to interact anonymously e.g. mine craft (all devices) and world of war craft (pc). Some game consoles allow internet access as well, so it is important to be aware of their communication features.

The Blue Whale game: is a 21st-century social network phenomenon that is claimed to exist in several countries, beginning in 2016. The game reportedly consists of a series of tasks assigned to players by administrators over a 50-day period, with the final challenge requiring the player to commit suicide. Throughout 2017 media in India reported several cases of child suicide, self-harm and attempted suicide alleged to be a result of Blue Whale – Wikipedia. [11]

II. GUIDELINE OF SMART PARENTS IN DIGITAL ERA

Being a parent has never been easy, but it can be even more challenging once your kids are using the internet. Even if you are as a parent not up on the latest technologies and platforms, though, you have an important role – maybe the most important in your kid's online lives. Guideline is dividing into three sections that each deal with a different aspect of digital parenting.

2.1 Be a part of your kid's media lives:

What your kids are watching, playing, reading and listening to is a big part of the person they're turning into, and their online lives can be just as important to them as the "real world". Kids are usually glad when their parents show an interest in the things they like, so get them to show you how their new favourite game works or why they're so excited about joining a new social network. You can also use media to talk about sensitive issues: kids may be more comfortable talking about sexting or bullying when you are discussing a character in a TV show than someone they know.

2.2 Be the person your kids come to when they have problems online:

A lot of the time, kids don't want to go their parents when things go wrong because they're afraid they'll get in trouble. When your kids start going online make sure they know clear procedures on what to do if things go wrong, then check out the "how do I talk about" and how do I "sections below for some of these procedures. If they are in the habit of coming to you about the little things, they'll be a lot more likely to talk to you about the big ones.

2.3 Set rules and communicate values:

The internet may seem like the Wild West sometimes, but the rules you set still affect how kids behave online. What's most important is that your rules are a way of getting across the values you want your kids to live by, that way they'll keep living by them even when they're grown up and out on their own. [12]

2.4 Key tips for Digital Parenting:

- Be a role model for your children.
- Learn about the devices & improve digital literacy.

- Keep a notebook with a list of social networking or gaming sites that they are on & also write down their passwords.
- Talk to your children but not interrogate.
- Ask them to show you how this game or site works, show interest to what they are doing.
- Set rules & parameters about their use.
- Don't overreact if something appears to be cyber bullying. [5]

III. PARENTAL CONTROL TOOLS (TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR DIGITAL PARENTING) –

A number of technologies have become available to help parents monitor and supervise their children's use of the internet. These have helped to simplify the tasks of parents and minimize possible parent – child conflicts arising from parent's supervision and monitoring. [2] And it's not just about protecting them on the internet; these apps are meant to keep an eye on their whereabouts, to find them in time of need, to provide them with tools to reach out for help, and more. Working parents are also anxious when they have to leave their kids behind for long hours. For them, and many others, here are some apps that can help ensure a safe environment for your child, and also help them sleep peacefully at night. [5]

3.1 eKavach –



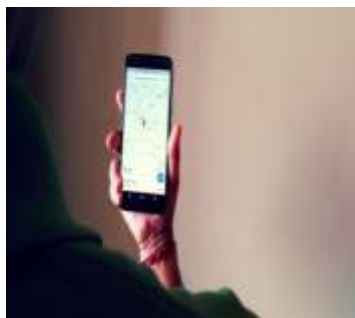
eKavach tells parents what applications are being used by a child, and how much time he / she spend on any particular app.

It also provides information about new apps installed.

eKavach monitors the child's online activities all the time. The instant any boundaries set by parents are breached, the app sends a notification on their phone.

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/app1.jpg>

3.2 angel child monitoring –



It is a GPS and GSM card enabled device that can be carried by a child like a mobile phone, or can be used like an ID card given in schools, thus tracking the location.

It also enables parents to learn about the real time surroundings of a child.

For this, they can call the gadget. It doesn't ring but the call gets answered automatically and parents can hear all that is happening around the child.

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/app2.jpg>

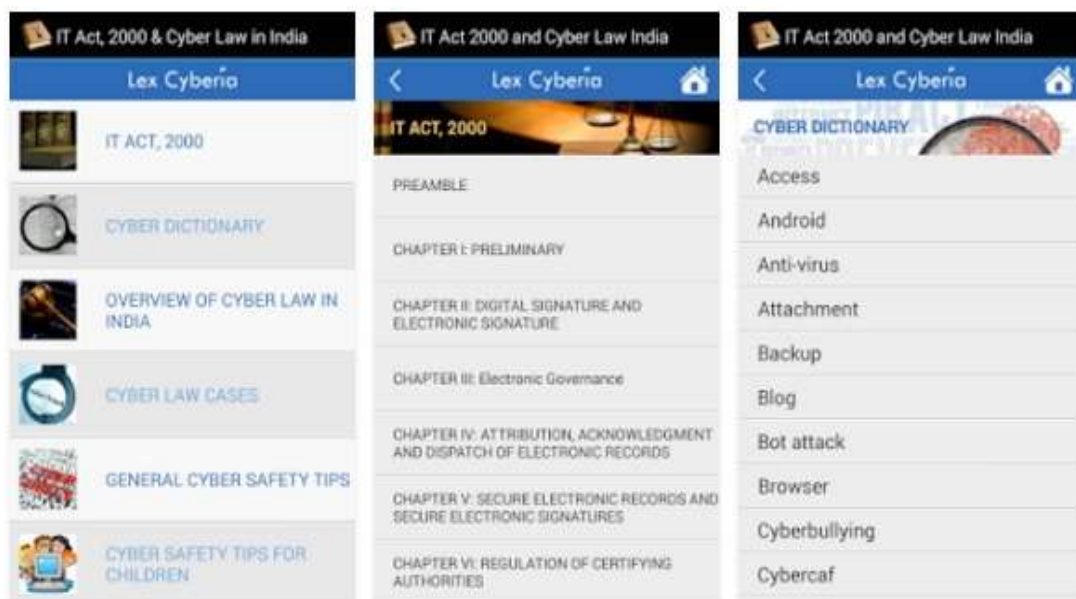
3.3 Safe browser –



☐ This is a cloud based browser that monitor more than 8 million website and a billion web pages every day to prevent children from opening inappropriate pages. Every time a child browsers the internet, this app will make sure that he / she is not able to reach the wrong places.

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/app10.jpg> [5]

1.4 IT Act, 2000 & Cyber Law India –



<https://www.thebetterindia.com/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/app5.jpg>

This is an app that was developed with the aim of creating cyber awareness in India among all sections of the society. With tips for general safety on the Internet, the app is very useful for children, educators, and parents. It provides information on how to be safe on the internet, and also explains the cyber law as applicable in India, including the Information Technology Act 2000, as amended by IT (Amendment) Act, 2008.

With the help of the cyber dictionary, the app helps people get familiar with the jargon, so they can understand the law and the various cases in a simple manner. There is a dedicated option named cyber safety tips for children that parents can go through, while also reading about different cyber law cases to understand situations better. [5]

IV. METHODOGY

This paper is a narrative review of survey report which had conducted by world's largest dedicated security technology company – McAfee recently, with different sample size upon Indian teens with their parents. The goal of the study was to check how families are adopting to the increasingly connected lifestyle that is taking over our lives. Parents concerned by children's internet use; behavior, habits and attitude of families towards evolving technology & growing digital divide between Indian teens, parents.

A. 54 percent Indian parents have discovered that their child has visited inappropriate websites:

McAfee has released a new report on 'New Family Dynamics In a connected world' after Survey about 13,000 adults between the ages of 18 to 55 and older that have used internet connected devices on a daily in 14 countries across the world. The study pointed out that most Indian parents are concerned about the dangers that digital world poses in terms of cyber-crimes and identity thefts as about 93 % have discussed these issues with their children. The partial reason for discussions about such topics is because of the fear that 49% parents have that their child could be interacting with cyber criminal's online or social predators. However, the fear and concerns about cyber security are largely backed by outdated methods of monitoring as about 59% of parents keep the internet connected devices in their possession handing the devices to their kids where they themselves can monitor the activity. This is a far cry from the 36% parents who use software tools to monitor the activity of their kids.

After monitoring the internet activity of their children, about 54% parents have discovered that their child has visited an inappropriate website. Parents have tried to minimize that by limiting the amount of time that their children spend in front of screen with 57% limiting it to 1-2 hours per day while 21% allowing it to be less than an hour per day. One interesting thing to note here is that 54% number is the highest when compared to 13 other countries in the survey. The changes in habit and behavior are not only limited to discussions and concerns and they extend to the household lifestyle as the report found that 84% parents allowed their kids to bring an internet – connected device to the bed. About 50% of parents in India have argued with their children about bringing the connected device to the bed. The interesting thing here is that about 71% of parents have been called on by their children for bringing internet connected devices to family time. [13]

B. Indian parents concerned by children's internet use :

As the internet evolves into a new platform for self-expression and social interaction, children will be prone to indulge in information exchange leading to increasing rate of cyber exploits. The survey titled, "How safe are Indian kids online?" involved 500 children and 496 parents throughout the cities of Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Cochin, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ludhiana, Mumbai, New Delhi and Pune. Parents in Bangalore and Ludhiana were found to have the most minimal awareness of their kid's online activities, whereas pune had the highest level of involvement at 84 percent.

Result - More and more Indian children are becoming tech savvy, and their parents are not happy. A recent survey conducted by McAfee across 10 Indian cities has revealed that 62% of affluent kids ages 4-12 have an email account, while 58% have an account on social networking sites. But while 32% of the parents surveyed

knew their kids were sharing personal contact information online and all parents of 4-8-year olds admitted to letting them access the internet, a sizable number voiced concern over potential exposure to inappropriate content. 56% of parents of 13-17 year old are concerned about their kid's internet activity, while 42% of parents of 4-8 year olds worried their kids could be exposed to inappropriate material. [14]

C. Growing digital divide between Indian teens, parents:

McAfee 'secret lives of teens' survey show that despite parental concerns and beliefs teens' end up sharing dangerous information online.

Result – one of the starting results of the study was the fact that while 70% of surveyed teens believe they shouldn't share their home address online, 40% of them still do. Correspondingly, only 21% of the polled parents believe teens would have actually done so.

Other results shows that while 31% of the surveyed teens have personally met their online acquaintances, only 17% parents are aware of this. A fifth of the surveyed teens had willingly accessed porn and nudity online on a daily basis, but 32% parents think teens willingly access it only a few times a year. Interestingly 37 of the teens polled have visited websites their parents wouldn't approve of and only 20% parents are aware of this. About 26% of the surveyed teens have been pressured into sending or posting revealing pictures of themselves online.

Interestingly 47% of surveyed Indian teens go online and intentionally search for information on answers to a test or an assignment but 46% of parents are aware of this. A fifth of the surveyed teens cheat on a test using their mobile phone and 21% cheat using different techniques they have discovered online. While 30% of the surveyed parents are very worried of this behavior by their children, 22% are not bothered.

Showing a growing gap between the parental perception and actual reality regarding the online activities of Indian teens, 65% of the polled teens believe their parents know some of what they do online but all of it. As many as 55% of the polled teens don't tell their parents about their online activities. On the other hand, 79% of polled parents trust their teens to not access age inappropriate online content and 70% of polled parents trust that their teens tell them everything they do online. [15]

V. CONCLUSION

It is very challenging for parents to educate their technology savvy children. [15] The key issue will be to ensure that kids are well aware of the good bad and the ugly side of online world. [16] Keeping a check on the personal devices is the most important for parents but it is difficult as well. As the devices are in their (kid's) control, they can easily hide and overlook the safety rules. They also ask for privacy. That is why mobile phone parental control tools are suggested for less intrusive and better smart parenting. Parents can keep an eye remotely and kids can enjoy on their own. But at the same time parents can know if anything goes out of bounds. Along with using mobile phone parental control apps or tools, encourage device free dinners, family time and physical activity, keep your own phone activities in limit so that the kids know that rules are not only for them. This way it becomes easier for them to share. [17] We hope this study provides Indian parents with some key insights and learning's on how to protect their children online.”[15] And prepare them for the

conversations they need to have with kids when they first start using digital devices, as they grow and their online activities change, and a different aspect of digital parenting. [12]

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