

## **Parenting in post pandemic times: discussing the risks and challenges**

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### **Abstract**

The Internet and social media revolution provide incredible opportunities for children to learn, participate and socialize but they also give way to all forms of vulnerabilities of abuse and violence. Hence, raising challenges for parenting in contemporary times. This paper aims to assess the risks faced by children in this digital age. Along with this, analyzing the challenges to parenting in socializing and creating a safer environment for their children. A proposed hypothesis for the study is which stated that “there is no significant difference in the parenting post pandemic”. A secondary method of data collection is used by studying the reports of recognized organization and international bodies. A primary data on risks and challenges in parenting is collected from 30 parents having children in the age group of 10-16 years and for analyzing data, percentage tables and chi square test is used to test the hypothesis. The paper discusses the risks associated with digitalization of education and social space, i.e. sharing of personal information, which leading to privacy invasion, accidentally downloading Malware, falling for scams that offer things they value, phishing or false email and messages and the most hazardous cyber bullying where the children ridiculed in social media exchanges and online gaming platforms and turning the game from an imaginative adventure into a humiliating ordeal. A survey conducted by Delhi based organisation, ‘child rights and you’ there are 36% rise in the cases

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of cyber bullying in 2020, alone, out of which 9.2 of the respondents had not reported it to their guardians, teachers and media platform. The challenges in parenting abreast tackling the digital risks must be a collaborative efforts shows the prior researches and can be start by reducing the communication gap between the parent and child, other than this by introducing safe searching methods, taking down illegal material, blocking websites containing child abuse images, with the help of internet service provider applying filters and giving details and training to the parents in proper execution of parental control software. The merits of digitization must not suffer at the hands of vulnerabilities of network society, the digital parenting is a way forward in digital socialization of high risk classes ( in this case children) of society.

*Keywords: Network society, cyberbullying, phishing, digital parenting, digital socialization*

### **Introduction**

This paper explores the challenges in parenting of children in the post pandemic times, where already existing digital risks of network society has not been wiped off completely and pandemic worsens the situation further, adding woes to the parent child relationship. exposure of children to screen and unlimited access to Internet, since two years, giving lee way to the cyber offenders making the colourful world of the children, a complete vulnerable one. According to Interpol data, in 2021, India reported over 24 lakh instances of online child sexual abuse during three year period between 2017-20 with 80 per cent of the victims being girls below the age of 14 years , which prompted the CBI to start a massive operation against the alleged peddlers of online child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in India with several websites under the scanner for their liability in hosting such material. “The data from Interpol is worrisome. It shows 2.4 million instances of online child sexual abuse with 80 per cent victims being young girls.”(India Reported over 24L Online Child Abuse Cases in 2017-20: Interpol | Business Standard News, n.d.)

As reported by UNICEF report children got victimised through the production, distribution and consumption of sexual abuse material and may be

groomed for sexual exploitation, with abusers attempting to meet them in person or exhort them for explicit content. Some 80% of children in 25 countries report feeling in danger of sexual abuse or exploitation online. (Violence against Children, n.d.)

With the revolution in technology no group of society lags behind in using and becoming a part of it. children of today spend more time on phone than ever before and through computers Smartphone, gaming they developed their social network and comes into the contact of offenders and inappropriate content. they are the high risk class to at the target of companies to encroach upon their privacy to collect data for marketing apps. There is a alarming rate of sexual abuse and exploitation through online medium which induced to share their images and comment offences from the confines of the phone directing on demand abuse of children. In India, these cases jumps after the outbreak of covid 19 disease, as the shift from physical classrooms to digital platforms has ensured continuation of learning process post pandemic outbreak, schoolchildren are more than ever at the risk of stalking, cyberbullying and trolling. ('Help Kids Deal with Cyberbullying', 2021)

As earlier mentioned post pandemic time increase digital risk to children, as most of them making digital media their life support rather spending time with parents, they like to be in online gaming you tubing, Instagram stories, chatting, among others. the limitations of parent to be present every time with their children and supporting them at each and every moment, does not seems possible in post pandemic time, where most of parents are struggling with their jobs, ensure better future and fail to present a model to their kids, in terms of reducing uses of digital media themselves. These challenge supplemented with their lack of knowledge and skill in the field of regulation and monitoring of child activity over phone. However, with the help of digital parenting with required digital literacy to operate the digital media platform and using parental control software programs which are completely child friendly, we ensure safe environment for children and reduce challenges for parents. Ultimately, a digital socialization can be achieve for the greater good for the entire society

With the revolution in technology no group of society lags behind in using and becoming a part of it. Children of today spend more time on phone than ever before and through internet technology they developed their social network and come into the contact of offenders and inappropriate content. They are the high risk class to be the target of companies to encroach upon their privacy to collect data for marketing apps. There is an alarming rate of sexual abuse and exploitation through online medium which induced to share their images and comment offences from the confines of the phone directing on demand abuse of children.

The above reviewed literature projects an upsetting figures and facts which enforces to understand the form of digital platform vulnerabilities in Indian children who access this technology and falling prey to cyber offenders, another aim is to getting the things and perspectives from the parents who are facing challenges in parenting in this network society. The challenges and risks can be reduced by practicing digital parenting and raise level of education in digital technology, essentially, become digitally literate.

### **Objectives and research question**

Objectives for this research

1. To examine the forms of digital risks faced by children based on parents experience
2. To analyze the challenges to parenting post pandemic.
3. To suggest measures that minimize the challenges to parenting in post pandemic times

Research questions which the said research based upon are:-

What the challenges parents are confronted with in post pandemic.

1. How the parents took up the challenge of digital risks and parenting child in post pandemic times.
2. What are suggestions that minimize risk and ensure safe environment for children.

### **Methodology and Hypothesis**

The research paper uses qualitative and quantitative method simultaneously. For data collection secondary sources i.e. Survey reports and studies of recognized organizations are reviewed. Area of study for this research limited to five cities of Madhya Pradesh state, India. Selective sampling is used where parents whose children are in the age group of 10-16 years are taken. In addition to this, only those parents who live with their children at least 20 or <, days are taken into the account, whereas sample size is, n=30. Hence, the primary data collection method is used. A questionnaire with open ended and close ended questions were filled to get the details of their parenting experience post pandemic. To analyze data, percentage and chi square test is used.

The following null hypotheses for this research are discussed under:-

$H_{01}$  = There is no significant rise in percentage of digital risks faced by children in post pandemic.

$H_{02}$  = There is no significant difference in the nature of parenting post pandemic.

### **Digital risks faced by children**

The potential impact of ICTs on children's health and happiness is a matter of growing public concern – and an area that is ripe for further research and data. Childhood is no exception. From the moment hundreds of millions of children enter the world, they are steeped in a steady stream of digital communication and connection – from the way their medical care is managed and delivered to the online pictures of their first precious moments. Like globalization and urbanization, 'digitalization' has already changed the world. The rapid proliferation of information and communication technology (ICT) is an unstoppable force, touching virtually every sphere of modern life, from economies to societies to cultures ... and shaping everyday life .ICTs are intensifying traditional childhood risks, such as bullying, and fuelling new forms of child abuse and exploitation, such as 'made-to-order' child sexual abuse material and live streaming of child sexual abuse. Predators can more

easily make contact with unsuspecting children through anonymous and un-protected social media profiles and game forums. New technologies – like cryptocurrencies and the Dark Web – are fuelling live streaming of child sexual abuse and other harmful content, and challenging the ability of law enforcement to keep up. Ninety-two per cent of all child sexual abuse URLs identified globally by the Internet Watch Foundation are hosted in just five countries: the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, France .thus, Digital technology also make children more susceptible to harm both online and off. Already vulnerable children may be at greater risk of harm, including loss of privacy. (UNICEF,2017). According to UK based government website a survey finds that Social media networking sites are seen as being very ‘cool’ by children and they may be pressured by their friends into joining them. The sites don’t actually present any threats that don’t already exist elsewhere online. The danger is that the threats exist in a new online environment you or your child may not be familiar with. As with most potential online dangers, the problems can start if your child doesn’t look after their personal information properly. The risks you need to be aware of are: cyberbullying (bullying using digital technology),invasion of privacy, identity theft, your child seeing offensive images and messages, the presence of strangers who may be there to ‘groom’ other members. Grooming of children is the action by a pedophile of preparing a child for a meeting, especially via an internet chat room, with the intention of committing a sexual offence. More than a third of young people in 30 countries report being cyberbullied, with 1 in 5 skipping school because of it. Most alarming is the threat of online sexual exploitation and abuse. It has never been easier for child sex offenders to contact their potential victims, share imagery and encourage others to commit offences.

Typologies of risks include four broad categories: content, conduct, contract and contact. Many of these are digital versions of traditional risks for children (e.g., bullying, racism and sexism, sexual predation). Just as in everyday life, a zero-risk digital environment is unattainable. However setting the conditions for a safer one is feasible.(OECD, 21st Century Children: Digital Risks and Resilience Report, 2018 - Search, n.d.)

In more general terms, the digital risks to children classified on the basis of parents own experience .these are Cyber bullying, Security and privacy -invasion of privacy and identity theft by accidentally downloading malware and falling for scams ,Grooming and sexting, Gaming disorder, access to pornographic, violent, offensive messages, racist, hateful or generally harmful, age-inappropriate or illegal content.

Cyber bullying is the bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behavior, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted . According to National head of UNESCO, children suffer because of online winning and trolling, internet has amplified the risk of cyber bullying and online discrimination according to a studies 62% of digital users did not know where to find help if they were cyber bully.

Another risks is the form of addiction a child has after using internet is on-line gaming, which turns into disorder, Gaming disorder is defined in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a pattern of gaming behavior (“digital-gaming” or “video-gaming”) characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.(Addictive Behaviours, n.d.)

### **Challenges to parenting**

The term parenting can be defined as the process and purposive activity, including interactions regarding to rearing and educating a child that parent or parental figure that perform for promoting child’s growth, development, including health.(Virasiri et al., 2011)

In particular, parenting means the role performed by a person that possesses parental status in order to suitably and positively enhances development in every aspect of their child’s

life. It is the primary method used by parents for socializing children. (Parenting in Contemporary Society (1985 Edition) | Open Library, n.d.)

Some challenges that parents are facing in post pandemic times are categorized in four sub headings.

**Communication Challenges-** allocate less time to have discussions creating communication gap, not having feedback or opinion of children, having quarrels and fighting back.failure to impart moral values As a result of which Child hiding things and becomes depended on internet world for their socialization. The families are falling apart due to a lack of time for each other. The children suffer when they don't find their parents around.

**Participation Challenges-** children not like to share social media updates with parents, they are less likely to involve with them in digital media, outdoor activities for refreshment replaced by overload of studies, gaming and social media. These are more tiring itself that other activities has not been paid attention to. Parent lacks time to participate in activities with their children due to excessive use of digital media and limitations of body. Online education too captured parents space. Even after classes resumes offline ,child rely on on line medium for queries and support, hence the role of parent as facilitator is culminated.

**Behavioral Challenges-** This is an outcome of lack of communication and participation. Lack of trust and understanding on part of parents, who are away at work, usually, they lack an excellent strong bonding with their child. They are finding difficulty in sticking work- home balance. The emotional bonding between a parent and a child has faded away with time. They are hesitant to open up in front of their parents due to a lack of emotional tie-up. This is the reason why kids are increasingly seeking help from their peers rather than approaching their parents. (Helsper, 2008)Parents are Overestimating or Underestimating the Problems, Having Unrealistic Expectations, being inconsistent, Aggressive behavior and Judgmental attitude are causing them to suffer from anxieties that transfer on their child.

**Digital literacy challenge-** parents are less familiar with what their children run on digital media, they are aware of digital risks associated with internet technologies, however not aware to regulate and monitor the activities of their



children. Hence, they lack digital parenting skills. Digital Parenting allows helping children take advantage of opportunities provided by digital media and online Environments, while requiring parents to protect their children from the harms that these environments might cause.(Helsper, 2008) Digital parenting is a developing skill through which the parents or caregivers and their children can explore technology together. Digital parenting more or less a parental efforts and practices for comprehending, supporting, and regulating and mediating children’s activities in digital environments.

### Findings and discussion

Table.1 Percentage table to assess challenges to parenting post pandemic

Challenges to parenting	Parents response (n=30)			
	Agree	%age	disagree	%age
Difficulty in striking work home balance	21	70%	09	30%
Risk associated with digital media	22	73.33%	08	23.66%
Behaviour change – child becomes less attentive and self centric	18	60%	12	40%
Participation with children reduced esp. in outdoor activities as result of limitations of the strength of body and shortage of time	25	83.33%	05	16.67%
Lacks digital literacy to properly involve and protect them from digital risks	26	86.6%	04	13.33%
Online education captures parents space and even after offline classes resumes child and school rely on digital media, hence nothing changed	27	90%	03	10%
A healthy communication is short lived and turns into arguments	23	76.66%	07	23.33%
Setting rules and limits upon over-use arouse violence and suspicious behaviour	24	80%	06	20%

The results from the above table shows that 86.6% parents believes that due to lack of digital literacy skill, they couldn't participate with their children more amicably in digital media platforms and even after resumption of offline classes, the children rely on online media, which eventually, "taking away the space of parents participation in their educational activities". This constitutes the 90% of the parent responses who favour this statement. Another challenges under challenge to parenting is that setting rules and limits on over use of phones and internet arouse suspicious and violent behaviour among children, as they become more addicted to it and do not want to listen to their parents, they become less attentive to them. earlier to this they were more likely interested in outdoor activities which are maintaining a balance in use of digital media. However, now it the seems that children wants to be more on internet rather to be with anything anymore, according to parents.

Table.2 Percentage table to assess digital risks to children based on parents experience

Digital risks cases	Pre pan- demic	%age	Post pan- demic	%age	Percentage increase in digital risk from pre pandemic to post pandemic
Cyber bullying	02	6.66%	03	10%	3.34%
Gaming disorder	10	33.33%	12	40%	6.67%
Exposure to inappro- priate content	03	10%	04	13.33%	3.33%
Phishing or privacy invasion	02	6.66%	05	16.66%	10%
No such cases occurred	06	20%	02	6.66%	13.34
Not aware of digital risks cases	7	23.33%	04	13.33%	-10%
Total	30		30		

From the above table.2 it is assessed that 24 parents are responded in a favour that their children experience distal risk in post pandemic times, this constitute 80% of the total sample and 17 parents are saying that in pre pan-

demographic times their children are facing the digital risk which institute 56.6%. Hence, it is analysed that there is a 10% increase in the rise of digital risk cases in post pandemic times. Moreover, 23.33% people are not aware of such digital risk in pre pandemic times but this percentage came down to 13.33 percentage which means 10% more people are getting aware of such kind of digital risks by this time.

Table.3 chi square frequency table to test nature of parenting post pandemic.

Nature of parenting post pandemic	$f_o$	$f_e$	$f_o - f_e$	$(f_o - f_e)^2$	$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$
More demanding in post pandemic	21	15	6	36	2.4
As demanding as earlier	09	15	-6	36	2.4
Total	30	30			$\Sigma=4.8$

To test hypothesis, goodness of fit test or chi square test on single variable is used. it is observed from the above results that calculated value of chi square ( $\chi^2$  calculated - 4.8), with  $df=1$ ,  $sig.level=0.05\%$ , the table value is? ( $\chi^2$  table - 3.84), which is less than the calculated value. Hence, null hypothesis which states that "There is no significant difference in the nature of parenting post pandemic" is rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis which states that "There is a significant difference in the nature of parenting post pandemic".

The study shows that, there is significant rise in percentage of digital risks faced by children post pandemic. There is significant difference in the nature of parenting post pandemic. parents share their perspectives on this and it is analysed that parenting is more demanding in these times than earlier on account of invasion of technology that captures the private space of parent-child and leaves no room for healthy communication between them, as it elevates stress, aggression and self-centeredness.

### Suggestions and conclusion

It is analysed that following suggestion helps reducing the challenges in parenting post pandemic and digital risks as well.

- Reduce communication gap.
- Increase participation in online activities.
- Adopt democratic style of parenting (persuasion and inviting opinions in decision making).
- Practice digital parenting – model, manage and monitor.
- Keeping home environment healthy- embrace small talks rather long ones , joke around, light hearted talks and violence and abuse free.
- Digital literacy –update themselves.

Parents' expectations for their children were unrealistic because they didn't know how online responsibility changes at different ages, as children's brains change. From this realization, there are 3 Ms—three approaches to digital parenting, based on specific age ranges: Model, Manage, Monitor first is that parents themselves present a model of keeping them away of gadgets and listen to children carefully, than next one is managing the stress and anxieties if any of their child and imparting values or digitally socialize them, monitoring in the case where suspicion arises, this can be done with the help of parental control software namely, kidsguard pro, net nanny, Google maps and mspy etc. (Rogers-Whitehead, 2021)

Possibly, the biggest mistake parents make is to allow societal expectations to overrule their inner parenting voice when it comes to bringing up children. At the beginning of one's parenting journey, one may feel confused. However, as the bond between you and your child becomes stronger, you will realize that you know your child the best. (*Parenting Challenges In The 21St Century, Challenges Facing Single Parents Today*, n.d.) [WePROTECT Global Alliance](#) model of UNICEF is working to protect children who are victims of online sexual abuse and working with government, to guide investment in evidence

based preventive programs and awareness raising.(*Violence against Children*, n.d.)

Similar models can be adopted at district or more at local levels, where on the ground responders in Indian case like social workers, ASHA and Anganwadi workers to provide services to victims. The state government can collaborate with tech companies to make digital product safe for children, providing industry guidelines and developing cutting edge tools to stop the circulation of child sexual abuse material and taking down all the inappropriate website, programs and content by contacting internet service providers.

parents in post pandemic feel pressure to avoid behaviour and actions that may lead to maladaptive outcomes for their children. Also they are well versed with the fact that absolute control and absolute laxity in the matters of their uses of digital technology, will cause them to suffer. parents are in the need of training programs and digital parenting workshops that will enhance knowledge in the operation of digital media and will learn to regulate, monitor and mediating the child activities online. Consequently, increase their participation and communication with their child and maintaining balance and their relationships. Finally, parents of today need not to panic rather adopt persuasiveness and rationality in their attitude when they find their children are at risk or when they susceptible to.

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