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Parents role in virtual learning of children during COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The present pandemic situation has hit not only the economic and social environment of the world nations but also the education sector. The current phenomenon of 'Stay home and Stay safe' has led the several schools to resort on online mode of delivering lectures to the students through e-learning apps. Certainly, the covid-19 outbreak has changed the role of parents as they have to support their kids and young children to cope up these virtual classrooms. The parents role has increased as this e-learning at home made certain additions to their responsibilities. For the better learning of their children, they most of the time (especially from 9 a.m till 1:00 p.m) keep themselves engage in providing necessities and supplies for smooth running of their virtual classes. The present article focuses on the role of parents in online learning of children during this crisis time. The attempt has also been made to study the problems faced by the parents while assisting their children through online learning mode.

Keywords: Virtual learning of children, COVID-19, economic and social environment

Introduction

Technology has such a magical effect on our society that it has become difficult to imagine life without this. The advancement of technology has led to so many eye-popping inventions, luxurious lifestyles, etc., but at the same it has dramatically changed our thought process. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has now increased the role of technology in every spheres of modern life. The education sector has also not remained untouched by this technological development. The technology plays pivotal role in modern education system as students feel easy access to all educational resources, enhances self-learning experience, preparedness for careers, etc. On the one hand, school and teachers have important hand in education, development and success of students, on the other hand, parents occupies vital position so far as education of their children is concerned. The parents have several responsibilities towards the education of their children like to be in regular touch with their class teachers, to provide conducive environment for study at home, encouragement of child, supervising and guiding them for various study and career related matters, spending quality time with them, etc. Home is considered to be a first school of child as he spends initial years of his life with his parents only.

The covid-19 pandemic has divesting effect on global education system and hence forcing us to look for the next best alternative of learning than face to face interaction. The present pandemic situation resulted in 'Stay home and Stay safe' criteria and all this led the several schools to resort on online mode of delivering lectures to the students through e-learning apps. According to data from UNESCO, the peak in school closures was registered at the beginning of April 2020, when around 1.6 billion learners were affected across 194 countries, accounting for more than 90% of total enrolled learners (UNESCO, 2020) [5]

Certainly, the covid-19 outbreak has changed the role of parents as they have to support their kids and young children to cope up these virtual classrooms. The parent's role has increased as this e-learning at home made certain additions to their responsibilities. For the better learning of their children, they most of the time (especially from 9 a.m till 1:00 p.m) keep themselves engage in providing necessities and supplies for smooth running of their virtual classes. Different forms of support from families and teachers, including parental emotional support and teacher enthusiasm, are found to be important for the development of positive attitudes towards learning and can ensure that students acquire the attitudes and dispositions that can maximize their ability to make the most of online learning opportunities. (OECD Report, 2020) [4].

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Objectives of the study

The present paper aims to study the following objectives:

1) The main objective of the study is to assess the role of parents in online learning process of the children up to the age group of 15 years.
2) To investigate into the problems faced by parents while assisting their children for these virtual classrooms.

Sample size and data collection

The primary data have been collected from the parents whose children fall into the age category of 5 to 15 years. The children belonging to Kindergarten school category have been excluded as generally they get offline study material from school in whatsapp group. A questionnaire has been framed on different aspects of online study and the role of parents in that. Due to the spread of covid-19, it was difficult to visit all the respondents personally so an attempt has been made to collect the data personally as well as telephonically. Initially, the questionnaire was distributed among 60 respondents. Only 56 respondents were able to give the feedback. After tabulation, only 50 questionnaires were found to be fit for analysis purpose. Percentage method has been used for analysis purpose.

Analysis and Findings

Table 1.1: Profile of the Respondents

	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Female	37	81
Male	13	19
Basis of Schooling		
Children Studying in Private Schools	42	85
Government Schools	8	15
Age Category of Children		
5-7 years	05	10
8-10years	15	30
11-13 years	11	22
13-15 years	19	38

Source: Compiled from questionnaire data

Table 1.1 reveals the profile of respondents. The majority i.e. 74% of the sample respondent is female and out of that 62.16% are from working class. So far as age category of children is concerned, 38% of parents are having children in the age category of 13-15 years, followed by 8-10 years and subsequently followed by 11-13 years and 5-7 years.

Table 1.2: Occupation Wise Distribution of Respondents

	Female	Male
Teaching	18 (42.6)	2 (15.4)
Business	2 (5.4)	5(38.46)
Banking	3(8.1)	4(30.7)
Housewives	14(37.84)	----
Others	-----	02 (15.4)

Source: Compiled from questionnaire data
Note: Figures in Parentheses denote the percentages

From the table 1.2 occupation wise categorization reveals that majority of female i.e. 48.6% are in teaching profession followed by housewives i.e. 37.84%, banking (8%), and female running own business like boutiques and parlour. The maximum no. of male respondents i.e. 15.4% are engaged in their own business followed by banking

profession (30.7%), and subsequently followed by teaching (15.4%) and others.

Table 2.1: Availability of Supporting Devices and Network for Online Learning

Devices	% of Respondents
Smart Phones	40
Laptops	14
Personal Computers (PCs)	6
Networks	
Mobile data	60
WIFI	40

Source: Compiled from questionnaire data

It has been observed from the table 2.1 that maximum no. of parents interviewed have provided smart phones to their children for online classes and rest have provided laptop (14%) and personal computer (6%). A few parents i.e 16% of the sample have to purchase new smart phone for online classes and hence, created additional burden on their pockets during pandemic situation. 60% parents have given the facility of mobile network to their wards for attending online classes and rest 40% are using WIFI facility for this purpose.

- All the respondents are of the view point that for learning purpose, only school can provide conducive environment as homely environment make the kids lazy despite their best efforts.
- 40% parents supervise their children when online classes are going on.
- So far as arrangements of supplies & materials are concerned, it has been analyzed that parents role is very minimal. They are of view point that kids are mature enough to arrange their stationary items.
- 68% respondents have to remember the time table of the children and give them reminder to follow that.
- 24% respondents assist their children in performing extra activities like art & craft or other projects assigned by teachers online. This shows that parents are not keen interested in extra activities assigned to children beyond their regular online study.
- 36% respondents devote extra time in evening or late afternoon to help the children for revising the concepts done in morning online classes.
- One of the interesting findings of the survey is regarding effect of online classes' time table on domestic activities of mothers. 81.25% mothers agree that online classes have disturbed their routine tasks like skipping of breakfast hours, and sometimes lunch hours, etc. Moreover, for working mothers, it has been difficult at all to manage their working schedule along with their kids classes.
- 48.6% respondents (mother), engage in teaching profession find it difficult to manage their online classes due to clash in time-table.
- A few parents i.e. 14% of the sample surveys are of the view point that recorded lectures should be delivered so that they can manage, or take up the problems of the children as and when desired.
- 48% parents help their children to create his study schedule and work upon it on regular basis.
- 30% respondents are of the view point that online learning provides more flexibility to their children in planning their work schedule as compared to offline

mode.

- 72% parents pay attention to child's progress regularly i.e. attend PTM and keep an eye on score card of children.
- So far as checking of notebooks of the children is concerned, 12% of the sample respondents have not been paying attention at all for checking the notebooks of their wards, 30% go through this practice once in every week. 50% respondents check the homework copies of their children on monthly basis and a very few i.e. 8% of the sample, do this practice daily.
- Majority of the parents i.e. 70% of the sample are equipped with sufficient digital skills to handle the technical problems related to online classes like operational issues of an app, login id, password, etc. 18% respondents carry moderate skills handle the digital issues. 12% respondents are not capable enough to support their children due to insufficient digital skills.
- Besides this, network issue, disturbance by other students in the online classes, carelessness, inactive behaviour, mobile addiction, lack of discipline among the students were another problems pointed out by the parents in this online learning process.

Conclusion
On the whole, it can be concluded that virtual classrooms have no doubt made addition in the parents' responsibilities but for the betterment of their children, this mode was considered to be sole option in the present critical situation. As we recognized that parental emotional support act as main driver for developing attitudes among kids. This COVID-19 pandemic, no doubt has intensified the need digital learning among children on one hand but on the other side, parents support and involvement in this home schooling phase could significantly help the children to cope up with the challenges and issues posed by online mode of learning. Obviously, there are certain hindrances faced by parents like lack of digital skills, difficulty in combining the job responsibilities with children home schooling, etc, but their positive attitude and encouragement to children in this environment can help to boost the morale of children.

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