

# Parental engagement challenges during Covid-19 pandemic

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## Parenting in the time of COVID-19

During the COVID-19, physical distancing placed huge pressures on teachers. Parents and students had to adjust to a modern learning climate online, which is increasingly reliant on parents for home learning. When the pandemic spread, it changed the role of many, including parents. The parents' roles are not only parenting any longer, but educators, mentors, safety and comfort providers while being with children at home.

Parent intervention is often viewed as important when any problem related to students occurs, whether this is COVID-19 or when a child gets into difficulties at school or fails an exam. Parental involvement covers a set of behavioural practices, including direct interactions with others, beneficial reinforcement amongst parents, a sense of protection provided to families, decision-making and guidance in the family setting (Sheridan et al., 2011). Parental participation in schools is linked to the success rate of children with academic and social skills (Kohl et al., 2000).

School is a second home for children, a place where they feel safe, happy, meaningful, and cherished. Students are free to interact with their peers, teachers, and everyone else in the school group at school. However, during the current pandemic, children can only dream of playing with their friends and learning new things at school. Children become fussy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some researches confirm that doing all children's regular activities at home solely causes boredom and leads them to be fussy. This indicates that parents must be prepared to deal with their children who need more care and preparation (Sari et al., 2020).



## Stress of Work/life balance

It is no surprise that parents' physical and mental health is suffering due to a lack of time for self-care and a sense of uncertainty about their health and finances. According to a new survey in the US, more than seven out of ten parents are concerned about their children's online education (APA, 2020). For parents, working as a substitute teacher is a big diversion during working hours, resulting in parents working later to make up for a missed time during the day. More time spent assisting their children with schoolwork means less time for household chores. This leads to a weak work-life balance, compounded by the fact that many parents struggle to establish a regular schedule for their families (Polizzi et al., 2020).

As the global outbreak of COVID-19 was so abrupt and unexpected, parents were not prepared for this change. This caused them to struggle to balance their job, home, and educational obligations. To make the matter worse, their workplace was also unprepared. Parents were trying to operate remotely or were incapable of working while looking after children and assisting them with their schooling, with little idea of how long the lockdowns would last. This unpredictable and challenging condition can heighten the stress and anxiety level and cause poor time management and planning. In their study, Garbe et al. (2020) found out that parents during COVID-19 time faced losing balance between work and parenting which caused them to feel overwhelmed.

## Socio-emotional concerns

Recent research shows that COVID-19 has negatively impacted children's health, more particularly their socio-emotional health (Golberstein et al., 2020). Schools have been serving as a mental health environment for children and developed their socio-emotional health, but the online learning prevents maintaining the social environment for the children in schools.

Researches identified socio-emotional development as being essential for academic success. A recent study showed parents stated their concerns about their child's social and emotional development because of their lack of contact with others (Garbe et al., 2020). In addition, parents of active children found it challenging to make sure they studied productively and happily at home.

Keeping a child in a house and not having the opportunity to interact with the outside environment could harm the child's growth regarding his physical and social activities (Buhheji et al., 2020).

## Technology and Internet access

The internet is now being used as a means of instruction in educational institutions more than ever. Students of all classes are not receiving similar benefits. While urban students have access to sufficient internet speeds, rural students lag behind. Again, there is a divide between rich and poor students due to the high cost of internet and a shortage of smartphones depending on the socioeconomic situation.

Internet access and the availability of computers or smartphones are critical requirements for remote learning, and the lack of dependable networks and devices exacerbated parents' difficulties with remote learning. The disparity in access to high-speed internet between rural and urban areas and socioeconomic groups has been widely known (Flack et al., 2020; Ali & Hassan, 2020). These disparities still existed and affected learning in traditional school settings, but they were exacerbated during the pandemic when all learning occurred at home (Walters, 2020).

The accessibility to technology and the internet as an influential factor have influenced parents' role and satisfaction with the quality of distance/online education during the pandemic.

## Recommendations

✓ Invest time in stress-reduction methods. Stress management is important not only for students, but also for educators, school leaders, and family members. Self-care and promoting one's own positive well-being are critical as educators model such habits for their students.

✓ Educators should differentiate between their family practices; some face significant problems, while others report no difficulties. This approach is similar to student differentiation, which has been shown to increase student performance (Beck & Beasley, 2021).

✓ The needs of the most vulnerable children should be considered in reopening strategies, and adequate health measures should be given for students with special needs, especially in rural areas. Conducting evaluations to estimate learning needs and plan remedial or accelerated learning programs is critical during the reopening process (De Giusti, 2020).

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