Pathways for Healthy Digital Engagement

Perspectives of
Children and Adult Stakeholders
from Karnataka, India

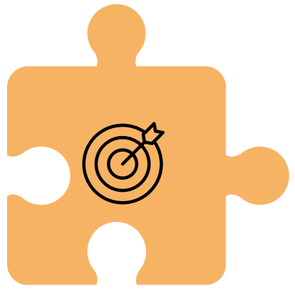
The Journey and the Ethos

A **child-centric approach** informed every leg of the journey

- The literature review
- The selection of research assistants
- The research methodology
- The analysis
- The conclusions and recommendations
- Our gaze wherein the study was seen as a puzzle

Putting the 12-Piece Puzzle Together

Aims and Objectives



1. To understand the why, the how of adolescents' digital engagement and what they feel about it
2. To review its impact on their sense of self and well-being and its role in their lives
3. To delve into the nature of parental monitoring mechanisms
4. To gauge parents' and teachers' awareness levels regarding laws, policies and redressal mechanisms surrounding cyber safety
5. To explore synergies between adolescents, their parents and teachers
6. To put forth recommendations for promoting healthy and safe digital engagement

Research Methodology

Study participants

156 adolescents (10 to 16/17 years)

57 parents and

17 teachers

Eight schools and centres

Urban and rural

Government and private

CBSE and international

Centre for children with diverse learning needs

Data collection approach and tools

Qualitative and quantitative

Adolescents:

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

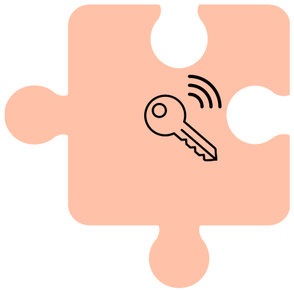
Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Interviews

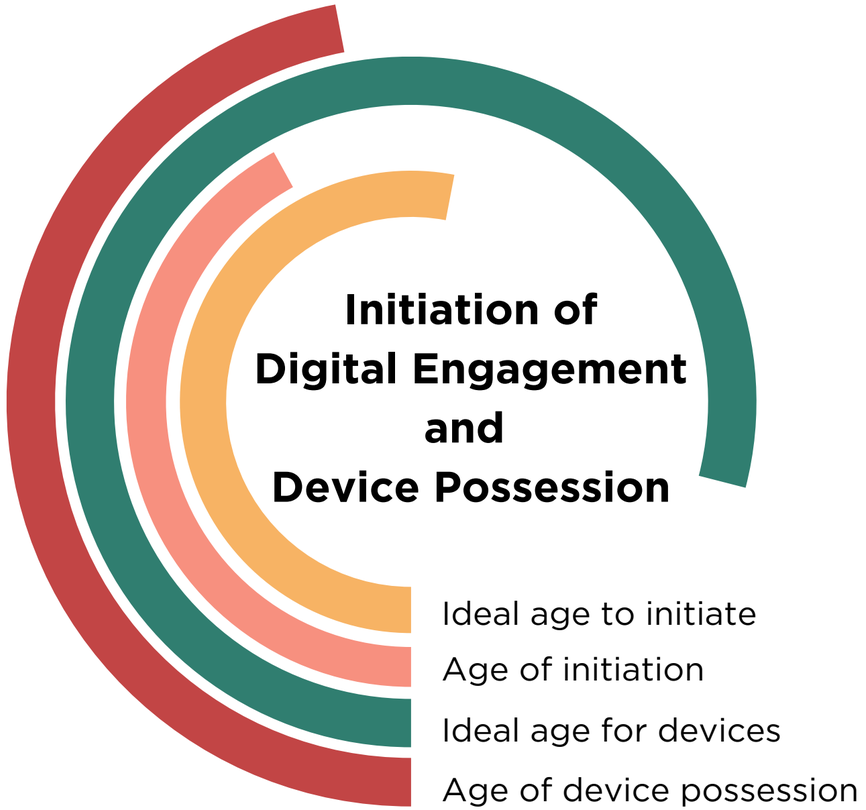
Parents: Survey (response categories were created based on adolescents' responses)

Teachers: Interviews

A Portal to the Digital World:
Age of Digital Engagement and Device Possession



Parents have the right ideas



53%

15 years and above to be the ideal age to initiate digital engagement, only two parents followed through with this

42%

reported that their children initiated online engagement between the ages of 12 and 14

79%

believed 16 years and above to be the ideal age for device possession

47%

had given their children a device before the age of 16

Early digital engagement and device possession were predominantly observed in the urban international school

Nature of Digital Engagement

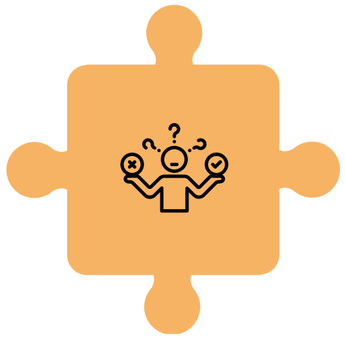
Reasons for going online

- education
- skill development
- exploring interests and opportunities
- communication
- entertainment
- socialising
- relaxing
- preventing the fear of missing out (FOMO)

Common online spaces

- YouTube
- over-the-top (OTT) platforms
- social media
- educational websites
- games and gaming platforms
  - adolescents mentioned 98; parents listed only about 10

Positive Impact of Digital Engagement



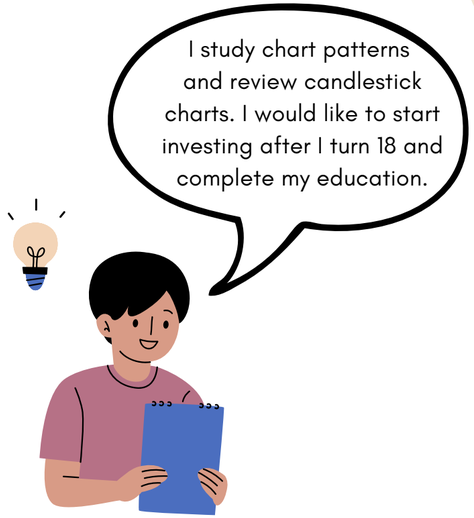
- access to information
- information on future opportunities
- fulfils curiosity

hobby and skill development

Boy, Class 6,
English medium urban government school

Boy, Class 6,
urban private school

validation



Boy with diverse needs,
aged 16

Girl, Class 6,
rural government school

access to spaces

Boy with diverse needs,
aged 14

Negative Impact of Digital Engagement

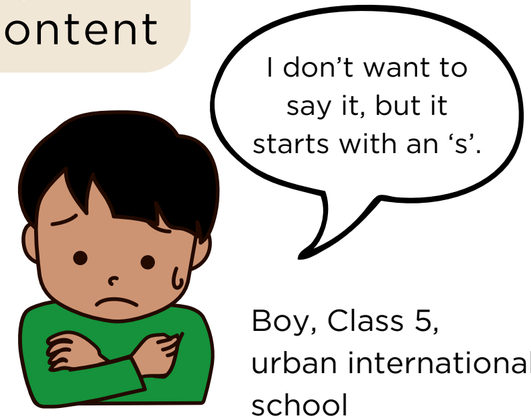
strain on relationships

Girl, Class 8, urban international school

physical impacts

Boy with diverse needs, aged 14

exposure to inappropriate content



Boy, Class 5, urban international school

- body image issues
- violation of privacy
- cyberbullying and hacking
- losing money through gaming
- intimate relationships with adults
- loss of focus on academics
- feeling trapped and addicted

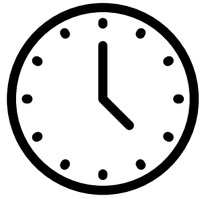
The Adults' Perspective

- Parents had a better understanding of the positive impacts
- Teachers were more aware of the negative aspects
- Parents and teachers were most aware of adolescents' online educational engagement - this component is a priority to them 🚩
- Parents were largely unaware of troubling online adolescent experiences and engagements 🚩

Teacher, Class 5,
urban international school

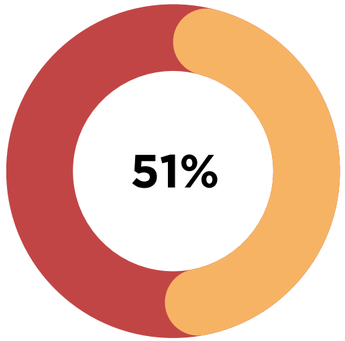
Time Spent Online

- Highest in urban international and urban private schools

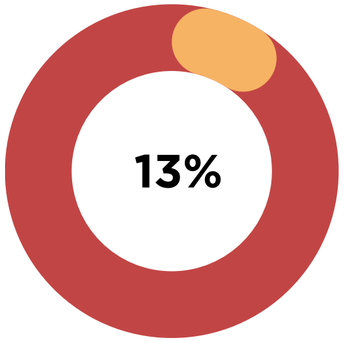


3 to 8 hours (weekdays)
9 to 15 hours (weekends)

- Least in government schools - lack of access to devices or due to workload
- Online time increases with age
- Parents were not fully aware



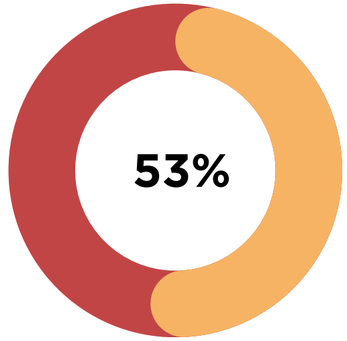
believed children spent under an hour online



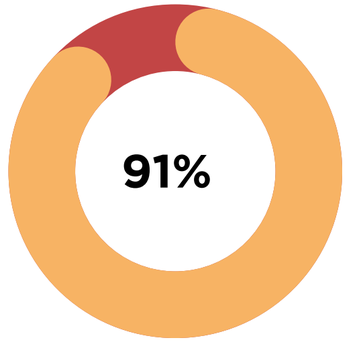
felt that children spent 1 to 2 hours online

Parental Monitoring Approaches

- time controls
- threats of violence
- actual violence
- third party applications
- checking search history
- watching the child



felt that children responded positively to their monitoring approaches



felt they could be role models for their children

Adolescents' Responses to Monitoring

I feel very bad because my parents keep scolding me. There are times when I am genuinely studying, but my parents shout at me because they are not aware of what I am doing on my phone.

Boy, Class 6,
English medium urban
government school

disappointment

My mother has out a password on the device, but I know the parentlock password, so I can access the device whenever I want. I also know how to increase the time, and my mother is not aware of this.

Girl, Class 5,
urban international
school

circumvention/guilt

discontentment

To be straight, I do not like how my parents behave when they are online. Therefore, they have no business looking at me as if I am in the wrong when I am online.

Boy, Class 5,
urban international
school

disregard

I hide in the kitchen and play games on the phone.

Boy with diverse
needs, aged 11

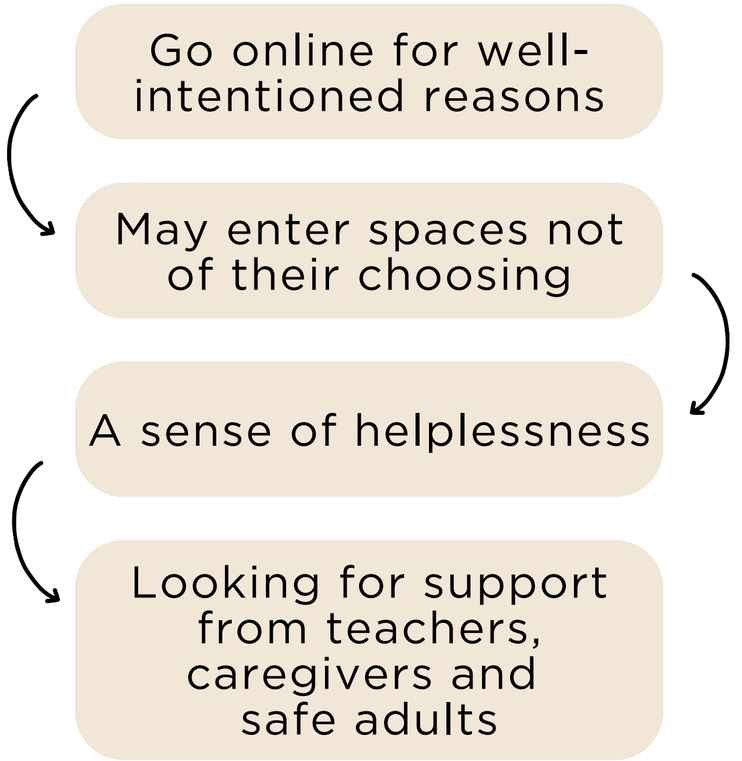
occasional appreciation

We are children, so being online has a different impact on us compared to our parents because our brains are developing. Adult brains are developed, so it does not affect them in the same way.

Boy, Class 6,
urban private school

Adolescents' Stance and Feelings About Digital Engagement

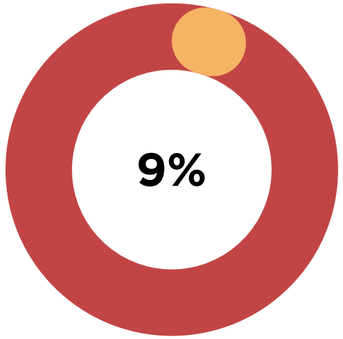
Highly aware of the role the digital world plays in their lives



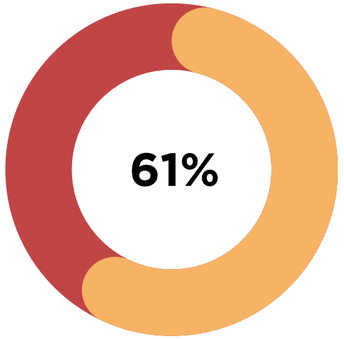
Case Vignettes: Expresses the Gamut of Digital Engagement

- ‘She is 14 and Runs an Online Business’
- ‘I Can Control My Digital Engagement’
- ‘Navigating the World of Minecraft and YouTube as a Rising Influencer’
- ‘Digital Engagement for Income Generation and Educational Growth’
- ‘Opening a Window to Online Trading and E-Commerce’
- ‘Manoeuvring the Digital Abyss’
- ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of the Online World’

Adult Awareness of Laws, Policies and Redressal Mechanisms



of the parents and **none of the teachers** had an understanding of the laws, policies and redressal mechanisms around cyber safety that are applicable to adolescents

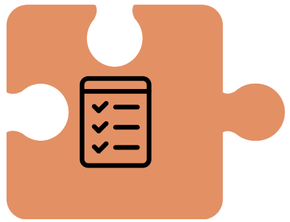


of the parents stated that their children were on social media. This includes adolescents below the age of 13, who are legally prohibited from accessing such platforms.

Search for Synergies

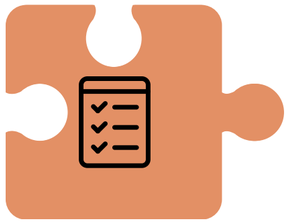
S. No	Domain	Theme	Sub-Theme	Children, Parents and Teachers	Children and Parents	Children and Teachers	Children	Parents	Teachers	Parents and Teachers
			Instigates violence							
5	Monitoring Mechanisms and their Efficacy	Monitoring Mechanisms	Time controls							
			Use of third-party applications and controls							
			Use of violence and threats							
			Checking search history							
			Watching the child							
			Not recharging the phone							
			Incentives							
		Efficacy of Monitoring Approaches	-							

Conclusions



- The **adolescents** had the most detailed understanding of their digital engagement
- Parents and teachers had a lesser understanding
- Being a parent and a teacher in today's world is challenging
- Multiple areas of poor synergies between adolescents, parents and teachers
- Boys' digital engagement is less healthy
- Boys have greater online access
- Early digital engagement in urban international and urban private schools
- Comparatively healthy digital engagement in government schools

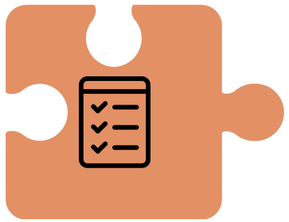
Handling Today's Challenges:
Enabling Synergies



What Can Parents Do?

- Maintain open communication
- Guide digital engagement from a young age
- Guide children towards self-regulation
- Enable children to develop a sense of self that is not determined or dictated by the online world
- Collaborate with children - identify suitable offline activities and participate in them
- Act as role models

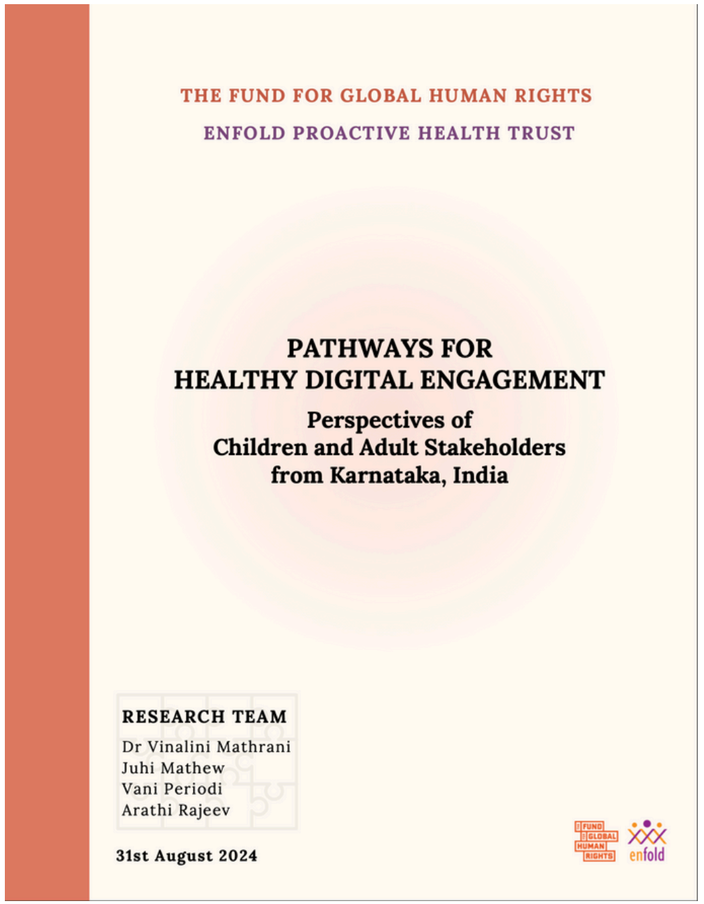
Handling Today's Challenges:
Enabling Synergies



Team up Parents and Teachers

- Secure a measure of digital literacy
- Focus on mentoring (not monitoring)
- Support children with diverse needs
- Holistic education on online safety
- Learn to recognise signs of digital dependency and related mental health issues

Thank You!



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