

Raising Cyber-Smart Children in the Digital Age

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Abstract: *Children are the future of every nation, and shaping them responsibly in the digital age has become a global concern. On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, Australia became the first country to ban children under the age of 16 from accessing social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube without parental controls. This bold initiative aims to protect children from harmful online content and growing cyber threats and is likely to influence policy decisions worldwide. We are currently witnessing the emergence of technologically immersed generations. Children born between 2013 and 2024 belong to Generation Alpha, while those born after 2025 are categorized as Generation Beta. These generations are digital natives who grow up surrounded by smart devices, artificial intelligence, and internet-based platforms. The paper explores on various significant aspects related to Role of parents and Educators in raising Cyber Smart Kids, the paper also explores on impact of digital addiction on children.*

Keywords: Cyber Smart Kids, digital addiction, Generation Alpha, Generation Beta

1. Introduction

Australia on Wednesday (December 10, 2025) became the first country in the world to ban children under 16 from accessing social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube without parental controls. This indeed is a bold step to protect children from the harmful content. This decision of Australia will for sure make other country think about it.

Children are the future of every country. It is important that we shape them in the right manner. This is the era where we are dealing with different kind of generation. Children born between 2013 to 2024 are called Alpha Generation and children who are born after 2025 are Beta Generation. These generations are born with technology.

1.1 Is technology a boon or a bane?

Technology is both a boon and a bane.

Technology is a **boon** when used **wisely**, as it makes learning interactive, improves communication, provides easy access to information, and supports skill development. For today's Alpha and Beta generations, technology enhances creativity, problem-solving, and global connectivity.

However, technology becomes a **bane** when it is **misused**. Excessive screen time, social media addiction, cyberbully, and exposure to harmful content can negatively affect children's mental health, social relationships and behaviour.

Therefore, technology itself is neither good nor bad; its impact depends on how responsibly we use it. With proper guidance from parents, teachers, and policy support, technology can be a powerful tool for positive growth and development of the society and the individual.

1.2 Concept of Raising Cyber Smart Kids

The concept of raising cyber smart kids refers to **preparing children to use digital technology and the internet safely, ethically, responsibly, and intelligently**. In today's digital age, children are exposed to online platforms such as social

media at a very early stage. Being cyber smart means that children are not only technically skilled but also are aware of online risks, digital rights and responsibilities.

Raising cyber smart kids involves teaching them about cyber safety, digital etiquette, privacy protection, and responsible online behaviour. **It helps children recognize threats such as cyberbullying, online scams, inappropriate content, and misuse of personal information.** Parents and teachers play a crucial role by guiding children, setting healthy screen-time limits, and encouraging open communication about their online activities.

This concept also emphasizes developing critical thinking, self-control, empathy, and ethical values while using technology. In alignment with NEP 2020, raising cyber smart kids supports holistic development by integrating digital literacy with moral education, life skills, and responsible citizenship, ensuring that children grow into confident, aware, and responsible digital citizens.

1.3 Cases where children were

The global cyber security forum GCF has found that 72% of children around the world have experienced at least one type of cyber threat online. The report survey over 40,000 parents and children across 24 countries its regions with results overwhelmingly showing that it requires urgent collectively action. The survey revealed that unwanted ads, inappropriate images and content, and bullying and harassment are the main threats experienced.

Case 1. Teen's death shocks Delhi

As per news published in Times of India -On Tuesday, 14 October 2025, a 14-year-old boy was found hanging from a ceiling fan at his residence in the Tri Nagar area of North-West Delhi. Police are investigating the circumstances of the incident. It was found during investigation that he wanted to make a reel out of this.

Case 2. Anxiety in kids linked to smartphone overuse: Ghaziabad

As per news published in Times of India - On Tuesday, 8

July 2025, The health department in Ghaziabad issued an advisory on mobile phone addiction, stating that it has been noticed that children are experiencing behavioural problems due to overuse of mobile phone.

Case 3 Facebook friend rapes 13-year-old after luring her from Tirupur to Chennai

A case from Tirupur highlights the risks of online grooming, where a 13-year-old girl was lured via social media and subsequently sexually abused after being taken to Chennai and Puducherry. The incident was reported after the minor returned home and disclosed the abuse, leading to police investigation. The accused were arrested and charged under the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, underscoring the need for digital safety interventions for adolescents.

1.4 Role of Parents/ Guardian

- 1) **Monitoring screen time and online activities:** Parents should regularly supervise the amount of time children spend on digital devices and the type of content they access. It helps to prevent excessive screen time, addiction, and exposure to inappropriate or harmful material. Balanced screen use supports children's physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- 2) **Using parental control tools:** Parental control tools help parents filter inappropriate content, restrict access to unsafe websites, and set age-appropriate limits on apps and games. These tools create a safer digital environment and ensure that children use technology responsibly.
- 3) **Encouraging open communication about online experiences:** Parents should maintain open and trust-based communication so children feel comfortable sharing their online experiences. This helps children to report cyberbullying, online threats, or uncomfortable situations without fear.
- 4) **Educating children about safe and unsafe online practices:** Children must be taught about privacy protection, safe passwords, avoiding strangers online, and recognizing cyber risks. Awareness enables children to make informed decisions while using the internet.
- 5) **Acting as role models for responsible technology use:** Parents influence children by example. Responsible use of technology by parents encourages healthy digital habits, ethical online behaviour, and balanced use of technology in daily life.

1.5 Role of Teachers and Educational Institutions

- 1) **Integrate cyber safety education into the curriculum:** Educational Institutions include cyber safety topics within subjects and activities, aligning learning with real-life digital challenges.
- 2) **Conduct awareness programs and workshops:** Education institutions can organize seminars, campaigns, and training sessions for students along with parents and teachers on cyber safety and digital well-being.
- 3) **Promote digital ethics and responsible online behavior:** Educational institutions should teach the students to use the internet and the online platforms with honesty, respect, and responsibility. This help students to

develop good digital values and become responsible digital citizens.

- 4) **Collaborate with parents to ensure consistent guidance:** Schools works closely with parents to ensure consistent guidance, monitoring, and support for children's online behaviour.
- 5) **Creating a safe and supportive environment:** Teachers should encourage the students to report online harassment or cyber bullying. And should also provide them emotional support so that they can feel free to share it.

1.6 Impact of Digital Addiction on Children

- 1) **Excessive use of social media and online games:** Excessive screen time leads children to spend more hours on mobile phones, video games, and social media platforms. This reduces time for physical activities, reading, and social interaction, affecting overall development.
- 2) **Effects on mental health, behavior, and academic performance:** Digital addiction may cause anxiety, stress, irritability, poor concentration, and sleep problems. It often results in declining academic performance and reduced interest in studies and also cause mental health.
- 3) **Signs of digital addiction among primary school children:** Common signs include mood swings, anger when devices are taken away, lack of interest in outdoor play, poor attention span, and dependency on screens for entertainment.
- 4) **Reduced family interaction and communication:** Children's excessive use of digital devices reduces face-to-face interaction with their families. Children may talk less with their parents and siblings, which can weaken emotional bonding and communication.
- 5) **Physical health issues like eye strain and poor posture:** Long hours of screen use can cause eye strain, headaches, neck pain, and poor posture. Continuous use of devices may cause to physical health and overall comfort.

1.7 Legal and Ethical Aspects of Child Cyber Safety

1.7.1 Overview of cyber laws related to children:

Cyber laws for children focuses on data privacy such as **POCSO Act, 2012** (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences), **DPDP Act, 2013** (Digital Personal Data Protection), **IPC, 1860** (Indian Panel Code). The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (cybercrime.gov.in) is used for reporting crimes against woman and children. These laws ensure punishment for offenders and protection for victims.

1.7.2 Ethical issues in digital usage:

Ethical issues in child cyber safety includess protection from risks such as cyberbullying, grooming, inappropriate content, privacy invasion, and data exploitation. Ethical digital usage encourages honesty, respect and responsible communication in online interaction of children. They must understand about right and wrong online platforms.

1.7.3 Role of institutions in ensuring compliance:

Educational Institutions plays a crucial role by implementing cyber safety policies, conducting awareness programs, and monitoring digital activities. Schools and colleges must comply with legal guidelines and promote ethical digital practices among students.

1.7.4 Importance of awareness about reporting cyber crimes:

Children, parents, and teachers should know how to report cyber crimes through cybercrimes portal like cybercrime.gov.in or cyber crime helplines numbers. Timely reporting helps to prevent further harm and ensures legal action against offenders.

2. Recommendations and Best Practices for Raising Cyber-Smart Children

- 1) **Encourage collaboration between parents, teachers, and policymakers:** A coordinated approach can lead to proper guidance, monitoring, and support for children's for online activities.
- 2) **Include cyber safety in teacher education programs:** Equipping teachers with knowledge and strategies to educate children about digital risks is very important.
- 3) **Promote early digital literacy and resilience building:** It is important to teach children to navigate digital challenges safely.
- 4) **Foster a safe and supportive digital environment:** Encourage open communication, reporting of online threats, and positive reinforcement of responsible online behavior.

3. Conclusion

In today's digital world, children are exposed to technology from an early age. Therefore, raising the cyber smart kids has become a shared responsibility of parents, teachers, institutions and the society. It is very necessary to guide them about safe, ethical, and responsible use of digital devices. Cyber smart children are not only aware of online risks such as cyberbullying, privacy threats, and digital exploitation but they are also equipped with the skills to use technology positively, safely and ethically.

Ultimately, raising cyber-smart kids is about empowering children with knowledge, resilience, and critical thinking so they can navigate the digital world safely and responsibly. By providing early digital education and guiding about digital ethics, we can prepare children to become responsible digital citizens and ensure a safer and more inclusive digital future.

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