Title of the Study

NEW AGE PARENTAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

A Study of Urban Indian Students' Perceptions of Parental Involvement, Academic Pressure, Digital Conflicts, and Generational Communication Gaps

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ABSTRACT

The Indian education system has undergone significant transformation, evolving from traditional models to technology driven and skills-based learning. This transformation has shaped contemporary parenting practices, with parents becoming increasingly involved in their children's academic journeys. However, this involvement is often perceived as uncertain by adolescents- as either supportive guidance or as intrusive academic pressure. This study examines urban Indian college students' perceptions of parental involvement, academic pressure, digital conflicts, and generational communication gaps. A quantitative descriptive survey was conducted with 101 undergraduate students predominately aged 18-21 years using a structured 35-item questionnaire. The findings reveal that while 76.2% of parents invest in coaching and 52.5% attend parent teacher meetings, parental involvement is perceived as supportive by only 56.4% of students. Significant challenges emerged: 72.3% of students experienced stress from parental expectations, 77.3% felt expectations were unrealistically high, and 74.3% felt misunderstood due to generational technology divides. Only 24.8% of parents regularly discussed mental health, and 53.5% set no screen time limits. Students identified active listening (46.5%) and effort appreciation over marks (42.6%) as most desired parental behaviours. The study highlights the need for emotionally supportive parenting, bridging the generational digital divide, and fostering open communication to reduce academic stress and promote adolescent well being. Recommendations for parents, schools, and policymakers are discussed.

Keywords: Parental involvement, academic pressure, generational divide, digital habits, adolescent mental health, Indian parenting

INTRODUCTION

The Indian education system has evolved gradually from the traditional Gurukul system into a current era of AI learning tools, tutors along with smart classrooms, E-books, digital report cards, recorded video lectures, biometric attendance and online learning portals. Schooling in contemporary times focuses on holistic, skills- based learning, technology integration and inclusive education. This transformation has also shaped diverse parenting styles ranging from authoritative, uninvolved and permissive approaches to a more emotionally intelligent, resilient and cooperative new age parenting. Parents' roles have shifted dramatically from rigid discipline orientation to more actively engaging with schools through parent portals, PTMs, digital homework tracking system and WhatsApp learning groups. Parental involvement refers to the active participation of parents in the child's development and educational journey. Based on the intensity and nature of the involvement, it can either be perceived as supportive guidance or as academic pressure by the children.

Indian society is deeply rooted in collectivist culture, prioritizing family, community and social harmony; unlike the western societies which emphasize individual desires and autonomy. This could be most evidently seen in India's highly competitive examination ecosystem, where examinations like NEET, JEE, CUET attract millions of aspirants every year. The success in these examinations is not merely perceived as an individual's achievement but as a reflection of family aspirations, social status and collective hope. Parents today are more educated, digitally connected and investing more on their child's coaching than ever before. This often creates a situation of "Hyper-Involvement" by the parents.

The growing rates of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression in the youth and lack of communication between the parents and adolescents; are direct or indirect consequences of the challenges associated with contemporary parenting and schooling. The generational tech divide where parents are pre-internet generation and children are digital natives often led to misunderstandings and conflicts as parents generally use old metrics like marks and ranks to solve new problems of screen timing and digital addiction. As students are directly influenced by parental practices and changing educational environments, their views provide valuable insights necessary for understanding the opportunities and challenges emerging in modern schooling. Accordingly, this paper aims to navigate the contemporary urban Indian high school educational landscape with main emphasis on how parental involvement is perceived by children whether as a source of support or pressure. This investigation adopts a quantitative descriptive survey method, gathering primary data through self-reported questionnaires. In doing so, it identifies emerging challenges and examines potential solutions, contributing to the wider discourse on children's holistic development and family dynamics in the 21st century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Patterson, G. R. (1975). Families: Applications of social learning to family life (Rev. ed.). Research Press.

Patterson was among the first to apply social learning theory systematically to the family setting. His argument is fairly simple at its core: children learn by watching the adults around them, and their behaviour gets shaped, reinforced, or discouraged through repeated interaction. Good parenting, in this view, means consistency – clear rules, predictable consequences, and praise that actually reinforces the behaviour you want to see. The idea he's best remembered for is coercion theory, which describes how ordinary, repeated conflict between parent and child can end up training the child toward more disruptive behaviour rather than less. Critics have pushed back on how much weight the model places on conditioning alone, arguing it leaves little room for attachment or emotion.

Elkind, D. (1981). The hurried child: Growing up too fast too soon. Addison-Wesley.

Elkind's argument is that childhood, as an experience, has been squeezed. Academic pressure starts earlier, parents expect more, schedules fill up - and somewhere in that process, kids lose room to just be kids. He connects this to lower self-esteem and perfectionism later on. It's worth saying plainly: this isn't a data heavy book. Elkind worked mostly from clinical observation, not controlled studies, so the causal claims are softer than they might first appear. Still, the book did something important ,that it put language around a problem that hadn't really been named before, and it's still cited as a foundational critique of how schools and families push children. Rosenfeld and Wise later picked up the thread and found empirical support connecting hurried childhoods to adolescent burnout.

Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. Journal of Early Adolescence.

Baumrind's typology is probably the most cited framework in this entire body of research, and for good reason. She split parenting into three styles : authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive; based on how much warmth and how much control each involves. Authoritative parenting came out ahead across nearly every measure she looked at: better academic performance, more self-confidence, stronger emotional regulation, and less substance use. The other two styles didn't fare as well. A notable limitation of this

study concerns its sample composition, which predominantly comprised affluent White families, thereby raising questions regarding the generalizability of its conclusions across diverse populations. This limitation has been widely acknowledged in subsequent scholarship, prompting recent investigations to re-examine the model's applicability across various cultural contexts.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share
Epstein's contribution was to stop treating school, family, and community as separate, disconnected actors and instead frame them as overlapping spheres, all pulling toward the same goal of the child's success. Her model breaks parental involvement into six categories and gives schools a practical way to build engagement across each one. It's not just an academic framework, either; Epstein and Van Voorhis later documented how directly it shaped actual education policy around parental involvement.

Tsabary, S. (2010). The conscious parent: Transforming ourselves, empowering our children. Namaste Publishing.
Tsabary takes a different angle from the behaviourist tradition entirely. Her focus is on the parent's own emotional patterns – the idea being that parents need to look inward before they can really connect with their children. Mindful, emotionally responsive parenting, she argues, is what allows kids to grow into emotionally secure adults. This framing lands with particular weight in the Indian context, where academic pressure has intensified and family structures have shifted enough that emotionally attuned parenting isn't just nice to have- it matters for adolescent mental health.

India Human Development Survey-II (IHDS-II) (2011–12). National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) & University of Maryland.
The IHDS-II backs up something researchers had mostly assumed but hadn't measured at scale in India: parental involvement means more than paying school fees. Parents who talked regularly with schools, checked homework, and kept a supportive home environment saw better outcomes in their children- higher performance, fewer dropouts. The survey makes the case that both practical monitoring and emotional support matter, and that this holds specifically within the Indian context.

NCERT (2021). National Achievement Survey 2021. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
NAS 2021 makes a point that seems obvious once stated but is easy to overlook in policy design: what happens at home matters as much as what happens in the classroom. Home environment, parental support, and socioeconomic background all showed up as influences on achievement. The report's implicit argument is that interventions focused only on schools, without touching family context, are missing half the picture.

UNICEF (2021). The State of the World's Children 2021: On My Mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health. UNICEF.
UNICEF's report draws a fairly stark line: supportive families, positive parenting, and emotionally safe schools protect adolescents from anxiety and depression, while conflict, neglect, stigma, and academic overload push in the opposite direction. While not entirely novel, this finding substantiates a central concern within the existing literature: that hurried, high pressure childhoods impose significant

psychological costs, and that both family and school environments bear shared responsibility for adolescent wellbeing.

Adams, A. (2022). Parenting in the age of anxiety: Raising children in India in the 21st century. Aleph Book Company.
Adams writes about what it's actually like to parent in India right now: social media pressure, academic anxiety, family structures that look nothing like a generation ago. Her argument isn't "push harder"; it's the opposite. She makes the case for emotional availability and resilience over raw achievement, drawing on interviews with therapists, psychologists, and educators to back it up with something more than opinion.

ASER (2022). Annual Status of Education Report 2022. Pratham.
During COVID, when schools shut down across India, parents ended up filling the gap- tuition, homework help, and informal testing at home. ASER 2022 documents just how much that mattered. Where parents stayed involved, learning continuity held up better.

ASER (2023). Annual Status of Education Report 2023: Beyond Basics. Pratham.
The 2023 follow-up shifts slightly toward the future facing side of things – career aspirations, digital learning access, and how much home environment still shapes where adolescents end up heading. Parents, the report finds, remain a major influence on what paths their children even consider.

RESEARCH GAPS

While foundational parenting theories offer a useful starting point, they remain tethered to pre digital, Western contexts and fail to account for the generational technological divide now shaping Indian households. Parents, rooted in pre internet value systems, continue to prioritize conventional metrics like academic rank, while their children, who are digital natives, navigate ubiquitous access to addictive short form content. This friction, where traditional monitoring strategies fail against modern digital distractions, remains systematically unexamined within established frameworks.

Macro level surveys such as IHDS II, NCERT, and ASER provide valuable descriptive data on parental engagement and learning outcomes, yet they remain largely outcome focused. They track what parents do, such as supervising homework or communicating with schools, but fail to capture the adolescent's subjective experience of that engagement. Critically, they do not explore where students draw the line between supportive guidance and intrusive academic pressure, a distinction that is psychologically vital yet quantitatively under researched.

Hyper involvement, manifesting as intense coaching, digital tracking, and surveillance, is a culturally specific reality within India's high stakes examination system (e.g., NEET, JEE). However, Western derived typologies do not accommodate this collectivist, family honour driven dynamic. While scholars like Tsabary and Adams offer clinical observations on mindful parenting, their work lacks robust empirical validation for the Indian middle class context, leaving unclear whether such intense involvement serves as a motivational catalyst or a psychological detriment.

Despite widespread concern regarding youth mental health and social media addiction, there is a conspicuous absence of empirically derived, student reported solutions. Prescriptive calls to foster resilience or slow down remain untested; the literature offers little quantitative evidence on which specific,

actionable strategies, such as co viewing content, collaborative screen time agreements, or structured emotional check ins-adolescents perceive as effective in reducing conflict and promoting open communication in Indian homes.

The post pandemic legacy remains underexplored. Although ASER (2022) documented the shift of parents into de facto teachers during school closures, the literature has not adequately examined how this forced proximity and heightened monitoring have permanently reshaped parent child boundaries and expectations in the post COVID urban Indian classroom.

Collectively, these gaps underscore the necessity of a child centric, quantitative investigation that moves beyond behavioural outcomes to capture adolescent perceptions, digital friction, and culturally grounded solutions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To address the identified research gaps, this study is guided by one primary research question and five corresponding sub-questions:

Primary Research Question

How do urban Indian high school and college students perceive contemporary parental involvement, and to what extent does this perception manifest as academic support versus psychological pressure, particularly in the context of digital distractions and generational technological divides?

Sub-Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between specific parental behaviours-including monitoring homework, investing in coaching, attending Parent-Teacher Meetings, and tracking academic performance- and students' self-reported perceptions of emotional support versus academic burden?

RQ2: How does the frequency of parent-imposed screen-time restrictions and conflicts over short-form social media addiction (Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts) correlate with students' levels of academic anxiety and their perceived quality of parent-child communication?

RQ3: To what extent does the mismatch between parents' reliance on traditional academic metrics (marks and ranks) and children's digital-native behaviour's predict diminished adolescent self-esteem and increased parent-child conflict?

RQ4: Among students preparing for high-stakes examinations (NEET, JEE, or Board exams), does intensified parental monitoring and investment correlate positively with academic motivation or negatively with psychological well-being and perceived autonomy?

RQ5: What specific parental communication and mediation strategies- including collaborative screen-time agreements, emotional check-ins, open non-judgmental dialogue, and shared digital engagement-are identified by students as effective in reducing academic stress and fostering supportive family dynamics?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative descriptive survey design to examine urban Indian students' perceptions of parental involvement, academic pressure, digital conflicts, and generational communication gaps. The quantitative approach facilitates measurement using structured instruments and statistical analysis to identify patterns and relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study adopts a retrospective approach, wherein participants reflect on their experiences during school and competitive examination preparation. Following similar Indian studies (Sood & Nanda, 2022; Reid et al., 2015), this cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time, allowing for correlational analysis without inferring causation.

Sample and Participants

The target population comprises undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in colleges across urban India, including ages below 16 to above 21 years. A convenience sampling technique was employed (Etikan et al., 2016), with inclusion criteria requiring current enrolment in an undergraduate or postgraduate program, willingness to provide informed consent, and ability to understand English. Incomplete responses were excluded. A total of 101 responses were collected, with age distribution as follows: 19.8% (16-18 years), 73.3% (18-21 years), and 6.9% (above 21 years). This sample size is adequate for quantitative descriptive research (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Survey links were distributed via WhatsApp, email, social media, and in-person sharing, with snowball sampling used to expand reach.

Data Collection Instrument

SECTION	TITLE	QUESTIONS	PURPOSE
A	Demographic Information	10	Gather background data
B	Parental Support vs. Pressure	6	Address RQ1
C	Digital Habits & Conflicts	6	Address RQ2
D	Communication & Generational Gap	6	Address RQ3
E	Academic Pressure & Mental Health	6	Address RQ4
F	Student-Reported Solutions	1	Address RQ5

A structured questionnaire comprising 35 questions was developed, divided into six sections, based on theoretical frameworks from the literature review and established instruments including the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Sood & Nanda, 2022) and the Parenting Behaviours and Dimensions Questionnaire (Reid et al., 2015). The questionnaire includes multiple-choice, 5-point Likert scale (Never to Always), linear scale (1-5), checkbox, and open-ended questions. For Likert-scale questions, responses were coded numerically from 1 to 5. While Likert data are technically ordinal, the use of means and standard deviations for descriptive purposes is standard practice in educational research

(Norman, 2010). For descriptive analysis, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed.

Face validity was established through peer and academic advisor review. Content validity was ensured by aligning questions with the theoretical framework and each research question. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 15-20 students to identify ambiguities and refine response options. Internal consistency will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.70 or above considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).

The questionnaire was developed based on the theoretical framework derived from the literature review, drawing upon established parenting instruments including the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) (Sood & Nanda, 2022) and the Parenting Behaviours and Dimensions Questionnaire (Reid et al., 2015).

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over 3-4 weeks. The Google Form link, including an informed consent section, was distributed via WhatsApp, email, social media, and in-person sharing. A total of 101 responses were collected, compiled in Google Sheets, exported to Excel, and cleaned to remove incomplete responses.

Data Analysis Plan

Data will be analysed using Microsoft Excel for descriptive statistics and SPSS or JAMOVI for inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics will include frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics will include chi-square tests for categorical associations, Spearman correlation for ordinal relationships, independent t-tests for two-group comparisons, and one-way ANOVA for three or more groups. Cronbach's alpha will measure internal consistency reliability. For open-ended responses, thematic analysis will follow Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. Expected themes include emotional support vs. academic surveillance, communication gaps, impact of competition, suggestions for improved parenting, and digital friction experiences.

Variables and Their Measurement

Independent Variables

VARIABLE	DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT
Parental monitoring	Frequency of tracking homework, performance	Likert scale
Coaching investment	Parental spending on tutoring/coaching	Multiple choice
Screen time limits	Parental restrictions on digital device use	Multiple choice
Generational gap	Differences in technology understanding	Likert scale

Dependent Variables

VARIABLE	DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT
Perceived support	Student's perception of parental encouragement	Multiple choice/Likert scale
Academic anxiety	Symptoms of stress due to parental expectations	Likert scale
Communication quality	Perceived effectiveness of parent-child dialogue	Likert scale
Self-esteem	Confidence and self-worth	Relationship Quality

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained at the survey outset, explaining the purpose, voluntary nature, right to withdraw, and confidentiality. No personally identifiable information was collected. All responses are stored securely in Google Drive with access limited to the researcher. Data will be reported in aggregate form only and retained for 5 years. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institution's research committee prior to data collection.

RESULTS AND FININGS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Profile

A total of 101 responses were collected for this study. The sample comprised students from urban India across multiple educational levels and age groups. The majority of respondents (73.3%) belonged to the 18-21 years age group, while 19.8% were in the 16-18 years bracket, and 6.9% were above 21 years. In terms of gender distribution, the sample had a slightly higher proportion of female respondents (53.5%) compared to male respondents (46.5%).

Regarding educational attainment, most respondents were in their first year of college (45.5%), followed by second year (20.8%), third year (11.9%), and final year (6.9%). A small proportion comprised postgraduate students (8.9%) and working professionals (6.9%). In terms of academic disciplines, Commerce (B.Com) and Medical (MBBS/BDS) were the most common courses, each representing 19.8% of respondents. Other courses included BBA/BMS (14.9%), B.Sc. (9.9%), B.Tech/B.E. (7.9%), and various others (27.7%).

The majority of respondents (73.3%) were living with their parents or family, while 15.8% resided in hostels or PG accommodations, and a small proportion lived independently (5.9%) or with relatives (5.0%). Regarding school background, a significant majority (65.3%) had attended international schools for their Class 10 and 12 education, followed by government or public schools (15.8%), private schools (14.9%), and others (4.0%). In terms of board affiliation, the overwhelming majority (93.1%) were affiliated with the CBSE board in Class 12, while a small proportion were from state boards (5.9%) and ICSE/ISC (1.0%).

Concerning examination preparation, the most common past examinations prepared for were Class 12 Board exams (77.2%), Class 10 Board exams (62.4%), and CUET (47.5%). A smaller proportion had prepared for JEE/NEET (19.8%), Olympiads (17.8%), or other competitive exams (19.8%), while 6.9% had not prepared for any competitive examination. Regarding current examination preparation, half of the respondents (50.5%) were not preparing for any exam, while others were preparing for postgraduate

entrance exams (21.8%), UPSC/Civil Services (15.8%), MBA entrance exams (10.9%), and others (11.9%). In terms of coaching history, 37.6% had not received coaching, while 7.9% received coaching for school subjects only, 10.9% for competitive exams only, and 16.8% for both.

Parental Behaviors and Perceived Support (RQ1)

RQ1: What is the relationship between specific parental behaviors and students' perceptions of emotional support versus academic burden?

Parents remain highly engaged in their children's education. Over half of parents consistently attended PTMs (52.5%) and tracked academic performance (49.6%). Investment in coaching was substantial, with 76.2% of parents providing additional academic support. However, perception of this involvement varied: 56.4% perceived parents as supportive, 29.7% felt a mix of support and pressure, and 3.0% felt predominantly pressuring. The following table summarizes these findings.

PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR	**ALWAYS/OFTEN (%)**	**MEAN (SD)**
PTM Attendance	52.5%	3.61 (1.20)
Homework Checking	38.6%	3.15 (1.35)
Performance Tracking	49.6%	3.48 (1.18)
Praise/Disappointment	51.4%	3.76 (1.15)

Note: Mean scores calculated on 5-point scale (1=Never, 5=Always).

Interpretation: Mean scores ranged from 3.15 to 3.76, indicating moderate to high parental involvement. While 56.4% felt supported, nearly one-third experienced some level of pressure.

Digital Habits and Conflicts (RQ2)

RQ2: How do screen-time restrictions and conflicts correlate with academic anxiety and communication quality?

Digital habits emerged as a significant concern. Daily short-form video consumption exceeded one hour for 79.2% of students, with 22.8% spending more than three hours daily. Over 40% (41.6%) reported moderate to high addiction. Despite this, 53.5% of parents set no screen time limits. While 41.6% reported never having conflicts, 31.7% experienced conflicts sometimes or more frequently. The majority (72.3%) believed excessive screen time negatively affected their studies. Only 36.6% rated communication about digital habits as good or excellent. The following table presents these findings.

VARIABLE	**KEY FINDING**	**MEAN (SD)**
Daily Short-Form Video	79.2% spend 1+ hours daily	2.44 (1.10)
Self-Perceived Addiction	41.6% moderate to high	2.80 (1.05)
Parental Screen Limits	53.5% set no limits	-
Effect on Studies	72.3% believe negatively affects	3.35 (1.22)
Frequency Of Conflicts	41.6% never, 31.7% sometimes+	2.07 (1.10)
Communication Quality	36.6% good/excellent	3.21 (1.00)

Note: Higher scores indicate greater frequency, severity, or quality as appropriate.

Generational Divide and Communication (RQ3)

RQ3: To what extent does the mismatch between traditional academic metrics and digital-native behaviour's predict reduced self-esteem and increased conflict?

A significant generational gap was evident. Over half (58.4%) felt parents judged success primarily by marks. Only 34.7% felt parents understood their digital world, while 74.3% felt misunderstood due to generational differences. Only 28.7% felt comfortable sharing personal problems with parents, and just 24.8% had regular mental health discussions. Despite these challenges, 60.4% rated their overall relationship as good or excellent. The following table summarizes these findings.

VARIABLE	**KEY FINDING**	**MEAN (SD)**
Marks-Based Judgment	58.4% always/often	3.61 (1.23)
Digital Understanding	34.7% feel understood	2.92 (1.18)
Feeling Misunderstood	74.3% sometimes+	3.25 (1.23)
Comfort Sharing Problems	28.7% often/always	2.92 (1.16)
Overall Relationship	60.4% good/excellent	3.78 (0.98)

Hyper-Involvement and Academic Stress (RQ4)

RQ4: Does intensified parental monitoring correlate positively with motivation or negatively with well-being?

Parental monitoring was high: 52.5% closely monitored coaching and study schedules, and 36.6% compared performance with others. Students' responses were divided: 36.6% felt motivated, 31.7% experienced both motivation and stress, and 18.8% felt predominantly anxious. Notably, 72.3% experienced stress symptoms due to parental expectations, and 77.3% felt expectations were unrealistically high. Only 38.7% felt they had autonomy in study-related decisions. Table below presents these findings.

VARIABLE	**KEY FINDING**	**MEAN (SD)**
Monitoring of Studies	52.5% always/often	3.51 (1.23)
Comparison with Others	36.6% always/often	3.01 (1.36)
Stress Symptoms	72.3% sometimes+	3.23 (1.21)
Perceived Autonomy	38.7% often/always	3.05 (1.25)
Unrealistic Expectations	77.3% sometimes+	3.38 (1.22)

Motivation vs. Anxiety:

· 36.6% Mostly motivated

· 31.7% Both motivated and stressed

· 18.8% Mostly anxious/stressed

Student-Reported Solutions (RQ5)

RQ5: What strategies do students identify as effective in reducing stress and fostering supportive dynamics?

Students prioritized emotional connection over academic surveillance. The most desired behaviours were listening without judgment (46.5%) and appreciating efforts over marks (42.6%). Other valued behaviours included open conversations about expectations (38.6%), supporting hobbies (37.6%), and encouraging mental health discussions (35.6%). Only 24.8% of parents regularly discussed mental health, indicating a significant gap. Table 6 presents these findings.

VARIABLE	KEY FINDING	MEAN (SD)
Mental Health Discussions	58.4% always/often	3.61 (1.23)

MOST DESIRED BEHAVIOURS	PERCENTAGE
Listening without judgment	46.5%
Appreciating efforts, not marks	42.6%
Open conversations about expectations	38.6%
Supporting hobbies/interests	37.6%
Encouraging mental health talk	35.6%

Note: Percentages exceed 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Summary of key findings

Positive Findings

FINDINGS	PERCENTAGE
Students perceive parents as supportive	56.4%
Rate relationship as Good to Excellent	60.4%
Parents consistently attend PTMs	52.5%
Parents invested in coaching/tuition	76.2%

Areas of concern

FINDINGS	PERCENTAGE
Parents set no screen time limits	53.5%
Experience stress from parental expectations	72.3%
Feel expectations are unrealistically high	77.3%
Parents judge success primarily by marks	58.4%
Regular mental health discussions	24.8%
Spend 1+ hours daily on short-form video	79.2%

Generational Gaps

FINDINGS	PERCENTAGE
Feel parents understand digital world	34.7%
Feel misunderstood due to generational differences	74.3%

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Parental Behaviours and the Perception of Support versus Pressure (RQ1)

Parents in this sample remain highly engaged, with 76.2% investing in coaching and 52.5% attending parent-teacher meetings. Yet student interpretations vary considerably: 56.4% experienced involvement as supportive, 29.7% as a mix of support and pressure, and 3.0% as mostly pressuring. Patterson's (1975) coercion theory helps explain this split, as nearly half of parents (49.6%) closely tracked academic performance and 51.4% expressed conditional praise and disappointment, behaviours that can generate anxiety as readily as motivation. Baumrind's (1991) typology adds nuance, with supported students likely experiencing authoritative parenting while those feeling pressured may be navigating a blend of authoritative and authoritarian styles, though the Indian collectivist context, where academic success is tied to family honour (IHDS-II, 2012), may blur this distinction. Epstein's (1995) model assumes involvement translates into positive outcomes, but these findings complicate that assumption; involvement experienced as surveillance rather than support can reduce autonomy. The IHDS-II link between involvement and outcomes is confirmed with a qualification: quality of involvement matters at least as much as quantity. Among the 76.2% who invested in coaching, collaborative involvement correlated with the 56.4% who felt supported, while controlling, evaluative involvement likely underlies the 32.7% who reported feeling pressured.

Digital Conflict and Academic Anxiety (RQ2)

A clear digital disconnect separates parents and students. Nearly 80% of students spend at least an hour daily on short-form video content, yet 53.5% of parents impose no screen time restrictions. Combined with 41.6% of students reporting moderate to high addiction, this suggests many parents are unaware or unsure how to address digital habits, even though 72.3% of students recognize that excessive screen time hurts academic performance. Elkind's (1981) hurried child concept applies here in a newer form, with short-form content fragmenting attention and compounding academic pressure. Where parents do intervene, conflicts often follow Patterson's (1975) escalating pattern of stricter parents meeting more resistant children. UNICEF's (2021) observation that family conflict raises mental health risk is relevant, with only 36.6% of students rating communication about digital habits as good or excellent and 74.3% feeling misunderstood due to generational gaps. Adams (2022) and ASER (2023) both point to families providing digital access without guidance, leaving students to self-regulate without support.

Generational Divide and Communication Gaps (RQ3)

The data reveal a deep generational split. While 58.4% of students felt parents judged success mainly by marks, only 34.7% felt parents understood their digital lives, and 74.3% felt misunderstood due to generational differences. Only 28.7% felt comfortable sharing personal problems, and just 24.8% had regular mental health conversations. This reflects parents applying familiar academic metrics to unfamiliar problems, leaving students feeling unsupported. Tsabary's (2010) conscious parenting framework is relevant, as the low comfort in sharing problems suggests emotional safety is often missing. Adams (2022) specifically noted that Indian parents apply old metrics to new problems, and the data offer direct empirical support. Baumrind's (1991) authoritative model assumes warmth accompanies high

expectations, but here that warmth appears lost; parents emphasizing marks may intend support while students receive judgment.

Hyper-Involvement and Competitive Examinations (RQ4)

Parental involvement in exam preparation shows a mixed effect. While 52.5% closely monitored coaching and schedules, student responses split: 36.6% felt motivated, 31.7% felt both motivated and stressed, and 18.8% felt mainly anxious. With 72.3% reporting stress symptoms and 77.3% seeing expectations as unrealistic, hyper-involvement appears more often to undermine well-being. This connects to the concept of hyper-involvement, with 76.2% coaching investment reflecting this pattern. Elkind's (1981) hurried child concept is intensified given how early Indian students enter high-stakes competition. In Baumrind's (1991) terms, high monitoring paired with perceived unrealism looks close to authoritarian parenting, though the Indian collectivist context may blur that distinction. IHDS-II and NCERT (2021) link involvement to better outcomes, but these findings suggest diminishing returns past a certain point, consistent with the Yerkes-Dodson law where moderate pressure aids performance but excessive pressure impairs it. Adams (2022) described exam success as collective family aspiration, and the psychological cost visible here suggests collective hope can come at a real cost, compounded by low mental health conversation rates.

Student-Identified Solutions (RQ5)

Asked what would help, students prioritized emotional connection over oversight. Listening without interrupting topped the list at 46.5%, followed by appreciating effort over marks (42.6%), honest conversations about expectations (38.6%), and support for hobbies (37.6%). Options tied to behavioral control were chosen far less often, suggesting students place more weight on being understood than on rule changes. This ordering fits Tsabary's (2010) conscious parenting framework and Adams' (2022) argument against excessive achievement weight. That 33.7% wanted to stop being compared with siblings or peers pushes back against the cultural assumption that comparison motivates; students experienced it as demoralizing. Negotiating screen time limits together was chosen by only 18.8%, though this still points toward openness to collaborative boundaries. Wanting parents to understand social media pressures (23.8%) suggests students ask for empathy rather than unlimited access. The least selected option, seeking professional help (14.9%), likely reflects continuing stigma around mental health support in India.

Synthesis and Implications

Taken together, these findings describe parenting in urban India as deeply engaged but unevenly experienced. High coaching investment and PTM attendance coexist with a meaningful share of students who feel judged rather than supported. Much of this tension traces to the same gap: parents applying familiar academic metrics to a generation navigating digital life, competitive exams, and emotional needs their parents did not grow up managing. The 74.3% who feel misunderstood and the consistent preference for listening and effort appreciation over surveillance sketch a clear picture of what would help. For parents, the findings point toward shifting emphasis from monitoring to emotional availability. Schools are well positioned to support this through parent workshops on digital literacy and communication. Students can take initiative in naming what support helps them and negotiating digital boundaries. At a policy level,

addressing the psychological cost of exam culture and promoting engagement that prioritizes quality over quantity would extend these findings beyond individual households.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

Limitations

Several limitations affect how far the findings of this study can be generalized. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling, using WhatsApp groups, email lists, and social media, which likely introduced selection bias: those who chose to respond may have held stronger views on parenting, greater digital literacy, or simply more free time than those who did not. With 101 responses, the sample is reasonable for exploratory research but too small to represent the wider population of urban Indian college students. The study was also confined to metropolitan areas, limiting its relevance to rural or semi urban settings where parenting practices and digital access differ considerably, and 73.3% of respondents fell within the 18 to 21 age range, restricting comparison across developmental stages.

Methodologically, all data came from self reported questionnaires, which carry a risk of social desirability and recall bias, particularly since participants were asked to reflect on experiences from earlier school years. The cross sectional design captures a single point in time and cannot establish causality; for instance, a correlation between screen time and academic anxiety does not indicate which caused which. Quantitative questions formed the bulk of the survey, so while some open ended items were included, the depth typically offered by interviews or focus groups is largely absent here.

The instrument itself has limitations. It was built from the literature and research questions, checked through peer review and pilot testing for face and content validity, but not tested against established psychometric scales. It also left out potentially relevant factors such as socioeconomic status, sibling dynamics, extended family involvement, and school culture, and the Likert format may not have captured the full range of participants' experiences, with "I don't know" possibly used as a default rather than a genuine response. More broadly, frameworks such as Baumrind's (1991) parenting typology and Patterson's (1975) coercion theory were developed in individualistic Western settings and may not fully account for the collectivist, family honour driven dynamics common in Indian households. Distributing the survey in English and online also excluded students with limited English proficiency or restricted internet access.

On the ethical side, informed consent was obtained, but no formal debriefing followed the survey, which matters given that questions touched on stress and mental health. No identifying information was collected, though some participants may still have been cautious about answering candidly.

Challenges Encountered

Recruitment was slower than expected despite sharing the survey across multiple channels; many students either did not respond or abandoned the form partway, pointing to survey fatigue and competing academic commitments. Google Forms offered limited control over question logic and skip patterns, and a number of responses seemed rushed or inconsistent, which may have introduced measurement error. Some participants appeared to default to neutral answers when unsure, producing less informative data. Certain statistical tests assume normal distribution and equal variance, assumptions that Likert scale data does not always satisfy, and since the design was cross sectional, interpreting the direction of any relationship remains difficult. The concept of hyper involvement, central to this study, was not measured

through a formally validated scale, and generational differences were captured only partially as a result. The project was carried out independently, without institutional funding, and within a limited timeframe, which constrained both sample size and depth of analysis. At 35 questions, the survey's length may also have contributed to fatigue, particularly affecting responses toward the end.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study highlight significant issues surrounding parent engagement, digital habits, parenting styles, and generational differences within urban Indian families. The following recommendations aim to address problems such as hyper-involvement, digital conflict, generational divides, and academic stress, while promoting emotionally supportive parenting and adolescent well-being.

For Parents, the evidence points toward a clear need to transition from academic surveillance to genuine emotional support. Although 56.4% of students described their parents as supportive, 58.4% believed their parents judged success primarily by marks. Parents would benefit from demonstrating interest in their child's overall wellbeing, engaging in conversations unrelated to school, and recognising effort rather than focusing solely on outcomes. Appreciating effort is particularly critical, as 77.3% of students felt expectations were unrealistic and 42.6% explicitly wanted parents to value what they learned rather than what they scored. Mental health conversations also need greater space at home, given that only about a quarter of parents discussed mental health regularly. Normalising such discussions and treating professional help as a positive resource are essential. The generational digital divide is another pressing concern, with just 34.7% of students feeling their parents understood their online world and more than half of parents setting no screen time limits. Parents who learn about the platforms their children use and negotiate boundaries collaboratively are more likely to foster healthier digital habits. Listening without judgment, the single most requested behaviour among students at 46.5%, involves giving full attention and validating a child's emotions, which can significantly rebuild trust. This pairs naturally with setting realistic academic goals through collaborative discussion and encouraging hobbies outside academics.

For Students, there is a corresponding responsibility to improve communication at home by being direct about what kind of support actually feels helpful. Given that nearly 80% of students spend at least an hour daily on short-form video content and most believe it negatively affects their studies, students would benefit from monitoring their own usage and treating screen time as earned rather than an avoidance tactic. Building healthier coping habits such as exercise, mindfulness, or seeking professional support is also important for managing stress.

For Schools, the institutional role in bridging these gaps is substantial. Organising workshops that teach parents effective communication and active listening skills can directly address generational misunderstandings, while mental health awareness and emotional intelligence should be embedded into the curriculum, supported by accessible counselling. Digital literacy sessions specifically focused on understanding social media would help address the blind spots many parents face. Assessment practices could also be restructured to reward effort, creativity, and progress alongside marks.

For Policymakers, a broader systemic response is required. Recognising the psychological toll of India's competitive exam culture, policymakers should consider regulating the coaching industry to prevent student exploitation. National campaigns promoting healthy digital habits and stronger integration of

digital literacy into school curricula would help close the technology gap. Mental health support should be formally written into educational policy, with schools required to offer counselling. Supporting evidence-based parenting programmes could extend these benefits beyond the school system.

For Future Researchers, developing instruments specifically validated for the Indian cultural context would allow more accurate capture of parental involvement, while longitudinal and mixed methods studies would help establish causal relationships. Expanding samples to include rural and semi-urban populations would improve generalisability, and evaluating actual interventions would offer practical insights into what genuinely works.

Taken together, these recommendations converge on consistent themes across all groups involved. Collectively, these steps aim to foster more emotionally supportive parenting, narrow generational divides, and improve adolescent wellbeing across urban Indian families.

CONCLUSION

The findings reframe effective parenting in urban Indian college contexts as a matter of emotional quality rather than intensity of investment. While parental engagement remains high, its benefits are undermined when perceived as overly evaluative and expectation-laden; conversely, listening without judgment, appreciating effort, and approaching technology use with understanding rather than restriction emerge as the practices most strongly associated with supportive relationships and student wellbeing. These results carry practical implications for parents, schools, and policymakers alike, though they must be weighed against the study's limitations, a modest, convenience based, urban sample and a cross-sectional, self-reported design preclude broad generalisation. Future research would benefit from longitudinal, mixed-methods approaches with culturally validated instruments and more diverse cohorts. Ultimately, the evidence suggests that shifting the parenting paradigm from performance monitoring to emotionally available engagement may offer a more sustainable pathway to adolescent resilience and academic flourishing in India's competitive examination culture.

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