



TELEVISION AND CHILD RIGHTS PROTECTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF PARENT'S ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION

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Abstract

The empirical and longitudinal studies conducted by the past researchers also revealed that television programmes did not focus the attention of the children and other stakeholders on the issues of child rights violation and children welfare in modern society. Scientific investigations are required to know more about what factors influence the personality of children, what preventive measures are effective in preventing the violation of child rights and what kind of progressive measures are required to empower the children in Jammu and Kashmir. The present study approached the problem through a systematic survey method which is very popular in the fields of communication, journalism, development psychology, social science and so on. A structured and pre-tested interview schedule was administered to the children, parents, teachers and activists in Jammu and Kashmir in order to gather primary data on the role of television in child rights protection. Child rights are of great concern in modern society where there is increased violation of child rights in all nooks and corners of the world by various anti-social forces. The media have not been sensitive to the rights of the children in the age of globalization. Empirical studies have reported that healthy and limited television exposure among children has created more awareness among children about their rights, responsibilities and developmental opportunities. Television has powerful influence on the lives of contemporary children who are the future builders of nation. The future agenda for broadcasters must deal with the corporate social responsibility of media and integrated development of children through meaningful broadcasting services. The provision of decency or morality is far more a safeguard to the rights of children in India and elsewhere.

Preamble

Child rights protection is not a uni-dimensional aspect of human resources development. There are several characteristics which depict the state of child rights protection. Prominent among them include speed and pattern of development, mechanisms of developmental change, population differences, individual differences, motor development, cognitive development, emotional development, social development and language development. The scholars have brought all these aspects of child development under 'developmental psychology' which refers to development of human beings throughout their lifespan. The goal of child development cannot be actualized in the absence of child rights protection.

A perusal of the available literature concerning television and children suggest that quite a few studies dealt with child rights and media in general and child rights and television in particular. The role of television in the protection of child rights in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India are not subjected to comprehensive and scientific research even though it is a very important area of human development research. A planned, deliberate, systematic and sustainable study on the role of television in the protection of child rights would sensitize the policy makers, educationists, practitioners, implementers, parents, teachers, activists and others responsible for child rights protection. There is a growing recognition all over the world about the crucial role of media and other agencies in the process of child rights protection.

Role of Television in Child Rights Protection

The role of television in child rights protection is widely debated all over the world since the decade of 1950s. Several commissions and individuals have examined the effects of television programmes and commercials on particular segments of global population, specifically children. Series of domestic and international conferences have also highlighted the role of media in child rights protection. These conferences have also identified the various stakeholders of child development including the media institutions.

A substantial amount of research has been carried out in order to develop a considerable body of knowledge concerning the role of television in child rights protection. Mc Luhan observes : "We need to know more about what elements in the television programmes influence children's personality and what preventive measures are effective in molding the personality of children in future since television cultivates forms of thought that are fundamentally different from those used in processing print or some other media".



Ball and Bogatz (1970:03) had pointed out that certain television programme *Sesame Street* designed for young children focused on variety of academic and social skills to help prepare children for entering school and cultivate pro-social habits which protect their rights. This programme had also enabled the children to gain necessary awareness about their rights in modern society. Researchers have also stated that healthy and limited television exposure among children has created more awareness among children about their rights and responsibilities. Studies have emphasized the role of television in the cognitive skill development, academic achievement and awareness of the rights of children who enjoy the benefit of exposure to television. Television has powerful influence on the lives of contemporary children who are the future builders of nation.

Daniel Anderson and Elizabeth Lorch (1983:01) argued that television viewing was based on active cognition of children. According to them, the pre-school children paid more attention to children's programmes than to commercials. Harris and Williams (1986) reported a positive association between academic achievement, awareness about environment and understanding of the rights of children through proper television viewing. Children also learnt strategies for watching television by using their knowledge of formal features to guide attention according to Campbell et.al. (1987:05).

Researchers have provided information on the role of television in the development of cognitive skills of children who become active media users after 3 years. Huston and Wright (1989:15) proposed a theory of attention to television which stated that the features of television that drive children's attention may change as a child ages. The children were less influenced by perceptual silence and were able to pay greater attention to informative features such as dialogue and narrative which drew their attention on violation of child rights. The television programmes also have the capacity to demonstrate immediate and potentially long-lasting effects of problem-solving skills especially for regular viewers of the programme among the children, according to Crawley and others (1999:07).

Premkumar (2008:19) studied the role of media in the protection of child rights with special reference to India and noted: "The effect or impact of the media on child is in multi-levels – positive and negative impact and as general and specific impact. The media also leads to positive reforms and adjudications which protects the rights of the child. The negative impact of the media is the influence of the media in such a way that it corrupts the child viewers and does evil than good. The media portrayal of crimes is exaggerated many a time. The pornography is readily accessible to youngsters through Internet and movies. The media portraying violence and sex has an influence on the young minds. The cable television has produced a harmful influence on young persons. The present day television serials also teach the young boys and girls modern techniques of deviance and ways to achieve high goals in life and earn money".

Review of Literature

The empirical and longitudinal studies conducted by the past researchers also revealed that television programmes did not focus the attention of the children and other stakeholders on the issues of child rights violation and children welfare in modern society. Quite a few studies have precisely dealt with the impact of television on the personality of children in abroad. Prominent among them include - Melton (1980:16), Conte et.al. (1986:06), Anderson (1989:02), Byrne (1990:04), Flekkoy (1991:10), Goddard and Tucci (1991:12), Parton (1991:18), Guru et.al. (2013:13) and Warriar and Ebbeck (2014:20). However, adequate investigations are not conducted regarding the role of television in the protection of child rights in Jammu and Kashmir State.

Significance of the Study

The role of television in child rights protection is widely debated since the decade of 1990s. Several commissions and individuals have examined the effects of television programmes and commercials on particular segments of global population, specifically children. A substantial amount of research has been carried out in order to develop a considerable body of knowledge concerning the role of television in child development. Nielson (1998:17) observes: "We need to know more about what elements in the television programmes influences children's personality and what preventive measures are effective in molding the personality of children in future since television cultivates forms of thought that are fundamentally different from those used in processing print or some other media".

Evra (1998:09) conducted an intensive and extensive review of major studies about television and child development by both communication scholars and developmental child psychologists. The scholar pointed out that very few scholars in the world have focused the attention of policy makers and general public's regarding the protection of child rights through meaningful broadcasting services. Scholars have also recognized that television enabled the children to learn certain pro-social behaviors and gain more awareness about their rights and privileges.



Heather et.al. (2008:14) comment: “although research clearly demonstrates that well-designed, age-appropriate, educational television can be beneficial to children of preschool age, studies on infants and toddlers suggest that these young children may better understand and learn from real-life experiences than they do from video. Early exposure to age appropriate programmes designed around an educational curriculum is associated with cognitive and academic enhancement, whereas exposure to pure entertainment and violent content in particular, is associated with poorer cognitive development and lower academic achievement. Research on children’s television viewing can inform guidelines for producers of children’s media to enhance learning”.

Din and Calao (2001:08) noted that professionally produced, curriculum based Internet websites for preschoolers enabled the children to learn academic and social skills which had long-lasting effects. Studies have also established a well defined association between television exposure and child rights protection across the globe to some extent.

Freeman (1992:11) stated that parent co viewing and mediation would enhance the effectiveness of educational programming by drawing attention to the most important aspects of the programme and by extending lessons presented in the programme. According to him, co viewing with a parent or other adult may increase a child’s learning from educational television, particularly when to co viewer actively mediates by explicitly drawing attention to the problem and by asking and answering questions.

Scientific investigations are required to know more about what factors influence the personality of children, what preventive measures are effective in preventing the violation of child rights and what kind of progressive measures are required to empower the children in Jammu and Kashmir. Child rights protection and integrated children development is the need of the hour and that the intervention of parents, teachers, policy makers, practitioners, bureaucrats, researchers and other stakeholders of child rights protection should be properly planned and executed in this direction. Present generation of scholars have developed this line of thinking in series of investigations that demonstrate the factors associated with the increasing violation of child rights in particular. Few researchers in India and elsewhere have assessed the role of parents, teachers, siblings, peers and others in the personality of children. The major deficiency observed in their works is the lack of emphasis on the protection of child rights in Jammu and Kashmir as a whole. Thus, the present study on Role of Television in the Protection of Child Rights in Jammu and Kashmir: A Study is justified because of the special constitutional status granted to the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the imminent need for protection of child rights in the state concerned.

Statement of the Problem

A synthesis of the available literature suggests that societal, governmental, educational and media intervention for child rights protection with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir in particular and India in general suffer from series of limitations. Therefore, the primary tasks of present study were concerned with identifying a reasonably representative sample of television viewing children, parents, and stakeholders so as to assess their views on the role of television in the protection of child rights with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir. The present topic has been chosen because:

- a. Child development cannot remain as a neglected sector of national development in developing countries like India and Iran.
- b. Public and private television channels have a corporate social responsibility of facilitating child rights protection.
- c. The role of television in the protection of child rights should be scientifically analyzed in order to safeguard and promote healthy personality of children in Jammu and Kashmir.

It is essential to have a vision backed up by appropriate research action on television broadcasting with special reference to child rights protection in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of Indian Republic. In the absence of suitable research support, it would be difficult to achieve this goal. The present study, was therefore, designed to cover all these dimensions and make it more comprehensive.

Objectives of the Study

With child rights protection being the thrust area, the research proposed to :

1. Assess the attitude of parents, children and stakeholders about the relationship between children’s television viewing and child rights protection in Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Analyze the perception of parents, children and stakeholders about the role of television in child rights protection in Jammu and Kashmir; and
3. Suggest appropriate methods for the betterment of television programmes from the point of view of child rights protection in Jammu and Kashmir.



Research Design

The present study approached the problem through a systematic survey method which is very popular in the fields of communication, journalism, development psychology, social science and so on. A structured and pre-tested interview schedule was administered to the children, parents, teachers and activists in Jammu and Kashmir in order to gather primary data on the role of television in child rights protection. Three important regions of Jammu and Kashmir state namely Jammu, Kashmir and Ladak were chosen for the purpose of primary data collection. The primary data were gathered from 660 respondents (children, parents and stakeholders) through questionnaire tool by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed to explore the understanding of the respondents have about the role of television in the protection of child rights in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Table: Distribution of Study Area and Sample

Study Area	Name of the Areas	Number of Children	Number of Parents	Number of Stakeholders	Total Respondents
Jammu	Jammu city	50	30	30	110
	Udampur and Kathua rural areas	50	30	30	110
Srinagar	Srinagar city	50	30	30	110
	Budgam and Pulwama rural areas	50	30	30	110
Ladak	Leh city	50	30	30	110
	Leh and Kargil rural areas	50	30	30	110
	Total	300	180	180	660

n = 660

The primary data were analyzed on the basis of certain standardized statistical tests which include – percentage analysis, graphical representation, Chi-square test and cross tabulation. All the statistical methods were carried out through the SPSS for Windows (version 16.0).

Findings of the Study

Demographic Features of the Respondents

There was more number of male parents (56.67%), above 40years old parents (52.52%), pre-university and university level educated parents (63.33%), farming and business oriented parents (57.78%) high and middle income group parents (64.45%) and even number of parents (33.33%) from Jammu, Kashmir and Ladak regions of the state respectively among the study sample.

Attitude of Parents about Television and Child Rights Protection

A majority of the parents have expressed their attitude toward television in child rights protection thus: medium of instruction for children on child rights protection (86.67%), benefit of exposure to children on child rights (78.89%), positive activity for child rights protection (82.22%), increase of the cognitive performance of children on child rights protection (88.89%), socialization of children for child rights protection (85.56%), education of children about child rights protection (83.33%), guiding the children about child rights protection (87.78%); and improvement of the understanding of children about child rights protection (88.89%).

Role of Television in Child Rights Protection: Children's Views

A majority of the parents have expressed their negative opinion about the role of television in child rights protection thus: lack of understanding of child rights (55.56%), lack of children's perspective while making decisions (58.89%), prevention of discrimination against the girl child (61.11%), failure to treat children with dignity and respect (63.33%), providing adequate physical safety for children (60.0%), failure to provide basic needs of children (62.22%), failure to provide healthcare facilities (57.78%), failure to facilitate socialization among children (66.67%), failure to provide adequate attention and guidance to children (56.67%), failure to prevent children from doing works inappropriate for their age (64.44%), failure to develop the talents and abilities of children (67.78%), failure to provide emotional safety and support to the children (67.78%), failure to provide healthy environment for child development (51.11%), failure to provide opportunities for cultivation of hobbies to the children (71.11%); and failure to provide guidance to children for personality development (73.33%).

Limitations of the Study

It was not practically possible for the researcher to enjoy the benefit of accessibility of data to all the children, parents and stakeholders of child rights protection in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It was also not possible to study the perception of all the children, parents and stakeholders on the role of television in the protection of child rights in the state concerned due



to lack of time, large numbers, lack of time and other constraints. The usual limitations of the survey method such as time, human inadequacies, resource constraints, recollection and communication were experienced by the researcher. Incidental and stratified sampling methods were followed in selecting the respondents. Though much care has been taken to collect the primary data, the memory bias on the part of the respondents cannot be completely ruled out.

Testing of Hypothesis

H1: The parents in Jammu and Kashmir have not cultivated a positive attitude about children's television viewing for child rights protection.

The data which are presented in the thesis clearly reveal that the parents in Jammu and Kashmir have cultivated a positive attitude about children's television viewing for child rights protection. Hence, the above hypothesis stands disproved according to the data analysis.

H2: Television has not protected the child rights in Jammu and Kashmir, according to the parents

The data which are presented in the thesis clearly reveal that television had not protected the child rights according to the parents in Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, the above hypothesis stands proved according to the analysis of data.

Implications of the Study

Role of Government

- Ñ It is imperative to formulate a national policy on child development in India.
- Ñ A national institute for child development should be established to prepare grounds for child rights protection and implementation of child development programmes at various levels.
- Ñ A national broadcasting policy should be formulated to facilitate the delivery of children specific and child rights oriented broadcasting programmes at various levels.
- Ñ The code of broadcasting practice should be developed in order to prevent the broadcasting services which adversely affect the interest and development of children.
- Ñ Close coordination between government organizations, educational institutions, media organizations, law enforcement agencies and non-government organizations is essential to protect the interest of children and implement various child development programmes.

Television and Parents

- Television should enable the parents to understand the significance of child rights and integrated child development.
- Television should enable the parents to make wise decisions which benefit the children's safety and progress.
- Television should enable the parents to prevent discrimination against the girl child.
- Television should enable the parents to provide adequate civic amenities, basic needs, educational facilities and developmental opportunities in the family.
- Television should enable the parents to create opportunities for meaningful socialization that benefits children.
- Television should enable the parents to provide adequate opportunities to the children to do works that make life better for them.
- Television should enable the parents to provide adequate time, place and facilities for educational progress.
- Television should enable the parents to protect the children from doing certain works which are inappropriate for their age.
- Television should enable the parents to provide adequate emotional safety and support to the children.
- Television should enable the parents to treat the children fairly at home.
- Television should enable the parents to provide adequate guidance to the children to learn what is right and wrong.

Suggestions for Future Research

The present study evaluated the role of television in the protection of child rights in Jammu and Kashmir. But, during the course of the study, it is understood that there are many areas of research which need to be focused by the future generation of researchers. Media intervention for child rights protection is a vast area of research. There is a need for establishment of meaningful linkage between television broadcasting and child rights protection in developing nations like India. Future studies should examine the role of state, educational institutions, judicial organizations, political parties, cultural organizations, non-government organizations, health care institutions and other agencies in the protection of child rights. In particular, the role of new media, social media, inter-personal communication media, extension media and multimedia could also be studied in the context of child rights protection in India and other states. A combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis is strongly advocated for understanding the role of various media institutions in child rights protection in future.



Conclusion

Child rights are of great concern in modern society where there is increased violation of child rights in all nooks and corners of the world by various anti-social forces. The media have not been sensitive to the rights of the children in the age of globalization. Empirical studies have reported that healthy and limited television exposure among children has created more awareness among children about their rights, responsibilities and developmental opportunities. Television has powerful influence on the lives of contemporary children who are the future builders of nation. The future agenda for broadcasters must deal with the corporate social responsibility of media and integrated development of children through meaningful broadcasting services. The provision of decency or morality is far more a safeguard to the rights of children in India and elsewhere.

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