CHAPTER – 7

CONCLUSION

Media holds a mirror to allow people to see who they are, what they do and why their actions have consequences. It systematises the complex phenomena of human hopes and struggles to help people, the communities and the nation to move forward towards better daily life.

Media is a powerful agent of socialisation. It influences every one, irrespective of age, sex, social status etc. Modernisation has converted media into an indispensable part of peoples’ life. It can bring about desirable changes among the mass people, keeping them vigilant and informed about the world. Media as a stimulant satisfies the information needed by the people to widen their horizon and therefore this information must be dispersed undiluted. Due to its power to influence on attitude and behaviour of the general public, it has been playing a significant role in most of all social, political and development sectors in planning and policy making on national and international level. Similarly, media is also playing a major role in promotion of children development. It places the knowledge of child rights and its violation in the minds of the public and on the political agenda.

Children whose rights are guaranteed and respected grow up into responsible adults. It is therefore crucial to protect children by guaranteeing their rights as they grow up. Due to which there is a tremendous need for the media and communication to contribute to the protection of child rights.

Print media being the first rank holder in credibility ranking (FICCI-KPMG Report, 2012), has the potential to create mass awareness about the significant issues pertaining to child rights by publishing various articles, special features, interviews and case studies on child rights. Thereby, the present study entitled, “Role of print media in educating the mass people on child rights. A case study of Kamrup (Metropolitan) District” is well justified
Children and their rights are very well defined in the first chapter. The relevant materials essential for the problem is reviewed in this chapter.

According to Child Right convention, every human being who is below the age of 18 years is defined as a “child”. Their rights are human rights, which draws particular attention to the rights of special protection and care afforded to the minors.

The present scenario of children in India was found to be very pathetic. According to the study conducted by the ministry of women and child development on child abuse (2007), the picture of the extent to which children are ill-treated in the country is very alarming. The state of Assam along with Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi, consistently reported higher rates of child abuse in all forms as compared to other states.

The related literatures were collected from various sources and they were classified under the following headings:

1. Child Rights
2. Violation of child rights
3. Impact of media
4. Role of media in educating the mass people on child rights

Although the constitution of India guarantees Child Rights protection but still they are violated. Media is a powerful tool to impart the knowledge of child rights and the consequences of child rights violation among the mass people. But unfortunately in spite of this potential, media is not found to be playing their role effectively.

Past studies found that the coverage of children’s issues has not been encouraging. In many of the cases, they were either shunned or inadequately covered. Many have observed that children news/views did not get necessary attention as much as they deserved. And since the children issues “rarely” made any sensational news, therefore they occupied the inside pages.
All the foregoing arguments indicated that the media is a powerful instrument, which could be effectively used in educating the mass people on child rights. The media is valuable as a change agent of attitudes and behaviour of individuals and as means of giving the children a better tomorrow.

Keeping in mind this scenario and the potentials of the print media, the present study aimed to know the children's issues those are more frequently published in the print media, to find out the prioritized issue related to child rights on each newspaper, to identify the overlooked children issues that should be advocated and finally to ascertain the role of print media in educating the mass people on child rights.

The methodology adopted for the study is described in the chapter one. A survey cum content analysis method was carried out to achieve the objectives. Survey was carried out among the selected samples and questionnaires were administered to collect the primary data. Similarly, sub-editors of the selected four dailies were also interviewed to know their viewpoints regarding the coverage of child rights. Content analysis of various child related issues published during the period 1st January 2012 to 31st December 2012, in *The Assam Tribune, The Sentinel, Amar Asom* and *Asamiya Pratidin* was carried out. The Agenda Setting Theory of media served as the theoretical framework of the study. It says that there is a substantial correlation between the agendas set by the media and the public’s belief about the importance of the issues. News/views which are printed bold, highlighted, placed on the first page and given importance by the print media, are found to drag more attention of the readers and had long lasting impact on the public.

Chapter two deals with the background of the study. As the study was conducted in Kamrup Metropolitan District, therefore the demographic profile of the study area is described in this chapter. The actual population of the district as found in the 2011 census was found to be 1253938, among them 647585 were males and 606353 were females. While the average literacy in the district was 88.71 percent, where male and female literacy was 92.13 percent and 85.07 percent respectively. Since, the present study was carried out among the literate mass people of Assam, therefore it was an important information to be considered for the study.
The status of children in terms of education, health, infant mortality rate, population, proportion, and child rights abuse were also stated in the second chapter.

It was found that according to 2011 census, the total number of children below six years (125386) have improved from 2001. The male population was 64444 whereas, in case of girls it was 60942 i.e. 48.6 percent, which was quite satisfactory. Similarly, the proportion of children under 6 years of age to the total population was 10.00 percent where for boys and girls it was found to be 9.95 percent and 10.05 percent respectively. It was found that the ratio has decreased from the past. Under the heading on Child rights abuse, it was found that Child Labour and child trafficking were among the burning problems of the state.

Regarding the background information of the respondents, the personal and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents was discussed in the chapter. Data revealed that male and female respondents were uniformly distributed in the different age groups. Majority of the male respondents were graduates and female were at least class XII passed. Majority of them were married. Under the economic characteristics, most of the male and female respondents were involved in service and their monthly income was Rupees 27001 and above. It was noticed that majority of the female respondents were less than the male respondents in terms of education and income. It was interesting to note that hundred percent of the respondents subscribed Newspapers/Magazines/Journals/Bulletins and owned a television. Regarding the data on social characteristics, it was found that majority of them belonged to nuclear families, had family members up to four and was member of at least one organisation.

It may be concluded here that in Kamrup Metro District men and women enjoys almost equal status in terms of education, occupation or income. Although joint families were less frequent but they were found to be socially active and assessed different media.

Awareness among the mass people on child is discussed in chapter 3. Children are the future of the nation who can shape the country into a developed country and in this circumstance it is necessary to enact laws in their favour to make them good citizens.
Our constitutions provide ample provision to safeguard the rights of children. Many laws and amendments were passed time to time by the Government to protect children from any kind of abuse.

An overview of the history of child welfare in India has been discussed in this chapter. Many social organisations have brought innovative child welfare programs traditionally from ancient days and it were boost up with the independence of the country. Throughout these years adequate provisions were made for care and protection of children in the constitution.

From time to time there were various schemes, policies and departments were established in order to protect child rights. In the following part of the study, an attempt was made to assess the awareness of the respondents regarding the child rights to achieve the fourth objective of the study.

Regarding the knowledge of the respondents on child rights, it was found that majority of the respondents were only partially aware of the child rights. They were not fully confident and had detail knowledge about the rights of children. It was interesting to note that seventeen percent of the respondents were not at all aware of the child rights to have protection against any type of abuse, exploitation or neglect. Therefore the knowledge of the respondents on child rights was found to be unsatisfactory. This finding satisfies the first hypothesis formulated for the study. Although they were not fully aware of the rights of children but more than half of the respondents were found to be aware of existence of organisations working for children. Only few of them were member of any of the organisations working for the children. Most of them were aware of the existence of legal protection for children. Further an attempt was to know the source from where they had acquired the knowledge on child rights. It was observed that majority (57.6 %) of them acquired knowledge on child rights from television / radio/internet. This may be due to the interest developed among the respondents towards Television programme, listening to radio even while travelling or working at home and the latest interest on internet and social networking which is in the present day easily available even in cell phones. It was immediately followed by newspaper and magazine. The information obtained from print media has a major impact on the readers.
Chapter four discusses the role of media in ensuring child rights. An in-depth analysis of the Indian media landscape gave some interesting insights. Among traditional media, television was the largest and most popular, with approximately two in three households in the country owning a TV. Whereas, print media, opposing the global trend, continued to grow in India, and came second to TV but with only about half the number of consumers.

The later part of the chapter discusses the Social Responsibility theory and the Agenda Setting theory of media. It is the social responsibility of the media to educate the mass people on child rights. Because whatever the agenda adopted by the media and paid more importance has direct influence on the public.

Impact of media was found to be immense. Therefore examples of some of the incidences which media had taken up in the past, was cited. Among them the reporting of incidence of molestation of a teenage girl in G.S. Road on 9th July and its consequences were mentioned.

In the following part of the study an attempt was made to know the viewpoints of the respondents regarding the role of print media in ensuring child rights. According to the respondents newspaper encouraged the children towards science and technology, educated the people about the dangers of child work and child abuse and urged to provide facilities to children. Although the respondents had admitted that newspapers has potential to influence the mass people regarding child rights, and they are performing their role to some extent but the frequency and the space provided to children news/views was very unsatisfactory. It was interesting to find that newspapers educated the readers on various children issues. Therefore it is expected that the newspaper agencies should use these information and cover more news and views on children to ensure better and secured future for the children.

Further in the chapter, interview of the experts i.e. the sub editors of the four dailies under study was also accommodated. It was found that the frequency of news/views on child rights was very less and the placement or coverage of news was made on the basis of its importance and relevance. The pressures to boost up circulation might be the major reason for most of the media houses to concentrate on those issues that generated
some debate and hold the interest of the readers. Since, the news/views on children had failed to generate the same interest among its readers, therefore children issues were kept aside and mostly placed in the inside pages. Unless the news/views are sensational, they lacked follow-up. Regarding the language approach they were sensitive towards child rights issues and always used respectful language. They maintained the privacy of the children.

The following chapter dealt with print media coverage on children issues. In this part of the study content analysis of four daily newspapers (two English and two Assamese) were carried out. It was found that the total coverage of the newspapers to children news/views was merely 3.8 percent and 4.6 percent to children news/views including pictures of the total news/views area, which was very less as compared to the total print area. This satisfies the second hypothesis. Majority of the children issues were found to be placed on the inside pages by the four dailies.

In the newspaper wise analysis, The Assam Tribune had more news on child rights protection followed by education; similarly The Sentinel had covered more news for protection of child rights. News on the education of children was more frequent in Amar Asom and on Asamiya Pratidin news/views on Juvenile justice was found to be more frequent. Regarding the frequency data on coverage of news/views on violation of child rights The Assam Tribune covered more news on physical abuse/corporal punishment and violation of Child right to education. Similarly, child right to education was also more frequent in The Sentinel, Amar Asom and Asamiya Pratidin. Therefore it may be concluded as news/views on violation of child’s right to education was the prioritised issue in all the four dailies during the study period from 1st Jan to 31st Dec 2012.

Findings showed that the newspapers had a fair coverage on children's issues. However, there were some issues related to children which were found to be overlooked by the newspapers. During the study period (1st Jan-31st Dec 2012), there were severe communal violence in different places of Assam. Children in these conflict zones were adversely affected physically as well as psychologically. But the newspapers gave very less emphasis to the impact of such activities on children. And there were inadequate
news/views addressing peace and development of children. Similarly, issues like drug abuse; birth registration, children’s creativity and issue of disability were overlooked issue of all the four newspapers. The issues of International news on children were also overlooked. Contradictorily, issues on Health, child malnutrition, IMR and children in conflict zone are also found as overlooked issues on *The Sentinel* and *The Assam Tribune*. Again, issues like child right protection and sexual offence on children was overlooked by *Asamiya Pratidin*. The study found that the coverage of issues like corporal punishment, malnutrition, IMR, female foeticide, infanticide and abandoned children was very scanty in *Amar Asom*. The overlooked issues may be the reciprocal result of this lack of investigative journalism in the publication. The other reason may be the lack of enough organizational activities for the children and exposure.

The discussion further on the findings showed that the data were mostly quoted against the activities reported from those of organizations that work with/for children. The news seemed mostly to be descriptive of activities such as trainings, workshops and seminars. If the follow up report of such programs and its impact on the target group were reflected then the coverage on this issue would have been called a real one in true sense. Even minor activities of established organizations are presented as news. Reporting seems to be done the way these organizations want them to be. The right to information seems to be thus limited to only what is shown rather what is hidden behind. The civic society would have benefited a lot with information plus in-depth analysis based on studies and researches.

Besides of some of the overlooked issues, the study showed positive and fundamental importance of children and their development in the print media. The treatment and the language approach towards the children issues were found to be respectful. Catchy or attractive title lines were used to attract its readers and to boost up their circulation. In an overall the range of newspapers are doing good work in publishing and disseminating news/articles related to children issues increasing the civic knowledge of the mass people.
SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Newspapers have always played a fundamental role in disseminating news, information and in creating a public awareness. It has been never denied that they are responsible and it has a massive impact on its readers.

Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. Overlooked children issues should be given more priority and there might be many other children issues and problems that should be identified and acknowledged.

2. The media covers issues on children massively on the occasions like Children' Day, Polio, Vitamin 'A' etc. Rather than focusing on such occasional news, the regular flow of news/analysis on children related issues should be given importance.

3. Children related news/articles should be more analytical and solution oriented. It is also observed that the news/articles are mostly informative in nature for adult and less attention has been given to analytical aspect of concerned issue.

4. During the study on the issue of international news, it is found that most of the news coverage is a healthy capsule for children or of crime/violent activities for and against children. So international news coverage should be more oriented to international developmental and creative activities that serve as good examples to inspire the readers.

5. News coverage is mostly found to be descriptive of the organizational activities. Rather than highlighting the organizational activities more of the analytical study would have been more relevant providing information about the impact on childrens' lives from the organizational programs, fund and aids coming for children.
6. Disabled children and underprivileged children are also a part of our society. The study found very less coverage on such issues for the development of disabled and underprivileged children. So newspapers need to pay special attention on such issues.

7. Children issues should be given more priority in newspapers coverage to bring issues on public eyes. It is found that only in the exceptional cases newspapers cover the news related with the children in the front page. And mostly children issues are published in the inside pages.

8. Last but not least, newspapers should cover much more news/articles on child rights issues. They need to cover child rights issues like, child rights to participation and decision-making, children as citizen of civic society, child rights to expression, child rights to recreation etc.