CHAPTER 2

Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

An objective is a desired result a person or a system envisions, plans and commits to achieve. It is a personal or organizational desired end-point in some sort of assumed development. In the present research, this section explains the purpose or the intention of taking up this research and the goal that is envisioned to achieve.

2.1.1 The Conflict:

In the previous chapter, it was observed that actors would not mind switching media as long as they have good work which would keep them busy. In the phrase-‘would keep them busy’, the word ‘them’ refers to the group of professional actors who have taken up performing as a profession at their own will and do it for a living. But the film and TV industry also houses individuals (as a necessity) who are not in a position to take their decisions on their own. This is with reference to the children in the industry. Out of the cast and crew and other members who belong to the film and television industry, Children form an important part, both on and off screen. The on-screen children – or “Child Actors” are usually the ones who seem get maximum appreciation for their talents, but also the ones with highly neglected personal lives.

The term child actor is generally applied to a child acting in motion pictures or television, and also to an adult who began his or her acting career as a child. This category of entertainers seems to be neglected in terms of their personal lives by the law as well as the society, which appears to
be selfishly enjoying only the performances. A simple example would help in clarifying this situation. Further description of the problem would be elucidated based on this real-life example.

The 6-year-old boy was dangling five metres in the air. He was wearing a rubber suit. The studio lights were just above him. He was sweating. He had been there for 45 mins. The director needed him up there, hanging, for however long it would take to complete the shot. The mother warned that the child cannot be allowed more than 45 minutes in camera position at a time. The mother wanted a decent break. The parents of other youngsters told her that he would be blacklisted if she continued to fuss, so she kept quiet. This would go on for hours. There was nothing in the contract papers regarding this so she could not get legal help either, only because – Indian law states that it is illegal to employ children below 14 years of age according to Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 but has no laws protecting actors under 14 years. Appendix B contains the Act as mentioned in the Constitution.

This is not a stray case of one boy in a film studio, but a large number of children face such situations almost every day in the Indian film and television industry. But the movie/television industry (unlike the industries specified in the Act - ref. appendix B) is unusual, because in the normal course of its business, it has to employ underage people, to play roles of their age. So, there is a requirement of special steps and initiatives to be taken.

Apart from the legal aspects of children acting in the media, there are issues about the child’s reaction to a lot of sudden attention and appreciation from friends, relatives and even unknown people. Children react differently, depending on their psychological abilities and the kind of support they get from the parents / guardians. But how the child’s future would unfold, would depend on how these issues are handled.
In the above example, we also notice that the mother yields to the pressures when she realizes that ‘the child would be blacklisted if she continued to fuss’. In most of the cases, parental pressure on the child to ‘achieve’ at that age would be higher than child’s own desire to perform, this discord combined with the child’s performance in various other spheres of life may result in internal psychological conflicts.

“We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.”

- Stacia Tauscher[6]

2.1.2 Significance of Research:

It is therefore, very important to treat children as individuals with their own ability to think and at the same time support and encourage the talents and abilities within the child. But it requires the effort of all the people around the child, including the parents, friends, relatives and most important of all, the employers to bring about a balanced solution into this conflict. But, by insisting that parents should take responsibility for their children - including being on set with them and supervising their welfare, the producers and even government have let themselves off the hook. The parents, on the other hand, with no authority to take decisions feel helpless. The situation gets worse because of no professional help available on the psychological front to both parents and children.

This study would enable in analyzing this existing discrepancy towards children in the Kannada entertainment industry in terms of the social and the psychological viewpoint of the child and the people around it. The study is exploratory in nature and has the objective of identifying some of the possible impediments that beset child actors in their professional and personal growth.
General Objectives:

To examine the approach of the Kannada Television and Film industry towards children working within it.

Specific Objectives:

To study –

- Social and legal norms which exist for the protection of child actors in Kannada film and television industry
- Psychological consequences as an outcome of the existing conditions of work
- Possible solutions and arriving at a meaningful and balanced resolution to the existing conflict
2.2 Methodology of Research:

2.2.1 Sampling:

Sampling is a kind of statistical research practice concerned with the selection of a subset for individual observations within a population of individuals intended to yield some knowledge about the population of concern, especially for the purposes of making predictions based on statistical inference.

Since there is no record of the exact population size of the fundamental set of research subjects, namely the child actors, arriving at the right number as a subset was not possible. Hence, 'Purposive Sampling' was adapted. This is a method of non-probabilistic sampling where the researcher chooses the sample based on who they think would be appropriate for the study. This is used primarily when there is a limited number of people that have expertise in the area being researched.

The basic criteria used for choosing the subjects were -

1. Subject's experience and familiarity with acting in films / television
2. Duration of working in this field and number of projects worked on
3. Willingness to share information with honesty and no bias
4. Availability and willingness to spend time with the researcher

Geographical location of research: Bangalore, which is very Cosmopolitan, has people from different Social, cultural and economic backgrounds. It is also the hub of Kannada television and film industries. Hence this was chosen as the core region for research. Small samples were also
collected from other centres in the state like Mysore. For details / profiles of the child actors selected for the research, refer to Appendix - A.

The samples were taken under five major categories for the different points of view required for the final analysis of the problem. They are -

- *Child actors*
- *Parents of child actors*
- *Film & TV fraternity*
- *Psychologists*
- *Advocates*

### 2.2.2 Instruments of Study:

- Interviews / Questionnaires
- Direct Observation
- Case Study

#### i) Interviews / Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. An interview is a conversation between two people (the interviewer and the interviewee) where questions are asked by the interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee.

Main modes of questionnaire administration are:

- Face-to-face questionnaire administration, where an interviewer presents the items orally.
- Paper-and-pencil questionnaire administration, where the items are presented on paper.
The researcher opted for the face-to-face questionnaire administration where the researcher (as an interviewer) could speak and discuss incidents, opinions and issues directly with the subject. Administering the questionnaires personally to individuals has a number of advantages. The person who is administering (the researcher in this context) has excellent opportunity to establish rapport, explain purpose & meanings which may not be otherwise clear. In the long run, the good rapport built may help in disclosing sensitive / personal information which may be very helpful for analysis or even greater cooperation by giving updates at regular intervals. This is very factual and dependable as the responses are direct and are in writing.

**Questionnaire construction**

When properly constructed and responsibly administered, questionnaires become a vital instrument by which statements can be made about specific groups or people or entire populations. In order to make maximum use of this tool of research, the researcher, in consultation with a psychologist and counsellor, prepared three different sets of questionnaires to be administered to the different groups of subjects. The important highlights of the questionnaire thus prepared were-

- The questions were kept open-ended so as to enable free flow of information and encourage possible discussions.
- The order of the questions was such that an answer to one question was not influenced by the previous one.
- The questions in the beginning were more generic in nature, helping to build a rapport and gradually got into more specific issues.
• Simple lie-detection was adapted (depending on the researcher’s perception) by asking a previously asked question again later in the interview by framing it differently.

The questionnaire thus formed was used throughout the research process, wherever necessary. A copy of the questionnaires used is present in Appendix C for reference. But since it was a face-to-face administering, the researcher sometimes varied the order of questions or added / skipped some depending on the responses that were given by the subject.

ii) Direct Observation

Direct Observation or experience, which is a way of gaining knowledge, also known as empirical research is the record of the researcher’s observations or experiences at the place and time of an event. It can be analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively depending on the situation and the kind of data collected.

In the context of this research, the researcher visited the location of work where child actors were shooting. Special permission was taken to be present on the set for the whole time. This also helped the researcher spend time observing the on-goings for the entire time, and occasionally interacting with a few people in requirement of relevant information. The observation was done both for a film shoot as well as a television shoot, separately. Though the researcher was allowed to take photographs, there were reservations about publishing the names of people involved.

iii) Case Study -

A case study is a particular method of qualitative research. Case studies involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event, in this case, a glimpse into the life and situations of the individual as an actor, which would provide a systematic way of looking at
events, and reporting the results. As a result, a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did, may be gained. A case study could be defined as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context.

The researcher, through this method intended to look at the lives of adult individuals who had gained a lot of popularity as child actors during their childhood. This would help in looking at the similar instances that present child actors might be facing with viewpoint that is retrospective, and also understand the possible outcome the child actors may have to face in their future lives. Apart from collecting information about their career graph and their filmography, the researcher also spoke to them individually to collect their opinions and share their experiences. This definitely added a new dimension to the research process.

**VARIABLES**

*Age* – The term ‘Child actors’ includes all children from newborns to 14 year olds. Children react in diverse ways and are affected differently at different ages.

*Gender* – Indian society treats girls and boys differently, as a result, the effect of this would be different on girls and boys.

*Socio-economic status* – Defines the pressure on the child on issues like finance ; and how they are taken care of by parents / guardians
2.3 Operational definitions:

I Actor

The word actor refers to a person who acts, regardless of gender, while actress refers specifically to a female person who acts; therefore a female can be referred to by either term. The Oxford English Dictionary states that originally ‘actor’ was used for both sexes. The English word actress does not derive from the Latin actrix, probably not even by way of French actrice; according to the Oxford English Dictionary, actress was "probably formed independently" in English. As actress is a specifically feminine word, some feminists assert that the word is sexist. The gender-neutral usage of actor, which has re-emerged in modern English, has been used throughout this thesis to refer to both male and female performers.

II Child

A child (plural: children) is a human between the stages of birth and puberty. The legal definition of ‘child’ generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of majority. The word ‘Kid’ is also used in the same sense at various places in the following paper.

III Parent

A parent is a caretaker of the offspring in their own species. In humans they constitute the mother and the father. In the thesis, the word parent is used in the same connotation i.e., the mother and father of the child actor.
IV Kannada film and Television
The Cinema and television of Kannada, encompasses movies and television programs made in the Indian state of Karnataka. Most of them are made in the State’s regional language, Kannada, with a handful of them in Konkani or Tulu. The word ‘cinema’ and ‘film’ is used interchangeably in the same sense at various places in the following paper. Popularly used abbreviation for television – TV is also used at some places in the following thesis with the same connotation. Film and television is collectively also referred to as the entertainment industry.

V Employer
An employer is a person or organization that hires people to perform work in exchange for compensation, which is usually money in the form of wages or a salary. In the present research this term is used with reference to the producers, directors or the production company which employs the child actor.

VI Shooting location / set
Shooting is the process of capturing the visual action through a camera. The present thesis uses the terms shooting location / set, to denote the geographical place where the filming of the movie or the serial is taking place. This usually also includes the place where the shooting equipment, costumes, make up etc. is also kept apart from the actual place of action which has lights camera and the actors / performers.