Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

A review of pertinent literature was conducted in order to find the roots of the problem. Existing literature not only provides direction for research but also helps in measuring the present situation and move accordingly. From research point of view, literature, including books, research papers, news articles, news reports-tell us about the research gap and provide leads for further investigations. It tends to bridge the gap between independently existing findings and connect disciplines. Wimmer & Dominick in their book titled ‘Mass Media Research’ discussed about the importance of literature review as they mentioned, “Experienced researchers consider the literature review to be one of the most important steps in the research process. It allows them to learn from (and eventually add to) previous research and saves time, effort, and money” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003, p.24). Here, the researcher has attempted to conduct thematic review of the literature. Variety of written material, that talk about the importance of family in the life of a child; how media find a place in the family setup; all - pervasive and irresistible nature of media; how media affect the health and the reason children/adolescents/youngsters (here school students) fall prey to media messages have been accessed and scanned.

3.1.1 Family: The Primary Social Institution

To know the world around him, every child (a student in this case) needs a family. Sociology mentions ‘family’ as the primary social institution (Ellwood, 2014). A child's perception, behaviour, etiquettes and media exposure are outcomes of parenting, specifically known as socialisation. Ample literature in this field speaks volumes of it. While growing up, the child observes the actions and behaviours of parents and those around him. Multiple media available in homes heavily influence these actions nowadays. The child observes how people communicate with media, use it, and consume media messages and reactions to it. As media not only seek attention all the time, but also hold the attention of the users for long and longer span of time, the child learns the importance of media. May be an exaggeration, but there are chances that family unknowingly teach the child about something they may regret later. Keeping in mind the exponential growth in media technologies and social media platforms, one may foresee the level of media engagement in families of future.
Talking about human family, Kenkel (1980) has aptly put forth:

The human family is universal because certain human biological characteristics are universal. Humans have a long period of dependency after birth. It takes at least 14 years for a human to achieve physical maturity. Mother cared for the child and taught it until it was able to fend for itself (p.264).

The institution of family sets legacies for its children. These can be norms, language acquisitions, values, beliefs, choices, and cultural practices the family believes in. “In all societies the social placement of children is determined by their positions in specific families; they are socialised and fed there; and members socially control each other” (Goode, 1977, p. 369).

While elaborating certain important factors in the process of socialisation, Goode (1977) further states:

Authority of the parents, consistency, giving freedom to the child, seeking explanations and reasons and punishment, are some of the factors important in the socialisation. Moreover, a common assumption, drawn from wide range of social behaviour, is that the child is plastic and can be moulded in almost any way. In the United States, it is a general belief, too, that people are “not born but made,” that the influences of family, group, or church determine much their fate (pp. 75-88).

### 3.1.2 Media: An Addition to Family

Apart from the family, contemporary media are among most influential factors that mould child’s conduct/ action/ performance up to a great extent. Adding to it, a change in the family structure has provided media a place in homes. J. P. Singh in an article, while talking about changes the family structure encounters, writes:

Since time immemorial, the joint family has been one of the salient features of the Indian society. But the twentieth century brought enormous changes in the family system…The nuclear family, same as elsewhere, is now the characteristic feature of the Indian society. (Singh, n.d, p. 3).
Moreover, socio-economic conditions have forced men and women to be financially independent and this contributed a lot in providing an impetus to a change in the family structure. The change varied from extended family setups to nuclear family setups. Media have grabbed the space that was created during this fundamental shift in the family systems. “The emergence of financially independent, career-oriented men and women, who are confident of taking their own decisions and crave to have a sense of individual achievement, has greatly contributed to the disintegration of joint family” (Singh, n.d., p.3). With such existing circumstances, media have been acting as a baby-sitter in most of the cases, if not always. These days, children/students grow up consuming and using various media. Liew, Chang, Kelly & Yalvac of Texas A&M University mentions:

“In an era where children grow up with media multi-tasking, that is, simultaneous media use of audio and visual gadgets as well as Web-enabled computers and mobile devices, the importance of self-regulatory abilities for learning and achievement (e.g., abilities to remain attentive, motivated, and engaged) becomes very apparent”.

Children are soft targets of media and marketing strategies, as they believe to be the potential future consumers. “Youth are now assaulted by a never-ending proliferation of marketing strategies that colonise their consciousness and daily lives.” (Giroux & Pollock, 2011).

One of the journalists, with the ‘The Hindu’ newspaper, Barkham (2009), in one of his articles written on the extent of TV usage, comments:

Television is no longer merely the drug of the nation; it is the pacifier, babysitter, wallpaper and teacher for our children. Increasingly it introduced on the very first months of their lives. In Australia, young children spend more time watching television rather than any other activity. In Britain, older children spend five hours and 18 minutes watching TV, playing computer games or online, just over an hour less than the US average (p.11).

Talking about how television as a medium made a great impact on the family system and socialisation, Park (1987) mentions:

The reason is that television has not simply joined the ranks of more traditional organs of socialization but has come so far as to exercise a considerable influence on the
socialization system itself. For example, the presence of television in a family has brought about new aspects in mutual responses and activities among family members, thus never failing to produce through vicarious socialization, many changes in the raising of children and thus in family life itself. It is because of a ready availability of television from early childhood and its simultaneous verbal and nonverbal character of message-sending, that this medium looms important in the process of socialization.”

As children grow up, they try to build their identity and look at things from a perspective they develop eventually. Media usually influence their perception formation mechanism. Media form images in the heads of their consumers. Talking about how the news media influence formation of worldview in the minds of the audiences, Dodo & Obukoadata in their paper titled, ‘Performance and Perception: Defining Roles and Influences’, mentioned:

The defining frames inherent in the discourse of perception have had cause to be varied at one point or the other in terms of influences and roles. Among these frames are the elements of media coverage, awareness level and performance of the subject. The intensity of media coverage for instance is likely to contour the perceptual map of the preceptor; while awareness level is seen to have defining roles.

Stressing on a point that when a child grows up he tries to locate himself in the social setup Berger (1963) asserts:

At a certain age children are greatly intrigued by the possibility of locating themselves on a map. The locating of oneself in configurations conceived by strangers is one of the most important aspects of what, perhaps euphemistically, is called ‘growing-up’ (p. 81).

In modern times media have become an inseparable part of any society and therefore affect children as they grow up in a media-rich environment. Ubiquity of media has grabbed everyone, right from toddlers to adults. “Media ubiquity implies the permanent availability of ‘media windows’ to the world that provide information, social contact, and experiences of entertainment and learning” (Melzer, 2010). Captive power and ease of access to media have swayed people, eventually turning them into preys. Media proliferation is a result of its acceptance among people, irrespective of their age. It is observed that children are
increasingly spending larger part of their time with different media. The related literature also approve of this.

To substantiate the assertion mentioned above, Calvert & Wilson (2009) write:

From the beginning of life, children in the twenty first century grow up in front of a screen. Once solely television based, these screen media have now evolved to be digital, interactive, pervasive and increasingly under the control of those who use them (p. 1).

Here, it is said that children grow up in front of screens, but it is equally true that they differ in accessing various media. They use and consume media depending upon their needs and desires. Even Kolucki & Lemish (2011) assert:

Children also differ in the access they have to different forms of media, such as books and magazines, computer, the Internet, music player and mobile phones. Children live in media rich environments and many media converge into a ‘screen culture’ that dominates their life (p.5).

Also, while highlighting the power and effect of media on the lives of children/students/youngsters, Common Sense Media Report, published in 2008, finds:

Media is becoming an ever more pervasive element in the lives of children and adolescents. Children spend on average almost 45 hours per week with media—including television, movies, video games, music and websites. This is more time than is spent with parents (17 hours) or at school (30 hours) (Para 1).

3.1.3 Irresistible Media

Modern society is inundated with information. It is bombarded incessantly with messages from different media sources (Conlon, 2000). In this era of technology, media have become the primary cogwheel in people’s everyday life. Media have become a necessity for the growth, if not survival, of modern day human beings. “The problem of information overload is widely recognised today. Living in an “information society”, we are bombarded with information whether or not we actively seek it” (Edmunds, 2000).
While discussing further he adds:

Growing numbers of television channels provide more viewing choice and result in burgeoning programme guides to be ploughed through in the often elusive search for an interesting programme to watch amongst the escalating dross churned out. Newspapers, radio and television often disseminate the same news items with such an intensity of coverage that one can soon develop a perception of information overload but here one can choose to ignore that information.

Casting effects on different generations, media usages have become irresistible in day to day affairs of teenagers (students in present case). “The world we live in today is very different than the world that most of us remember from our childhood. The twenty-first century is a media saturated, technologically dependent, and globally connected world” (Kellner & Share, 2007, p: 3). “As people are living in social environments where media are omnipresent, the impact of media upon social norms and values seems to be irresistible” (Kim, 2004). In the wake of the exponential growth that media industry has seen during the recent times and keeping in mind the findings, results and recommendations of media effect studies conducted around the world, it becomes more important to study the effects of media on children and other important entities of society. Students, being one of the most crucial parts of our society, demand special attention and care. Healthy students are asset for any nation and every nation has all the reasons for being concerned for their health and takes pro-active measures to curb any potential threat. In case of media usage, as if now, such a perspective is not developed or observed. The primary reason behind this must be the lack of research (Stewart-Brown, Evans, Patterson, Doll, Balding & Regis, 2000).

Steve (2005), while talking about media as carriers of information across boundaries, says:

The media are the vehicles for most artistic expression and communication in the modern age. They have also amplified, extended and transformed artistic forms and practices. All the media arts are constructed forms, with meanings partially shaped and by the interpretations and responses of ‘active’ audiences. Audiences differ across the world and depending on their social composition (p.81).
Earlier, traditional media had altered the sense ratios of the users but technological advancements have provided people, especially teenagers/students, with more powerful tools of communication. The case in point is new media- the Internet, mobile and social networking sites- for their usage and consumption. Discussing about the extent of media influence on today’s youth, Narasimhamurthy (2014) writes:

There is no doubt that there is a growing population of new generation of youths are ardent users of new media platforms in India. The contemporary media have changed the way of our society connects with one another, does information, entertainment. Today’s generations have never known a world without new media. With social networks like Facebook or Twitter, the Indian youths are very much connected with each other with global and local issues through these new media platform. The contemporary media platforms are fast replacing traditional communication channels such as television and radio in India.

A large number of research studies have documented that teenagers are affected/influenced by the content they consume and use while spending time with various media. Whether this influence is progressive or regressive, there is a dire need to study it. “Students often believe what they are told by media. The messages that run across the television screen are effective” (Polowski, 2005). Spending time with various media has both positive and negative effects on one’s health. Polowski further adds, “Adolescent obesity and poor body image are among the consequences of excessive television watching. Excessive television viewing is defined by the Canadian Guide to Healthy Living, which recommends that people watch no more than two hours of television per day.” If students are spending a considerable amount of time with media, it is evident that their social, physical and mental health might get affected. “Media use is a double edged sword with both merits and demerits, and it is therefore, imperative for parents to understand the effect of media exposure on children in order to understand and handle problems resulting from this exposure better” (Agarwal & Dhanasekaran, 2012, p. 38).

### 3.1.4 Media Effect: On Health and Beyond

In the field of Mass Communication and Journalism, the ‘media effect’ studies evolved with the history. The infamous Payne Studies, Two Step Flow theory, Uses and Gratification
theory, Diffusion of Innovation, Media Dissonance theory and others emerged as a result of burgeoning media technology and continuous research in the field.

Talking about media effects, McQuail (2010) rightly asserts:

...the entire study of mass communication is based on the assumption that the media have significant effects, yet there is little agreement on the nature and extent of these assumed effects. This uncertainty is the more surprising since everyday experience provides countless, if minor, examples of influence. We dress for the weather as forecast, buy something because of an advertisement, go to a film mentioned in a newspaper, react in countless ways to media news, to films, to music on radio and so on (p.454).

Ray & Jat (2010) emphasised on the negative effect of media on the health of children:

Effects of the mass media have been found to be far reaching and potentially harmful in influencing the health-related behaviors of children and adolescents, many of whom are not yet mature enough to distinguish fantasy from reality, particularly when it is presented as “real life.” This is particularly important for very young children who developmentally think concretely and are unable to distinguish fantasy from reality. Furthermore, time spent with media decreases the amount of time available for pursuing other more healthy activities such as sports, physical activity, community service, cultural pursuits, and family time.

Certain researchers have asserted that as far as growth and development of a society is concerned, media do play a positive role as well (Peterson, 1963). “Children and adolescents spent a considerable portion of their time watching television, movies, playing videogames and on the internet. Media have proved to be very useful tool in the fields of education, arts, science, sports, and culture” (Agarwal & Dhanasekaran, 2012, p.38).

3.1.4.1 Effects on Physical Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) (1948) defines health as, “A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p.100). For the present study, physical health means overall fitness of the body and lack of obesity. According to many studies children, teenagers, or adolescents (in present case school
students) are spending considerable time consuming and using media and as a result, they end up displacing the time they could have spent on various physical activities like outdoor games (Lee, Bartolic & Vandewater, 2009). “As obesity rates climb, there is both growing concern about the role media may be playing in contributing to the obesity epidemic and increasing support for finding ways media can help stimulate public action to address it” (Samuels, Craypo, Lawrence, Lingas & Dorfman, 2007, p.p.209-226).

Physical inactivity tends to lead to a sedentary lifestyle. Sedentary lifestyle is one of the causes of various diseases and disorders. “Prolonged TV viewing was associated with increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and all-cause mortality” (Grunted & Hu, 2011). People consume fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) while spending time with various media. Ritzer (2001) has observed that when we eat while using media we tend to eat more. He also says:

“Following the fast food model, people have ever more options to ‘graze’, ‘refuel’, nibble on this, or snack on that, rather than sit down at a formal meal. Also, because it may seem inefficient to do nothing but just eat, families are likely to watch television or play computer games while they are eating” (p.40).

It means dietary intake increases. When there is no energy dissipation the body accumulates fats. Also, Lowry, Wechsler, Geluska, Fulton & Kall (2002) write:

Obesity results from an energy imbalance created by factors that increase energy intake or reduce energy expenditure. Television (TV) viewing may promote obesity both by displacing participation in physical activity that would expend more energy, and by increasing dietary energy intake, either during viewing or as a result of food advertising (p. 413).

Further, media usage and consumption cause teenagers to adopt unhealthy food habits, resulting into illness. “A review of 130 quantitative studies examining the relationship between media exposure and health outcomes found that there was strong evidence linking media exposure with obesity, tobacco use, and violence” ( Tremblay, Colley et al, 2010, while quoting Nunez-Smith et al., 2008, p. 733).
Tremblay, Colley, Saunders, Healy & Owen (2010), while quoting Howard et al. 2008 and Gierach et al. 2009, also highlight:

The National Institutes of Health–American Association of Retired Persons Diet and Health Study cohort has given important insights into the link between sedentary behaviour and cancer. It consisted of a prospective cohort study of 488720 men and women aged 50 to 71 years at baseline from 1995 to 1996. High levels of TV and (or) video watching were associated with an increased risk of colon cancer for men and women and endometrial cancer in women (p.732).

Talking about the content of the advertisements Diveley (n.d.) says:

Media also plays a big role influencing what teens eat. Half of the advertisements aimed at children are food ads, most of them are unhealthy choices and none that promote fruits and vegetables… Parents generally do the shopping for food, but they are influenced by their children’s request.

Children by nature form a gullible audience. Unfortunately, there are many advertisers, brands, corporations and organisations that realise this and do not hesitate to take advantage of this. For instance, television serial ‘Shaktiman’ was immensely popular with children in India so much so that there are some instances reported in news media where children hurt themselves badly while attempting to impersonate the lead character played by Mukesh Khanna. Similarly, through advertisements there are many false promises and claims made by advertisers and students fall prey to them. For instance there is one fairness cream brand that promises quick change of facial complexion after application of the product on offer. Such instances leave deep impression on kids and reflect on their social behaviours. “Exposure to television advertisements can lead to harmful outcomes for children. Indeed, television advertising has been implicated as one of the sources of the increased level of obesity in US culture” (Wartella & Robb, 2008, p.23).

Even Dixon, Maddison, Mhurchu, Jull, Lundberg & Widdowson (2010) hold that:

Increasing number of working parents, and long hours spent watching TV or using a computer to play electronic games encourage sedentary behaviour and are related to
overweight and obesity in children. A number of studies have reported associations between the risk of obesity and the amount of time children spend watching television, children’s consumption of fast food while watching TV, and playing electronic games, or using the computer in preference to physical activity (pp.189-190).

There are visuals in advertisements that sometimes are so luring that they almost push the viewer to act swiftly as instructed. For instance, when someone is watching a film of may be a couple of hours duration, and during the commercial breaks he is fed luring images accompanying the message that talk about the new food menu at the nearest KFC or McDonalds, there are very bright chances that the viewer is skipping his meal and ordering food items from some of these advertisers. Scholars have even found connections between junk food advertisements and obesity. Krishnan (2010) while covering an Indo-Australian summit on childhood obesity in Hyderabad in February 2010, writes:

> Doctors and representatives from the Indian Council of Medical Research discussed the possibility of reducing the exposure of advertisements on children. TV is the most powerful medium and makes great impact on a child’s mind. Most programmes watched by children are peppered with the advertisements strategically placed to bring change in eating or behavioural patterns (para.7).

Many scholars have mentioned that students are spending increasing time with media. As the time spent with media increases, the time spent on other activities is reduced apparently. Other activities include physical and outdoor activities also. Scholars have raised concerns over this matter. “If children’s calorie intake from their eating is greater than energy expenditure through heat, growth, resting metabolic rate and physical activity, they will gain weight” (Robinson, Yardy, 2012, p.340). “Obesity is now reaching epidemic proportions in both, developed and developing countries, and is affecting not only adults but also children and adolescents” (Lau et al, 2007, pp. 1-2).

Jordan & Robinson (2008) elaborate:

> Although much has been written over the decades about the possible deleterious effects of television viewing on children’s imagination, academic performance and aggressive behaviour, researchers in the social and medical sciences and public health fields have only recently begun to explore the physical consequences of children’s television viewing (p.119).
Moreover, studies confirm that media influence the eating habits of children. Excessive usage of media by the teens resulted in unhealthy eating habits as well. Lavine & Murmon quotes a study conducted by Harrison (2000), while discussing about the influence of media and media messages on eating habits and eating disorders:

More recently, a longitudinal study by Harrison (2000) found that the number of hours those children ages 6 through 8 watched television per week predicted an increase in disordered eating without predicting idealization of a slender body. This raises the interesting and testable proposition that exposure to various salient media messages, including those contained in the onslaught of advertisements for diet-, fitness-, and weight-related products, might have little effect on the “thinness beliefs” of young children, while leading them to vilify fat, glamorize dieting as a grown-up practice, and yet still think of fattening, non-nutritious foods as desirable in general and useful for assuaging negative feelings.

Research has shown that parents, at one point, consider media responsible for ill health of their wards. Researchers are investigating the role of media in shaping and cultivating eating habits among teenagers. Also there are many studies that focus on the food related advertising in and around educational institutions, their impact on children.

Davison & Birch (2008) write:

Concern has been voiced that TV viewing, and other sedentary behaviours such as watching videos and playing computer games may explain increases in childhood overweight. It has been shown that food advertisements during ‘child-viewing-hours’ comprise 63 per cent of all advertisements and, of these advertisements, 60 per cent are for sugar-coated breakfast cereals. TV viewing may therefore lead to requests by children for parents to purchase such foods and consequently influence children’s dietary patterns (pp. 10-13).

Also, it is observed that fractions of media realise what they are doing to children and what they are capable of. There are many films where when they need to depict a character that is a computer geek, the stereotypical image that is being created is of an obese boy with a pair of glasses. “Media features as an important dimension in young people’s lives, and is recognised
as a critical factor that shapes health-related beliefs and behaviours” (Dorey & McCool, 2009, p.645).

A Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation report released in 2004 finds:
Paediatricians, child development experts and media researchers have theorized that media may contribute to child obesity in one or more ways, including the time children spend using media displaces the time they could have spent in physical activities, children snack excessively while using media and depiction of nutrition and body weight in entertainment media encourages children to develop less healthy diets (para7).

Adding to it, Brown & Martin (2009) puts forth:
Several research studies have found that adolescents who are exposed to smoking in movies are more likely to take up smoking. Similar findings relate exposure to alcohol consumption in movies or television and later alcohol use. Little research has been done to date relating exposure to video game or the Internet to adolescent smoking and drinking behaviour. There is concern that excessive media use promotes obesity by reducing time devoted to physical exercise and consumption of high calorie non-nutritious food (p.2).

It is not just the television that grabs and holds the attention of the youth, but the new media comprising the Internet, mobiles and social media claims to be as powerful. Most of the research involves television viewing and sedentary lifestyle; however, these can also be validated in case of other screen media (Tang & Yang, 2011). Extensive research, outside India, has recognised the power of media to make their users physically inactive. “Childhood is endangered, pitted against the ubiquitous presence of media images and sound bites all of which persuade children to conform to a modality that is not necessarily in their best interests” (Hill, 2011, p.349). “Exposure to media frequently limits children’s time for vital activities such as playing, reading, learning to talk, spending time with peers and family, storytelling, participating in regular exercise, and developing other necessary physical, mental and social skills”(Gupta, 2006, p.183).

To find out the fitness level of young children, EduSports had conducted its 3rd Annual School Health and Fitness Survey (2012). The survey finds that:
Sedentary lifestyle, changing food habits and lack of physical activities are making children in metros unfit as compared to their counterparts in non-metros. One in four children in the metros is overweight/obese whilst one in six children in non-metros is overweight or obese. 23.9 per cent of children in the states of Punjab, Delhi/NCR, Rajasthan, UP and Haryana are overweight/obese as compared to the national average of 19.9 per cent (pp. 6-8).

Sedentary lifestyle owes a lot to excessive use of interactive technology. Stressing on the fact that interactive technology is one of the reasons that makes the consumption and usage of media high, Strasburger and Wilson (2002) write:

Youth today are confronted with a media environment that is rapidly changing. Technologies are proliferating, merging, and becoming more interactive. And the content featured in these technologies is increasingly graphic, realistic, and commercial in nature. At the same time, media use is at high all-time (p.8).

3.1.4.2 Effects on Social Health

The present research work has taken social health as an ability to meet people, adjust in a group, cope up with the environment and develop relationships. It is presumed that students who spend a large share of their time with media interact less with people surrounding them. The purpose of the study is to find if less interaction is affecting their social health and health as a whole and whether effects are positive or negative.

Various research works, conducted to study the relationship between media and social health, have elicited different findings. As Sigman (2009) finds:

Global alterations in human gene transcription, immune system cytokines and Natural Killer (NK) cells, narrowing of major arteries, incidence of stroke, early death, high blood pressure, dementia, Alzheimer, and even the common cold, can all be linked to changes in our social patterns. It has identified a dramatic decline since 1987 in hours per day of face-to-face social interaction as the use of electronic media dramatically increased.
Adding to it, Turkle, as quoted by Baumer (2013), writes:

Digital media dramatically alter our social lives. We have become so wrapped up in the seemingly limitless possibilities of our digital devices that we completely overlook the decreasing standards of human interactions. We would rather text than talk and would rather break up a relationship by sending a text message than having a face to face interaction… (p.74).

While Shields & Kane (2011), in their research, conducted on the college students, regarding the internet usage found: “Use of the Internet for personal and school-related purposes was high among our sample of college students, but lower for work-related purposes”. Similarly, Shields & Kane (2011) finds, “Internet use is associated with both positive and negative social and psychological variables. In few cases where Internet use was related to the amount of face-to-face interaction, all of the relationships were positive and there were no negative effects.

With children/youngsters spending maximum time with the media, they hardly interact with their family members. “Did members of the Greatest Generation spend a lot of time talking about where they were and what they did and how they felt when they first heard the news from Pearl Harbor?” (Zengottia, 2005, p.1). Nowadays children are engaged with all forms of media. They read, watch, hear, type, and with the click of the mouse they cross boundaries. A majority of teenagers prefer to be a part of the virtual reality even at the cost of their health. Here, we are pointing at television, radio, mobile phone, the Internet and video gaming. Literature has also shown that TV dominates as a popular medium in the lives of teenagers. “Preschool children who owned electronic television games, or had a television in their bedroom, had less physical activity and were more sedentary than those who did not” (Spurrier & Magarey et.all. 2008).

Here, we can draw an inference that if a child spends a considerable amount of time with TV then this limits the social interaction among his or her peer group, family members and others. “There have been studies documenting some pro-social and educational benefits from television viewing, but significant research has shown that there are negative health effects resulting from television exposure in areas such as violence, nutrition and obesity”(Barb-on, 2000, p.289).
The phenomenon of new media has altered the operations of the social fabric. “As this is being written, ‘new media’ is a buzzword shorthand for a volatile cultural and technology industry that includes multimedia, entertainment and e-commerce”. (Lievrouw & Livingston, 2002, p.1)

Besides this, Gunn & Donahue (2008) highlight:

Media technology is an integral part of children’s lives in the twenty-first century. The world of electronic media, however, is changing dramatically. Television, which dominated the media world through the mid-1990s, now competes in an arena crowded with cell phones, iPods, video games, instant messaging, interactive multiplayer video games, virtual reality sites, Web, social networks and e-mail (p.3).

While conducting a study on American children, The Henry Kaiser J Foundation in 2003 finds:

Nearly three out of four (73%) have a computer at home, and about half (49%) have a video game player. In some ways, new media is trumping old: nearly twice as many children in this age group live in a home with Internet access (63%) as with a newspaper subscription (34%). Nearly all of them (97%) have products—clothes, toys, and the like—based on characters from TV shows or movies. (Para 1)

Lenhart (2009) after surveying teens of 12 to 17 years and a parent or guardian concludes:

93% of teens go online, 71% of teens own a cell phone, computer, 55% have a portable gaming device, 88% of teens talk to their friends on a landline, 67% of teens talk to their friends on their cell phone, 65% of teens send email to friends, 61% send messages to friends through social networking sites, 60% of online teens send instant messages to friends, 58% of teens send text messages to friends.

Similarly, Nielson (2009) stresses the presence of mobile phones in the lives of teens. He asserts:

Teens are the early adopters of all mobile media. Increasingly, the mobile phones play a critical role in the media lives of teens. In US, 77% of teens already have their own mobile phones. Another 11% say they regularly borrow one. Teens are avid issuers of a wide variety of advance mobile data features. More than a third of teens download
ring tones, install messages or use the mobile web, while about a quarter of US teens download games and applications (p.8).

Mobile phone usage and consumption have become an integral part of youth’s/students’ lives. They use mobile phones on campus against rules. The mobile phone technology is helping students in various ways. They discuss class assignments, projects and talk to teachers as well. Students search information on the Internet using their mobile phone.

Tindell & Bohlander (2012) write:

As the use of mobile devices, such as cell phones, has proliferated in academic settings in recent years, new challenges are faced by institutions of higher education and their faculties... It was found that 95% of students bring their phones to class every day, 92% use their phones to text message during class time, and 10% admit they have texted during an exam on at least one occasion. The majority of the students surveyed believe that instructors are largely unaware of the extent to which texting and other cell phone activities engage students in the classroom. These activities include browsing the Internet, sending pictures, or accessing social networking sites (pp.1-9).

However, one of the research studies conducted by Louis-Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy and published by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, stated that after schools banned mobile phones, the test scores of students aged 16 improved by 6.4% (Doward, 2015). “Modern technology is used in the classroom to engage students and improve performance. There are, however, potential drawbacks as well, as they could lead to distractions” (Doward, 2015).

In a survey conducted by Pew Research Centre, Lenhart (2015) admits:

Much has changed in recent years when it comes to teenagers and their use of technology...The survey shows gaps in access to technology which fall along socio-economic, racial and ethnic lines — especially access to desktop and laptop computers, and smartphones. The survey also reveals that a large number of teens are using sites and apps like Instagram and Snapchat. However, adolescents continue to use Facebook, and it is the site that the largest share of teens say they use most often.
The researcher feels that if children/teens/adolescents/youngsters have access to all sorts of media available in the market then their lives are predominately governed by media. They prefer spending their time with one media or the other. Hence, there is no harm in assuming that they have less face to face interaction and teens prefer mediated communication with their peers, relatives, neighbours and friends.

3.1.4.3 Effects on Mental Health

The present study considered mental health as emotional well-being, a state of the mind and lack of psychological disorders. It is assumed that the amount of time students spend using and consuming different media, kind of programmes students watched, what their role models are up to, the kind of products they are exposed to and all such matters collectively affect their cognitive and physical behaviours. For instance, if a student prefers watching wildlife, quiz or news-oriented programmes over soap operas, his/her cognitive behaviour will be different from other students who watch soap operas. There is a chance that the former will be strong or more rational as compared to the later.

The field of Mass Communication and Journalism has witnessed a vast research on violence shown in media and its effect on the behaviour of children. “Repeated exposure to violent media can lead to increases in violent behaviour. The newer interactive form of violent media (video games) had a larger impact on violent behaviour than the older form (television and movies)” (Anderson et.al, 2007, p.76).

Also, Albert Bandura, who illustrated Social Learning Theory, found that behaviour is learned from the environment through observational learning.

McLeod Saul (2011) writes:

Children pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode their behaviour. At a later time they may imitate (i.e. copy) the behaviour they have observed. They may do this regardless of whether the behaviour is ‘gender appropriate’ or not but there are a number of processes that make it more likely that a child will reproduce the behaviour that its society deems appropriate for its sex.

While studying the media usage and consumption one cannot ignore the premises of the Uses and Gratification theory. “Studies have shown that audience gratifications can be derived
from at least three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media per se, and the social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media” (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974, p.514).

As students consume more and more content delivered by the media of their choice, there is noticeable impact on the behaviour of the students. The unprecedented growth of the Internet has posed serious challenges for mental health advocates and puts the onus of larger responsibilities on parents. To forbid the use of the Internet will have adverse effects on children’s growth in the contemporary scenario where the Internet is the medium helping everyone to keep pace with a swiftly changing work and personal environment.

In such a scenario teachers, doctors, healthcare professionals and especially parents are experiencing much pressure as they can neither completely ban children from using the Internet nor can they keep a concrete check on their usage of the medium.

Benedek, Ash, & Scott (2009) point out the importance of the Internet:

In today’s rapidly changing cyberspace society, the Internet has an ever-increasing impact on the lives of the children and adolescents. In certain types of forensic evaluations, the mental health evaluator should carefully evaluate youth’s internet activities as an important potential source of information (p. 261).

The Internet provides space to the user which is virtually secluded and where the user feels an urge to satisfy his desires which are socially forbidden in real life. Julie, Nicotera & Jenson (2011) explain the situation in the context of new media while focusing on the Internet:

The media represents a “significant other” in the teenager’s world such as it can serve as a place for behavioural rehearsal and social contacts beyond one’s family, school and neighbourhood. New technologies have surpassed traditional media (television, radio, video games). More recent interactive Internet media such as text messaging, online gaming, Facebook and MySpace add complexity to adolescent development. Media-level risks can aggravate mental health issues, such as depression or eating disorders (p. 258).

Usha Nayar (2012) analyses the media usage among young children and takes note of how teenagers mix and cultivate relationships with peers. “Although media technologies are a resource for children and adolescents’ mental health, its intense use leads to questions
concerning young people’s capacity and interest to bring balance in physical and mental activity” (Nayar, 2012, p. 97).

“Although the newsprint and broadcast media have come under significant scrutiny from mental health advocates, it seems that in the world of literature, with a few minor exceptions, little has been done” (Morris, 2006, p.128).

Strasburger (2012) identifies the linkage between the teens’ media use and suicidal tendencies among them. He refers to some studies while putting forth his concern:

Studies have linked media coverage and portrayal of suicide with an increase in actual suicides, a type of “suicide contagion” that affects teens far more than adults. Even sensitively made-for-TV movies have resulted in an increase. The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention actually issued guidelines in 2003 for reporting suicides in the media, which asks TV stations and newspapers to avoid sensationalizing suicides and glorifying the person involved.

Another research by The Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation in 2003 on parents and media highlights:

According to a recent survey by Common Sense Media, approximately 9 out of 10 American parents believe today’s media contribute to children becoming too materialistic (90%), using more coarse and vulgar language (90%), engaging in sexual activity at younger ages (89%), experiencing a loss of innocence too early (88%), and behaving in violent or anti-social ways (85%). The majority of parents believe that media negatively affect their own children in these ways (para 1).

3.1.4.4 Media and Catharsis

The relationship between media and violence is quite old. It is always said that media are mirror of the society. Media show what is happening in the society. And history showcases violence as a part of the society. “Violence in entertainment is as old as civilization itself. The Romans delighted in watching Christians do battle with hungry lions. Dramatic theater from-ancient Greeks to Shakespeare to Andrew Lloyd Webber-has always been thick with jealousy, retribution, and violence” (Barthlow, Dill, Anderson & Lindsay, 2003, p.1).
Violence is termed as psychological effect of media on their audience. This effect is better termed as Catharsis. “The notion of catharsis extends all the way back to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, where he spoke of drama purging the emotions of the audience and leading to a ritual purification” (Harris, 2009, p. 276). Dr Seymour Feshbach is known for formulating the Catharsis hypothesis in the field of Mass Communication (Communicationtheory.org).

Talking about catharsis effect, Sherry (2013), in a book edited by Raymond W. Preiss, writes:

Six studies addressed the issue of catharsis effect, in which violent content media are used as a safe outlet for aggressive thoughts and feelings (Calvert & Tan, 1994; Dominick 1984; Graybill et al., 1985, 1987; Silvern et al., 1987; Silvern & Williamson, 1987). The expectation is that an angered individual may use violent media instead of engaging in aggressive behavior. Catharsis effects have long been held to be an unlikely explanation of television effects (Gunter, 1994), largely due to the positive overall effect size found in television aggression studies and the discrediting of the few experiments that tested a catharsis effect.

Groebel, in an international survey conducted on children and media violence, comments:

Children and adolescents have always been interested in arousing, and often even violence stories and fairy-tales. With the occurrence of mass media, film and in particular television however, the quantity of aggressive content consumed by these age groups has dramatically increased.

“Exposure to television violence probably does have a small effect on violent behavior of some viewers, possibly because the media directs viewer’s attention to novel forms of violent behavior that they would not otherwise consider” (Felson, 1996, p.103-128).

After the Catharsis theory, it is the Cultivation theory that established that violence viewing effects attitude of audiences.

Harris (2004), while talking about the Cultivation Theory, mentions:

George Gerbner and his colleagues argue that the more exposure a person has to television, the more that person’s perception of social realities will match what is presented on TV (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002; Signorielli & Morgan, 1990; Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986, p.273)
3.1.5 Complexity of Media Messages

For children it is always difficult to differentiate between virtual reality and reality. They tend to believe what they consume from media. For instance, advertisements pump products and services into our lives using propaganda. The propaganda tools vary from card stacking, glittering generalities, bandwagon, name-calling, transfers, plain folks, and testimonial.

Our society is drenched with information, hence, makes difficult for us to decode media messages efficiently in order to receive the intended meaning. Media treat children as their special audiences. Children with less understating of the reality fall prey to media messages. “Children are eager to learn, have less real world experience, and have less developed cognitive skills, making them ultimately more vulnerable to media messages” (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002, p.31)

However, Potter (2008) has written about how one can protect oneself from the information overload. He says:

> In order to survive in our information–saturated culture, we put our minds on “automatic pilot” to protect ourselves from the flood of media messages we constantly encounter. The danger with this automatic processing of messages is that it allows the media to condition our thought process. (p.3)

Elaborating upon the treatment of children by media, Potter (2008) further says:

> Children have been treated as a special audience by the public in general, by researchers, and by policymakers. They are regarded as being at higher risk for negative effects of media messages because they are at lower levels of development—cognitively, emotionally, and morally—because they lack the degree of real world experience necessary to process media messages well.

In India, the government’s adoption of liberalization, privatization and globalization policy in 1991 has provided an impetus to the growth of technology in the country that eventually offered children an easy access to new media technologies. Moreover, with the availability of various forms of media, the young people get all the chance to use media in their day-to-day activities and they use various media depending upon their needs. “The world’s media flow increases at an ever-faster rate, surrounding our lives with images, sounds, data and noises.
But some have more media than others, and all of us interpret it differently based on our own experiences” (Steve, 2005, p. 14).

Here, it is significant to observe that the policymakers manufacture content targeting the young generation specifically. “The public and policy makers regard children as a special audience that needs protection from potentially negative effects of mass media exposure. Media literacy can help children, adolescents, and adults reduce negative effects of media” (Potter, 2008, p.69).

3.2 Research Gap

After scanning available literature, it was observed that the effect of media on the health of teens/adolescents/students was yet to be explored on a larger scale. Barring a few articles, no piece of literature of Indian origin was found to provide pertinent leads for the present study. There are studies that explored role of media on society. Such studies attempted to answer questions pertaining to the media effects on the users in Indian context. Some studies addressed the issue of increasing media use among children and its effects on their behaviour. Findings of these studies vary on the basis of many factors including the time frame, the sample of study and the area of study.

In fact, public health sectors in countries like America, Britain and Canada are doing considerable work in this field, but in India the social scientists are yet to take up this issue for research works. Researchers are attempting to explore the prevalence of obesity among teens and its implications, but the role of media in this situation has not been focused upon much. This study attempted to initiate or provide a lead to find out how media is affecting the social, physical and mental health of school students.

At present, a large section of Indian population is quite young and in the context of burgeoning new and social media technologies it is pertinent to assess the role that media plays in the life of youngsters (Chakraborty, 2015). In addition, keeping in mind the timeline of the growth of media, there is a dire need that this is done time to time. This urgency to study the phenomenal effect of media on society in general and youngsters in particular is the starting point of this study.

Furthermore, results of previous studies concerning the effect of media on the health of users are not consistent. The level of penetration of media in the lives of users is growing rapidly
The situation in the field of media and communication technologies is such that the research that was carried out, may be a couple of years ago, becomes redundant within a surprisingly short span. This entices and challenges researchers to accelerate their efforts in order to decipher enigmatic characteristics of media that are changing rapidly.

3.3 Research Questions

A lot of research has been done on media effects. However, this study has attempted to find answers to the critical issue involving media and its effect on the health of school students. Key questions that the research has tried to answer are:-

1. Have media become an indispensible component in the lives of school students?
2. Do media consumption and usage depend on the cognitive level of school students?
3. Do media consumption and usage have an effect on the health of school students?
4. Do parents monitor consumption and usage of media by their wards?
5. Is there any difference between government school students and private schools students in terms of media consumption and usage?

1. In the context of media becoming an indispensible component in students’ lives
   a. Do they depend on media to do their homework/assignments?
   b. Do they depend on media for entertainment purposes?
   c. Do they depend on media for social networking?
   d. Do they depend on media for news and information?
2. In the context of the association between student age groups and media usage among students
   a. Is there an association between student age groups and time spent with media?
3. Do media usage and consumption affect the health of students?
   a. Is there any effect of media usage on the physical health of students?
   b. Is there any effect of media usage on the social health of students?
   c. Is there any effect of media usage on the mental health of students?
   d. Is there any effect of media usage on food preferences of school students?
4. About parents monitoring their wards’ usage and consumption of media?
   a. Do parents make suggestion about the type of media to their wards?
   b. Do parents restrict media usage of their wards?
   c. Do parents facilitate m access of media to their wards?
d. Do parents motivate their wards to use media?
e. Do parents check what use wards make of media?

5. Is there any difference between government school students and private school students regarding media consumption and usage?
   a. Are government school students less exposed to different media as compared to private school students?
   b. Are government school students more active on social media platforms as compared to government school students?
   c. Do government school students spend more time on outdoor activities as compared to private school students?
   d. Are government school students more obese than private school students?

3.4 Summary

In this chapter the researcher has quoted literature that discusses various dimensions of the research problem. These dimensions include the need of a family for a child, altering family structures (i.e. from extended family structures to nuclear ones), the unique space occupied by media in the modern day family, its importance in the technology dominated world and the luring features of media for children/adolescents/youngsters (school students), the effect of media on the routine life of citizens. Various researchers have laid stress on the point that media have both positive and negative effects on their consumers. The effects depend on the kind of content users consume. Scholars have proved that prolonged exposure to media led to sedentary lifestyle and this type of lifestyle hassled to various kinds of diseases like obesity, cardiac arrests, diabetes and others.

This chapter has also discussed the effect of media on the physical, social and mental health of youngsters. The literature has documented the prevalence of sedentary lifestyle, obesity and intake of fast moving consumer goods among the children/youngsters. Moreover, it has also been observed that the present generation prefers mediated communication over interpersonal/face-to-face interactions. It has also been found that the age group between 8 and 18 years spend 7.38 hours per day with various media.

Many researchers have claimed that media govern the lives of children these days. Our society is bombarded with information and it has become really difficult for children to understand the media messages as their cognitive level is lower as compared to adults. It is
hard for young minds to differentiate between virtual reality and reality. Even parents agree that their kids had become materialistic and scholars have stressed that parents are worried about the extensive usage of media by their wards. Many scholars also raised concerns over the inability of parents to cope-up with the rapid pace of technological advancements. They also feel that it is difficult for them to monitor media consumption and usage of their wards as they are surrounded by one or the other media channel all the time. The next chapter talks in detail about research design, its importance, methodology, universe, population sample, and sample size.