STATE OF CHILD-FRIENDLINESS IN NEPALI MEDIA

AN ASSESSMENT OF COVERAGE ON CHILDREN IN NEPALI MEDIA 2022

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures and Tables ................................................................. 7

Executive Summary ........................................................................ 8

Unit I ................................................................................................. 10

**Introduction** .............................................................................. 10

1.1 Background ................................................................................ 10

1.2 Child-friendly consciousness in the Nepali newspapers and news portals ................................................................. 12

1.3 Conceptual Framework ............................................................ 14

1.4 Main Research Question ......................................................... 16

1.5 General Objective .................................................................... 16

1.5.1 Specific Objective ............................................................... 16

1.6 Limitations ................................................................................. 16

Unit II ............................................................................................. 18

Review of the Earlier Documents on the Topic ............................. 18

Unit III ........................................................................................... 20

**Methodology** ............................................................................ 20

3.1. Focus Group Discussion ......................................................... 20

3.2. Key Informant Interviews ..................................................... 20

3.3. Content analysis .................................................................. 20

3.3.1 News and views on Protection .......................................... 22

3.3.2 News and views on Child Development ............................ 23

3.3.3 News and views on Child Survival ................................. 23
3.3.4 News and views on Child Participation ............................................. 23
3.3.5 Common factors in all thematic angles of the stories ........ 23

Unit IV ........................................................................................................... 26

Presentation and interpretation of data.................................................. 26

4.1. Focus Group Discussion .................................................................. 26
4.3 Key Informant Interviews .................................................................. 28
4.4 Content Analysis .............................................................................. 31

A. Newspapers .......................................................................................... 32
4.4.1 Ratio between total news and child-related news ...................... 32
4.4.2. News by theme .............................................................................. 34
4.4.3. Nature, placement and usefulness of news-stories ................. 37
4.5. Articles from newspaper .................................................................. 41
4.6. Interviews from newspaper ............................................................. 46
4.7. Editorials from newspaper ............................................................... 46
4.8 Comparison between all the reading materials (news, editorials, articles, interviews) and the materials on children .......... 50

B. Online news portals ............................................................................. 54
4.9 Child-related reading materials on Online news portals .......... 54

5. Findings out of all three techniques of data collection ................. 60

Unit V .......................................................................................................... 65

Conclusions and Recommendations ..................................................... 65
Reference .................................................................................................. 70

Annex-I ....................................................................................................... 71

Glossary .................................................................................................... 71

Annex-II ..................................................................................................... 72

Participants of FGD .................................................................................. 72
Annex-III .................................................................................................................72
  Key Informative Interviewees .............................................................................72

Annex-IV ..................................................................................................................73
  List of Questions for FGD ....................................................................................73

Annex-V ....................................................................................................................73
  List of Questions to the Key-informant Interviewees ........................................73

Annex-VI ...................................................................................................................74
  Research Team ......................................................................................................74
## List of Figures and Tables

**Fig 1:** Ratio between the total news-stories and the news-stories on children .................................................................................................................. 35

**Fig 2:** News coverage in terms of depth in content .................................. 36

**Fig 3:** Ratio between the news on children originated from the Kathmandu valley and outside ................................................................. 36

**Fig 4:** News-stories on four thematic areas of child rights .................... 37

**Fig 5:** Different aspects of news-stories related to children ................. 38

**Fig 6:** News-stories related to child abuse and exploitation of children 38

**Fig 7:** Ratio between the news-stories with the exposition of the accused or abuser and not the exposition of the accused or abuser ....... 39

**Fig 8:** Ratio between the sensitive news-stories that maintained privacy and not maintained privacy .......................................................... 40

**Fig 9:** Nature of the news-stories on children ........................................ 41

**Fig 10:** Priority is given to the news-stories on children ........................ 41

**Fig 11:** Quality of the news-stories on children ...................................... 42

**Fig 12:** Usefulness of news-stories on children ...................................... 43

**Fig 13:** Sources of news-stories on children .......................................... 44

**Fig 14:** Ratio of total articles and articles on children ............................ 45

**Fig 15:** Articles on children in terms of their focus ............................... 46

**Fig 16:** Themes of articles related to children ........................................ 47

**Fig 17:** Current context of the articles...................................................... 47

**Fig 18:** Quality of articles on children in terms of clarity ......................... 48

**Fig 19:** Quality of articles in terms of the argument ............................... 49
Fig 20: Total number of editorials and editorials on children ..................50
Fig 21: Editorials on children in terms of depth and argument ...............50
Fig 22: Editorials on children in terms of thematic division ......................51
Fig 23: Editorials on children in terms of topic and subject matter ...........52
Fig 24: Editorials on children in terms of clarity .....................................52
Fig 25: Quality of editorials on children in terms of presentation .............53
Fig 26: Total number of all kinds of materials and materials on children 54
Fig 27: All the child-related news and views: Focused, partly focused and slightly related .................................................................54
Fig 28: All the reading materials and ratio between entirely child-focused, partly focused and slightly related ..............................................55
Table 1: Child-related Materials by thematic division ..............................56
Table 2: Materials by contemporary issues .............................................56
Fig 29: News-stories on four thematic areas of child rights ......................57
Fig 30: Different aspects of news-stories related to children ....................58
Fig 31: Nature of the news-stories on children .........................................58
Fig 32: Quality of the news-stories on children .......................................59
Fig 33: News in Online portals in terms of usefulness ...............................60
Fig 34: News-stories related to child abuse and exploitation of children 60
Fig 35: Articles by the four major themes of child rights ..........................61
Fig 36: Child-related articles: Entirely focused on the child, partly focused and slightly related to children .......................................................62
Fig 37: Current context in the articles on children ....................................62
Fig 38: Conceptual clarity on the issue of child rights on the articles in online news portals ..............................................................63
Executive Summary

Nepal’s ratification of the UN Child Rights Convention and the establishment of the plural media system coincided with the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990. However, in the last three decades, a total number of all kinds of reading materials comprises of news, articles, editorials and interview in the Nepali newspapers and online news portals, the materials on a child or child-rights issues has yet to cross 5-6 percent. Albeit the Nepali media in general seen to be aware on the principles enshrined in national and international professional standards such as the guidelines of UNICEF, International Federation of Journalists and Press Council Nepal on child-friendly reporting, out of total materials related to children, only 33 percent are entirely focused on children’s issues or the substantial. Rest, 22 percent materials are partly focused on children and much as 45 percent of materials have just mentioned about children or merely touched children’s issue within a single word or a sentence. In comparison to entire published materials in newspapers (total 11,530) as much as 2 percent materials are found to be entirely focused on children’s issues and 1 percent materials are found to be partly focused, were 3 percent materials have just touched children’s issue. The Child-Friendly Media Directives (CFMD) issued by Nepal Press Council in collaboration with Federation of Nepali Journalists and the then Central Child Welfare Board is yet to be established as an effective and convenient instrument amongst the Nepali media practitioners.

Against the backdrop, contents of the Nepali newspapers and the news portals are examined. The findings of the content analysis of five newspapers and three online news portals are verified and substantiated by FGD and KII. Samples taken from the study is conducted with the belief that mainstream media outlets are for general mass and in
principle, they cover all the aspects of social lives and how much priority is given for child-related issues.

The study indicates that children’s issues are not in priority in the process of gatekeeping in the Nepali newspapers and news portals. The conclusion applies to the entire Nepali media outlets. Hence, Federation of Nepali Journalists, Press Council Nepal and National Child Rights Council need to collaborate again to make an effort in socializing the Nepali journalists with the letter and spirit of the relevant documents including CFMD.
Unit I
Introduction

1.1 Background

The study is focused on assessing the state of the coverage of the child-related issues from the rights perspectives. It is based on the understanding that there are guidelines on child-friendly reporting in global and national levels. It signals the state of sensitivity on the child or child-related issues in the Nepali mass media in general.

The general expectation is that the media outlets abide by the notion of paying special attention while covering children’s issues. Thus the basis for the examining the child-friendliness is the principles enshrined in the provisions of national and international professional standards such as the guidelines of UNICEF, International Federation of Journalists and Press Council Nepal on child-friendly reporting.

Since the study aimed at examining the contents concerning children from the Nepali newspapers and online news portals that are targeted to the public, primarily it is not an appraisal of the content specially prepared for the children. That is why the assessment does not anticipate the contents dedicated to the children. Rather the study is conducted with the belief that mainstream media outlets are for general mass and in principle, they cover all the aspects of social lives and how much priority is given for child-related issues. The ideal is that media outlets need to be the avenues to manifest the issues related to children. Thus the study has not assessed the ‘content for children’, rather it has examined the contents on or about children in the media outlets available in the Nepali market. The general understanding is that even if they are not targeted to the children, they take care of the issues concerning children in principle. This study attempts to assess their treatment to the children or the issues related to the children.
Thus it is focused to assess the place for children issues in mainstream media. It would also indicate the priority given to children in the mainstream of national life. The study is concentrated on the state of abidance of Child-Friendly Media Directives (CFMD), issued by Press Council Nepal, in consultation with FNJ, for the Nepali media people.

Content analysis is considered as one of the effective ways of data collection to identify patterns in recorded forms of communication. Kerlinger (2009, p.525) presents the definition of content analysis as a method of studying and analysing communications in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner to measure variables. As he considers content analysis is a method of analysis measurement, this study aimed at the State of child-friendliness in Nepali media. Wimmer and Dominick (2005, p.141) state that quantification is important in fulfilling the objective of the content analysis because it aids researchers in the quest for precision. He argues that quantification gives researchers additional statistical tools that can aid in interpretation and analysis. Hence, required data is collected from a set of written, oral or visual texts in this technique of data collection. For this study selected numbers of newspapers and online or digital news portals running from Kathmandu.

The research is designed to be both quantitative and qualitative. It will, mainly, be focusing on counting and measuring through the fixed indicators. The method of content analysis is implied here to achieve the purpose of examining the State of child-friendliness in the Nepali newspapers and news portals, generally in Nepali media. Content analysis will be used to quantify the occurrence of certain words, phrases, subjects or concepts in a set of historical or contemporary texts. For instance, it is required to quantify the news story on children’s issue in terms of quality and given priority. However, to get
insight into some of the coverage technique for qualitative research will be applied. It will be an attempt to know about the sociology of the media and media logic in case of the coverage on children.

This report is based on the analysis of news and views covered on children from August to September 2020. Seven mainstream Nepali news outlets were randomly selected; out of which five of the print media in Nepali and three digital news portals. The five Nepali national dailies are Gorkhapatra, Kantipur, Nagarik, Naya Patrika and Annapurna Post. Similarly, three online portals are Onlinekhabar.com, Ratopati.com, and Setopati.com. The analysis has employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Thus, to supplement the study mainly based on content analysis, key informant interview conducted with selected journalists including the editors, and child rights activist as well.

1.2 Child-friendly consciousness in the Nepali newspapers and news portals

Issued per section 12 of the Journalists Code of Ethics-2016, Child-Friendly Directive is one among two specific guidelines declared by the Press Council Nepal. It has altogether 10 sections and sections from 3 to 10 are intended to guide the journalists or provide a remedy in case of ignorance of the directives.

Section 3 ensures prominence to children and it instructs journalists to be cautious to protect child rights in any circumstances. Section 5 prohibits circulating heinous or disturbing graphics that would affect child psychology. It stresses on taking pre-consent before interviewing a child. It also instructs to assure that it does not harm a child while involving in advertising. It seeks assurance from mass media to present the matter useful to the children. It asks journalists to behave
sensitively with the juveniles who are caught in the incident against the laws. The section ensures the protection of privacy of the child and asks the media not to present child-related issues sensationaly.

Likewise, section 4 presents 9 points as don’ts for the journalists. It instructs the media not to hurt child psychology and dignity by presenting any materials. It cautions journalists until and unless it is for the public good, and do not reveal the identity of children if the matter endangers them. It ensures that children are not to be used as a witness of any incidents. The section also asks the media not to harm a child by illustration or graphics. It prohibits the indecent or obscene materials on children. It also prohibits harming children by using them on advertising. It instructs not to reveal the identity of a child who has experienced sexual harassment or violence. It insists journalist not to interview the child without the consent of the guardians.

Section 5 of the directives is about the complaint and the remedy. Rests of the sections are related to the process of the enforcement of the directives. Child-Friendly Directives for the Nepali journalists is one such an instrument on the way to fair journalism that would also be an example of best practices for the outside world.

Setting out the rights that must be realized for children to develop to their full potential the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, CRC was adopted 30 years ago. It was adopted as an international legal framework. Aiming at ensuring the best interest of child across the world, the convention has been getting overwhelming support. Nevertheless, the ideal enshrined in it would not be materialized without internalizing it by the different entities of the society. As the CRC acknowledges, the child, because of his/her physical and mental immaturity needs special safeguards. Journalists and the mass media outlets need to abide by their responsibilities in this regard. Media, the
lifeblood of a democratic society, is a social entity which has a crucial function to fulfill the communication needs of the society. The mass media also have a function to make people optimistic by protecting the future of humankind, the best interest of children.

One approach to examining the contents of the media considers the entire media system as a tree. McKenzie (2007) uses the metaphor of a tree to discuss a media system. In the context of this study his visualization, especially of the leaves as contents concerning the children in the Nepali daily newspapers would be relevant. According to McKenzie (2007, p.37) leaves are the most observable and changeable part of a tree, we can think of leaves as analogous to content in a media system. He states further that as standout leaves provide commentary on the general welfare of the tree, news reporting provides commentary on the general welfare of a media system.

Hence, the study, *State of Child-Friendliness in Nepali Media: An assessment of coverage on children in Nepali newspapers and digital news portals* is an attempt to analyze the contents concerning children from the representative newspapers and digital news portals in the Nepali media landscape.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

For this study, the term child-friendliness primarily refers to the abidance of normative values by the media outlets concerning the coverage of children’s issues. The four groups (or categories) of child rights such as protection, development, survival and participation are ingredients of the normative value regarding the child-friendly coverage. It is visible to a larger extent; the normative value contributes to a general attitude towards children and their rights. They are based on the notion that children too are equal as human beings. Thus findings of this study could be taken as a baseline to get
acquaintance about the media coverage of the children’s issue and extent of their usefulness in political accountability. The study has indicated the perception of gatekeepers of the Nepali media outlets to determine the values of the materials related to the children.

The gatekeepers determine which information will be passing out to people. However, a gatekeeper is always having its influences like social, cultural, ethical and political. Theory of gatekeeping describes the process through which events are covered by the mass media. It explains how and why certain information either passes through or restricted.

Selection and organization process of the information as per the level of importance and interest depends on a team or a person. The gatekeepers determine how much of the information gets published or on aired. According to Shoemaker (1991), gatekeeping is the process by which billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day (p. 1). Watson (2004) states that gatekeeping is about opening or closing the channels of communication. It is about accessing or refusing access (p.123).

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that the factors affecting the decisions of gatekeepers include news values, government, culture, personal judgment, politics, ethics and beliefs. One of these factors could also invoke the self-gatekeeping for the media. Watson (2004) holds that in studying the news one needs to explore three linked features of production-gatekeeping, agenda-setting and news values. He states that the operation of the first two depends upon the demands of the third which in turn regulates the conventions of news presentation (p.123).
1.4 Main Research Question

How child friendly is the Nepali news media outlets?

1.5 General Objective

To examine how leading newspapers and digital online news portals report on the news coverage concerning children. The general objective is to know the degree of ethical consideration to which journalists abide by in the course of presenting news stories.

Thus the main purpose of the assessment is to be informed on the implementation status of Child-Friendly Media Directives (CFMD) issued by PCN.

The underlying idea of this study is to provide situational analysis to advance any forms of sensitization efforts to the dignitaries of associations of journalist and working journalists in different parts of the country.

1.5.1 Specific Objective

To examine the extent and depth of the coverage of the child-related issues in the Nepali newspapers.

1.6 Limitations

Albeit a content analysis presents some level of subjective interpretation, it would be possible to quantify selected features and trends regarding the coverage of the particular area. Appropriate sampling and proper way of collecting data would ensure the reliability and validity of the results or outcomes. The study generally manifests the trends of the Nepali mass media. However, it is concentrated on the newspapers and news portals.

This research, mainly based on content analysis of selected newspapers
and news portals, is not focused on age-appropriate news for the children; rather its main focus is to demonstrate the state of general awareness on the rudiments of the coverage on children amongst the mainstream media in Nepal.

The situation of the study period is slightly different than the normal situation by the pandemic and natural disaster. The changed context may have some impact on the news trend in comparison to the same period of the normal situation.
Unit II

Review of the Earlier Documents on the Topic

Children or the issue related to the children are not being given significant coverage. Hence, the data reveals that the process of the gatekeeping in the Nepali media shows that gatekeeping is the way to fix the information in a hierarchy. Aryal (2020), referring to a Media Monitoring Report, 2020, states that around 90 percent of news stories related to the right to education in 8 Nepali newspapers, are being placed on inner pages and only 8 percent of such items are placed on the front page. Stating that only 0.5 percent of the total news stories on right to education have appeared as the banner news in the newspapers namely, Gorkhapatra, Kantipur, Annapurna Post, Nagarik, Nepal Samacharpatra, Rajdhani, The Kathmandu Post and The Himalayan Times, he views that given the situation, it would be relevant to draw the attention of Nepali newspapers to provide more priority to the news item relating to the right to education (p.9-10). The constitution of Nepal has guaranteed the right to education up to the high school level. The right is for the children. Hence, not given priority to the right to education could be equated to not give priority to children.

Attempts have been made to change the media’s perception not only in Nepal, rather in entire South Asia to enable journalists’ ability to approach children’s stories from a mainstream economic and political agenda. A belief in this line holds that journalists are encouraged by media schools and editor to cover development issues like children and women, but these are often treated as soft topics (Balgos, John and Subba, 2000. p.3). Nevertheless, the coverage of children’s issues is being a matter of concern over the years in the country. For instance, Loo Niva Child Concern Group (2019, p.7), Lalitpur has recorded on its Annual Media Monitoring Report, The Status of Right
to Education in Nepal, 2019, that as many as 4 news stories were published as banner news in 8 national dailies in the year 2018. The organization, which has been conducting the media monitoring since the year 2014, has selected Gorkhapatra, Annapurna Post, Kantipur, Nepal Samacharpatra, Rajdhani, The Himalayan Times, The Kathmandu Post and Nagarik dailies as the sample. It shows that the news stories concerning the children are being given less importance and prominence in the Nepali newspapers.

National Child Rights Council has been compiled news stories on the incidents of the violations of child rights as its annual report entitled State of Children in Nepal. NCRC’s annual report of the year 2019 states that as many as 452 males and 830 female children and 20 infants were affected by sexual offence, child labour, child marriage, murderer, trafficking, abduction, suicide, mental and physical punishment. Among 20 cases some of the cases of abortion has also included. The data was compiled from as many as 24 news outlets. Out of the total incidences of violence against children, incidences, 323 incidences were related to sexual abuse and rape. As many as 223 incidences were about child marriage and 180 incidences were about suicide (p. 68).

NCRC has been coordinating with concerning offices, i.e., municipalities, ward committee, Nepali Police and others for the wellbeing of children. Hence, the Nepali newspapers and online news portals have become a good source to examine the state of children in Nepal. Loo Niva (2018, p. 1) holds that largely Media in Nepal are focused on political issues and crime-related sensational reporting, however in recent years the news reporting on social issues, public concerns are emerging. The issues of education, health, women rights and gender justice, agriculture and disaster are increasingly observed in Nepalese mass media.
Unit III
Methodology

The study is comprised of both qualitative and quantities techniques. The study adopted three techniques of data collection.

3.1. Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion is organized virtually in zoom among the senior and young Child Rights activists along with the experts in the field. The participants were from the government agency, UN Agency, INGOs, NGOs and the networks working for child rights in different parts of country.

3.2. Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are conducted to examine the gatekeeping procedures in the newsrooms of the Nepali newspapers. The findings of the study are also substantiating with the help of the views obtained from the interviews with the editors of the major daily newspapers of the country.

3.3. Content analysis

A total of 60 days-content on the coverage on children from eight Nepali media is reviewed in August and September of 2020. Children related coverage from the broadsheet daily newspapers namely Gorakhatra, Kantipur, NayaPatrika, Nagarik and Annapurna Post were analyzed in terms of their presentation style and usefulness. Likewise, the contents concerning the children from the digital news portals namely Online Khabar.com, Setopati.com and Ratopati.com are analyzed.

The content analysis has been compared in terms of quantity with the total number of news and views published. The contents concerning
children issues in terms of news and views separately from the front, inside and the back page are also examined.

The news stories on children are also examined regarding context, source and news peg. The procedure of content analysis, the major technique of data collection for the study, moved ahead step by step.

First, contents that are related to children’s issues from the select medium such as newspapers and online news portals were selected as the sample for the texts to be analyzed.

The contents are divided into two broad categories, i.e., news and views. Further, the news is divided into event or incident reporting, news based on the release, report or announcement, and the situation reporting. The study presents the total number of news from inside and outside pages on children or the child-related issues. After counting the total number of news from the front, inside and the last page, the percentage of news stories on children found in entire newspapers were calculated.

Similarly, the views were divided into three broad categories, i.e., opinion-article, editorial and interviews. A total number of all three types of views-matters was also compared with such materials concerning children. In the context of all three categories of views for the study, presentation of the main point of the material is examined to see whether it is clear or ambiguous. Next, there is an attempt to see the quality of the argument. Whether the argument is well-articulated, or satisfactory, or it is poor. Another factor to be examined is conceptual clarity on the issue of Child Rights. In this question, there are three options, well crafted, average, and confused. All child-related materials are also divided into three categories such as entirely focused, partly focused and touched on children’s issues.

Second, the units and categories of analysis and coding of units are
defined. The contents are broadly divided into four thematic categories: **child protection, survival, development** and **participation**. All four dimensions of child rights have been considered as the cross-cutting parameters for the assessment of all kinds of contents, i.e. news and views. The total number of news from the front, inside and last page on child protection, development, survival and participation are thus quantified.

Third, a set of explicit rules for coding has been developed to ensure appropriate and consistent coding of the texts. Fourth, relevant data from each text are recorded into the appropriate categories following the fixed set of the rules for the study. To locate the child-related materials are not examined only through the headings, rather the detailed search is conducted with the help of keywords such as “Balbalika, Balika, Balak, Shishu, Bidhyarthi, Bidhyalaya, Khopa, Poshan”. The effort found to be helpful to capture almost all the coverage on children even though the heading or lead is not directly related to children.

Finally, the conclusion has been drawn through the analyses of the results.

**3.3.1 News and views on Protection**

The study is focused on examining sensitivity in the news and views concerning the issue of child or protection, e.g. sex abuses, juvenile justice and child trafficking. Whether the news story is presented with an identifiable photo of the child or photograph of the child is not published or the photograph is published with blurring the face. The study also has included the information whether the accused or abuser exposed.

Hence news and views about the incidents and situation related to an orphanage, disability and online safety are generally covered under the
theme of child protection. Stories or the opinion concerning protection further includes different forms of social protection, discrimination in the basis of Dalit identity, including the minorities and ethnic groups, victims of ill-traditions such as Chhaupadi, domestic child labour, child labour, various forms of sexual abuses, corporal punishment, other forms of abuses, child marriage, separation from family, street children, and drug abuse.

3.3.2 News and views on Child Development

News stories and views, or any reading material, on child development are comprised of different areas including the issues of education as well as recreational, activities and parental care.

3.3.3 News and views on Child Survival

News and other reading materials regarding ultra-poor, health and public health issues, sanitation as well as vaccination and nutrition comes under the categories of news and views on child survival.

3.3.4 News and views on Child Participation

The news stories and views related to the children out of school, child participation in different walks of social lives, and their learning process come under the news on child participation. Activities of child clubs, the voice of children, their participation in sports, arts and literature are examined under this category.

3.3.5 Common factors in all thematic angles of the stories

The study examines the place of publication of the news, in the case of newspaper, to see the importance and prominence given to the news stories related to children. All four thematic issues of the news are examined in terms of nature whether they are incident reporting or situation reporting or based on press release or report.
An attempt is made to examine the news whether it is focused on child or not focused and only touched the issues related to children. The study has attempted to see whether it is capable to impart overall positive impression, negative impression or the news are unable to create an impression.

Likewise, whether the news stories are comprehensive and well explained is another question in the course of examining the news stories. The study has analysed the uses of sources of the news stories. There could be formal, informal, strong or weak sources. Another issue of the Nepali newspapers concerning coverage on children is the use of language. Hence, the study has examined whether language is appropriate or inappropriate.

Another common factor, which was examined in all four thematic issues of child rights, is the usefulness of news. A news story on children could be useful for the exposition of wrong-doing. It could be useful for general awareness or for making the offices accountable. Similarly, it could be of use for appreciating good doing or for making sensational news. Analysis has also tried to examine whether the news story is encouraging for children and person working for children.

The study of the contents related to children has tried to examine the level of ethical consideration as well. For instance, a parameter is about the right to privacy. In this question, there are two options first, maintained Privacy of Children, second, not maintained Privacy of Children. Another concern related to ethical consideration is the level of sensitivity. In this context, an attempt is made to examine whether an identifiable photograph of the child is published or a photograph of the child is not published. Likewise, whether the face in the published photograph has made unidentifiable to avoid visible identification of children. The usefulness of any news story concerning the children depends on their contents. To examine the quality of news in this
regard the study has attempted to see whether identification such as name or identity of accused or abuser is exposed in the story. Similarly, another attempt related to the ethical quest is to examine the uses of language whether they are appropriate or inappropriate. As the reading materials from any newspaper or digital news portal expected to be useful for the audience and society, the study examines the extent of the usefulness of news in one of the four aspects. First, is the exposition of wrongdoing and the second is general awareness. Likewise, the third is whether it is useful for making the offices accountable, and the fourth is for appreciating good doing. Fifth is for making sensational news, and sixth is whether it is encouraging children and person working for children.
Unit IV
Presentation and interpretation of data

4.1. Focus Group Discussion

The experts express mixed opinion while asking that to what extent you are satisfied with the news and views concerning the children on Nepal’s online news portals and printed newspapers. Some hold that the situation is improving. According to them, the issues have been getting space in comparison to the past. Some of the experts express dissatisfaction over the coverage. However, they reach an agreement that the coverage on children’s issues is not significant in terms of quality and quantity in the Nepali newspapers and online news portals, however, it’s getting some spaces in comparison to before.

First, the newspapers or news portals are unable to pay respect to the voice of the children. Consequently, children are underrepresented in the newspapers and news portals. Those who hold this view think that coverage on children is increasing in terms of quantity. However, the treatment to the matters is not appropriate and up to the professional standards.

Second, the trend of merely mentioning children in any write-up has been growing. However, the materials are not substantial, thus not capable to convey child sensibilities. The news outlets, broadly, do not abide by the obligations to provide space for the children and they are not committed to being inclusive. News stories from outside the Kathmandu valley get less space, specifically prominence and importance, in comparison to the news from the valley. Moreover, in most of the cases of abuse and exploitation, the materials are not used to be sufficiently concentrated on the crime and perpetrators; rather they present figurative description by highlighting the act of crime. The news stories related to children are less concerned with
an attempt to hold the authorities accountable. In other words, the coverage would not be proved to be instrumental for the protection and promotion of child rights.

Third, the news outlets are yet to be able to respect confidentiality, as per the professional standards, of the children while covering them or their issues. The media in general lacks the awareness on the concept of privacy of the children. It is because of the absence of the specialization on children’s affairs among the journalists. As another consequence of such inadequacy, most of the materials where coverage on children usually found targeted to adults.

Fourth, audiences are equally responsible for the inadequacy of child-friendly coverage. Because the media are market-driven and the contents concerning the children are not considered as the saleable items. It is the market that has been invoking the media to present children’s activities as a matter of entertainment. Generally, the right based approach, with the sensitivity towards child rights, lacks in the processing of the media product. Another problem is that most of the news stories on children are formal, ceremonial and incident or event-oriented. The news outlets are not abiding by the child-friendly guidelines prepared by different national and international organizations. But in the cases, while conducting campaigns media are seen supportive. Thus news outlets serve the cause of child-rights in case of sensitization from pressure groups and child rights organizations.

On asking what is your opinion regarding the subject matters related to the children that must be covered in the media, the experts opine that children should get a platform to ventilate their voices. The experts who hold such views state that children have been deprived of expression as the media are unable to provide the platform for them. They suggest that news outlets need to understand the children also
holds the rights and they are also a part of society and citizenry. Thus any materials concerning children need to be informative, educative or supportive to the overall development as well as the best interest of the children.

On asking what are your categorical suggestions for news outlets, while covering the issues concerning children, the experts state that children need to be treated as the citizens of today, not as the future citizen. They also suggest that there should be follow up in the case of crime against children. Message about the action taken against the perpetrators needs to get wide and effective coverage. The experts opine that child rights activists, researchers and specialists need to raise the frequency and intensity of analyzing the state of children. They stress on the socialization of journalists on the issues concerning children. The child rights groups can provide journalists with an exposure to the appropriate socialization. Likewise, they could help journalists to get rid of stereotypes. Any materials on the abuse or exploitation of children need to be able to hold the responsible person accountable. The materials need to be capable to sensitize the concerning authorities on obligations of the state. Even the media logics allow the news outlets to cover children related issues, who comprises of 38 percent of the total population of Nepal.

4.3 Key Informant Interviews

On asking what the major parameters are fixed for the gatekeeping in terms of news and views in the Nepali newspaper, the editors express that there are mechanisms for news and views. The editors say, they undertake plagiarism check for the article. In the case of news, they have, they have a mechanism for a fact check and cross verification. The papers have established the provincial bureaus that verify the news. Besides the technical gatekeeping, by and large, they need to take care of the themes as they have some standing orders in terms of
theme or subject matter.

The editors state that the process of gatekeeping is necessary to filter the news and information in terms of balance and fairness. They state that the news or views which may undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity, the nationality of Nepal or the harmonious relations between the Federal Units or the harmonious relations between various castes, tribes, religions or communities, or on any act of treason are being discarded. Likewise, as per the letter and spirit of the constitution of the country, anything deemed as defamation or contempt of court or incitement to an offence, or on any act which may be contrary to public decency or morality, on any act of hatred to labour and any act of incitement to caste-based untouchability as well as gender discrimination is being discarded by the gatekeepers of the newsroom. They opine that there are dos and don’ts in the newsroom while selecting the news-stories and fixing their priorities.

Apart from checking the basic ingredients of the news in the process of gatekeeping they judge for the priority in terms of the thematic area. However, the editors, or the gatekeepers in Nepal, say that they primarily go for the newsworthiness. The thematic area could be politics in general, there could be issues related to the area out of politics. According to them even the issues such as the news concerning the children, which are considered as soft issues, are being placed even on the front page, sometimes as banner news. They state that these days the dailies are placing news on children are not confined within the criteria of anchor news. The gatekeepers hold that theme don’t determine the placement, rather the context and news values are the determining factors.

News is produced within an entire system of a newspaper or news portal right from the reporting to the final editing through the different layers. Different bureaus, news coordinators assign the reporters in
the field level. Then the process of screening continues through the different desks and the editors. According to them the judgement of the news starts from the reporting level. After the selection of theme and cultivating angle every news-story need to undergo through the process of fact-checking and checking for appropriate sources. One of the viewpoints express by the editors is that the news-placement or the prominence and importance dependent on the potentiality of that news in creating the impact among the general public. These views hold that greater the potentiality to create an impact on a larger number of people, greater the chance to get importance and prominence. They also stress that personal matter if that is not important and prominent in the eyes of the general public use to be ignored.

Answering the question, whether they have some standing instructions in line with the effective gatekeeping, the editors say that it also depends on time and the presence of influencers. For instance, the coverage of pollution could be more in winter. Likewise, coverage on climate change could be escalating during the monsoon. In terms of children’s issues or the coverage on children, by and large, they don’t get front page. However, whenever the editors decide to prime the issue, even the soft tissues, as the term could publish in the front page. They realised that since reporting on children needs more sensitivity and specialized skills, they get less space because of the inadequacy of such quality among the journalists.

For the big daily newsroom space use to be limited to accommodate all the news produce every day. Hence, according to the editors, they mainly depend on the context rather than the particular themes. They view that they are focused to be the watchdog for the state institutions such as the parliament, government and the public offices. Their priorities would be the continue surveillance to the public expenditures and the performance of the public institutions.
On questioning how do you judge the news related to the children or news on the children, the editors pose the answer that they examine the gravity of the information. Generally, they give less priority to the news related to the soft tissues. However, in the case of pressure and public interest, they cover the issues related to children. For instance, during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, everyday, the coverage on women gets escalated. The editors hold that they use to be suspicious about the sponsored news, directly related to the NGOs or INGOs activities and campaigns. However, they give priority to the news linked to the general public. They admit that there are not any standing instructions to give or not give priority to the news on children as such. Nevertheless, they state that the priority to a news-story mainly depends on the news values.

The editors state that they do not have any policy to avoid non-political news such as the news stories on children. Some of the editors perceive that because of the changing nature of society, the ambit of news values has been widening. Hence, the issues related to children are also being given equal importance and prominence. Some of the editors have organized the orientations for child-sensitive reporting and writing inside the newsroom. They recall that in the presence of child-rights experts they have developed a guiding perception on writing on children or issues related to the children. Editors also cite the example where they rectify the errors or modify the news in line to the child-sensitivity.

4.4 Content Analysis

The newspapers namely Gorakhapatra, Kantipur, Naya Patrika, Annapurna Post, and Nagarik and the digital news portals Online Khabar.com, Setopati.com and Ratopati.com are selected for the study of the contents concerning the children.
A fair amount of news stories, mostly related to the effect of pandemic and disaster, are found to be mentioned about the children at the lead. However, in the body followed by such leads, the issues have not been treated properly. As the media mirror, the situation, children get covered. But the news stories on children, generally, found to be superficial and slightly touched. The selection of the media outlets aimed at achieving an overall picture of the Nepali media landscape concerning child sensitivity.

### A. Newspapers

#### 4.4.1 Ratio between total news and child-related news

The study reveals that among the total 9832 news-stories published in selected five newspapers for two months as much as 5 percent are related to children.

*Fig 01: Ratio between the total news-stories and the news-stories on children*

![Bar chart showing the ratio between total and child-related news in five newspapers](chart.png)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

Albeit the news-stories related to children occupy 5 percent (as many
as 497) of the total news-stories published in the newspapers. The highest number of news-stories published in Gorkhapatra among the five newspapers as it reached 44 percent of total child-related news-stories.

Most of the news-stories on children are not fully focused on children’s issues. Some of them are included just because of a single word or sentence on children.

**Fig 02: News coverage in terms of depth in content**

The news-stories entirely focused and partly focused on children are as much as 36 and 24 percent respectively; whereas 40 percent news-stories on children are included in data just they have touched the issue.

Majority of the published news stories are from outside of the valley, which also includes few no. of news from out of the country as well.
As much as 38 percent of the news stories on children are found to be originated from Kathmandu valley whereas 62 percent of news on children are found to be published with the out of the valley dateline.

4.4.2. News by theme

Out of the above mentioned four thematic categories of news-stories, one third news stories are about child development and little less about survival and protection. Whereas news stories on child participation are found negligible.

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
Out of the total number of child-related news-stories, as much as 33 percent news-stories are found to be about child development. News regarding the survival, protection and child participation, is as much as 31, 28 and 1 percent respectively. About 8 percent news-stories are not directly related to any of the four themes.

All child-related news stories are examined by the subject matters. The stories are assessed in terms of focus given to the subject matters. The higher number of news-stories are related to education and followed by the pandemic.

Fig 05: Different aspects of news-stories related to children

Among the child-related news-stories, as much as 29 percent are directly related to education, as much as 18 percent to the pandemic, as much as 14 percent to disaster/accident, as much as 12 percent to the abuse and exploitation, 9 percent to health and 17 percent are related to others areas.

Among the abuse and exploitation cases, the majority of news-stories are about sex abuse and few on child marriage. No news stories are
found about child labour and corporal punishment.

Fig 06: News-stories related to child abuse and exploitation of children

Among the news-stories on abuse and exploitation cases, as much as 72 percent are about sex abuses, 8 percent about child marriage and 20 percent are about others subject matters.

Among the abuse and exploitation cases, majority of the news-stories have mentioned about the accused or abuser.

Fig 07: Ratio between the news-stories with the exposition of the accused or abuser and not the exposition of the accused or abuser

As much as 62 percent of news-stories on abuse and exploitation pointed out the accused or abuser, whereas 32 percent news-stories

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
have not mentioned about the accused or abuser.

Around 20 percent of the total published news-stories on children are found to be sensitive, where the right to privacy is applied. Among them in more than one fourth, the right to privacy is not maintained.

*Fig 08: Ratio between the sensitive news-stories that maintained privacy and not maintained privacy*

![Right to privacy chart](chart)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

Among the sensitive news-stories where the right to privacy applied (total 99 news) in 27 percent right to privacy are not maintained. In some news-stories found that the privacy of the victim child is maintained, but in the same news-stories, the privacy of the juvenile (accused child) are not been maintained.

**4.4.3. Nature, placement and usefulness of news-stories**

Slightly more than half of the news-stories on children are based on event or incident reporting. The news based on a press release or report found significantly less and others are based on situation reporting.
As much as 51 percent news-stories on children are based on event or incident reporting where the news based on a press release or report occupies only 4 percent space out of the total. As many as 45 percent news-stories on children are based on situation reporting.

The study reveals that the news-stories on children generally publish on inside pages.

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
Out of the total news-stories on children published during the period of study as many as 21 percent of news-stories were published in the front pages of the newspapers. Majority 78 percent news-stories are published in inside pages and 1 percent in back.

Most of the news-stories on children are not above the satisfactory level.

*Fig 11: Quality of the news-stories on children*

As much as 9 percent of the news-stories on children are well explained, whereas 8 percent news-stories on children are poorly explained and 83 percent are satisfactorily explained.

The study reveals that more than two-thirds of the news-stories on children are functional for general awareness. These are the news plainly for information.
Fig 12: Usefulness of news-stories on children

As much as 70 percent, of the news-stories on children, are functional for general awareness. As many as 15 percent news-stories on children are functional for the exposition of wrongdoing and 3 percent news-stories are functional for making the offices accountable. As many as 9, 2 and 1 percent of news on children are useful for appreciating good doing, making sensation and encouraging children or person working for children respectively.

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
Majority of the news sources, of the news-stories on children, are found to be formal, strong and newsworthy.

*Fig 13: Sources of news-stories on children*

![Use of Source: Child related News in Newspaper](image)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

As much as 74 percent of the news sources, of the news-stories on children, are found to be formal, strong and newsworthy. Likewise, 24 percent of news-stories are found to be based on informal and strong and 1 percent informal and week sources. As much as 1 percent of the news on children based on anonymous sources.

**4.5. Articles from newspaper**

Even the articles focus on contemporary politics have mentioned about the children in some instances. The word child or children are appraised in the context of analogy and anecdotes in some articles. Moreover, there are articles on children’s issues in Nepali newspapers. A few numbers of articles are well-articulated and full of argument.
Out of the total number of 1376 articles published in the newspapers 10 percent are found to be related to children’s issue.

However, within 10 percent (as many as 138) of the total articles,(that are considered as child-related), not all are entirely focused on children. Most of the articles have just touched the children’s issue.

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
Among the child-related articles, 21 percent are found to be entirely focused on children. Likewise, 17 articles are partly focused on children. Majority of the articles, as much as 62 percent are found to be just mentioned the children’s issues. In comparison to the total articles merely 2 percent articles are entirely focused and less than 2 percent is partly focused on children.

The study has analysed the total articles concerning the children, no matter they are focused or they have just touched. Most of the articles related to the children are concerning the right to development.
Out of the total number of articles on children up to 43 percent is related to the right to development of the child. Likewise, articles on the thematic areas of protection, survival and participation are 25, 11 and 1 percent respectively. As much as 20 percent of the articles on children fall under other categories.

Out of the various current contexts, education is the most covered issue in the articles of the newspapers.
As much as 35 percent of articles on children presents education as the main points of subject matters. As much as 11 percent articles related to children are about abuse and exploitation, 10 percent on the pandemic, 8 percent on health issues other than pandemic and 36 percent on various other issues.

The study shows that most of the articles on children are clear on their argument and viewpoint.

*Fig 18: Quality of articles on children in terms of clarity*

![Presentation of the main points of subject matters](chart.png)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

As much as 13 percent of the articles that are focused on children are found to be ambiguous. However, most of the news focused on children, as much as 87 percent, are found to be comprehensive.

The study reveals that a majority of articles related to children are average in terms of the argument.
Fig 19: Quality of articles in terms of the argument

As much as 80 percent of articles related to children are found to be average in terms of the argument. The articles that are not focused and slightly related to the children are also included in this category. As much as 16 percent of articles on children are well-crafted and 4 percent are found to be confusing.

4.6. Interviews from newspaper

During the study period, a total of 60 interviews were published, where only 4 interviews (7 percent) touched the children’s issues somewhere in a single word or a sentence, among them, 2 interviews were related to the pandemic as under the survival theme and one each to education as on development theme and abuse/exploitation as on protection theme. All the views expressed in the interviews are at a satisfactory level from the point of conceptual clarity on the issues of child rights.

4.7. Editorials from newspaper

Editorial, which is considered as the institutional viewpoint of a newspaper, are analysed to examine the state of priority given to
the issues concerning children. Editorials are examined to find the range of issues related to child rights, quality of argument and style of presentation.

*Fig 20: Total number of editorials and editorials on children*

![Total Editorials](chart1.png)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

Out of the total 262 editorials published in the selected newspapers during the study period as much as 12 percent (as many as 32) editorials are found to have mentioned the child-related issues.

*Fig 21: Editorials on children in terms of depth and argument*

![Concerning](chart2.png)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*
Out of the 32 editorials related to children as much as 47 percent editorials have just touched the children’s issues and 34 percent, editorials are entirely focused on the issues of children. As much as 19 percent of the total editorials on children are found to be partly focused on the issues of children.

*Fig 22: Editorials on children in terms of thematic division*

Out of the total editorials related to the child as much as 47 are found to be concerned with the right to development. As much as 28 and 16 percent editorials are found to be related to protection and survival respectively. As much as 9 percent editorials are suitable to be placed in other categories. Such editorials are not found directly related to one of the four thematic categories. No single editorial is found concerning the children’s right to participate.

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*
Fig 23: Editorials on children in terms of topic and subject matter

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020

In terms of the current context, the editorials have dealt with the range of issues right from the pandemic up to education and health. As much as 34 percent found to be related to education and 13 percent to abuse and exploitation. Likewise, 13 percent to health other than a pandemic, whereas 3 percent editorials are found to be concerning with the pandemic and 3 percent to disaster as well as accident.

Fig 24: Editorials on children in terms of clarity

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
Most of the editorials focused on children are found to be clear on presenting the main points of the subject matters and the arguments. As much as 91 percent of such editorials are clear. However, they are not free from the errors. As much as 9 editorials seem to be unclear in terms of the subject matters and argument.

*Fig 25: Quality of editorials on children in terms of presentation*

![Conceptual Clarity on the issue of child rights](chart.png)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

From the child rights perspective, 25 percent editorials are found well-crafted as large numbers as much as 72 percent are found satisfactory. As much as 3 percent editorials are found to be confused about the conceptual clarity on the issue of child rights.

### 4.8 Comparison between all the reading materials (news, editorials, articles, interviews) and the materials on children

A total number of entire reading materials, combining all the news and views, presents a composite picture of the state of coverage on children in the Nepali newspapers and online news portals.
**Fig 26: Total number of all kinds of materials and materials on children**

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

A total number of all kinds of reading materials comprises of news, articles, editorials and interview in selected five newspapers between August and September 2020 is 11530. Of those total materials, 6 percent (671) materials have mentioned about the child or child-related issues.

**Fig 27: All the child-related news and views: Focused, partly focused and slightly related**

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*
Out of 671 children related materials, only 33 percent are entirely focused on children’s issues and 22 percent materials are partly focused on children. As much as 45 percent of materials have just mentioned about children or merely touched children’s issue with spending a single word or a sentence.

*Fig 28: All the reading materials and ratio between entirely child-focused, partly focused and slightly related*

![Diagram showing the ratio of total and child-related materials](image)

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

In comparison to entire published materials as much as 2 percent materials are found to be entirely focused on children’s issues and 1 percent materials are found to be partly focused, whereas 3 percent materials have just touched the children’s issue.
Table 1: Child-related Materials by thematic division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Protection</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Survival</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in %</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020

Out of the total child-related materials 35 percent are found to be under the right to development. As much as 27, 26 and 1 percent materials are found to be related to protection, survival and participation respectively. Around 10 percent of materials are directly related to none of the category.

Table 2: Materials by contemporary issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related To</th>
<th>Pandemic</th>
<th>Disaster</th>
<th>Abuse</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in %</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020

Out of the total published child-related materials, 30 percent are about education. As much as 16, 12, 11 and 9 percent materials are related to the pandemic, abuse and exploitation, disaster or accident and health issues respectively. 21 percent is in other issues.
B. Online news portals

4.9 Child-related reading materials on Online news portals

The prominent Online news portals of the country, namely Ratopati.com, Setopati.com and Onlinekhabar.com are taken as the sample for the content analysis to examine the coverage on child-related issues. As many as 133 child-related news are found to have appeared in the aforementioned 3 online news portals during the two months between August and September 2020.

*Fig 29: News-stories on four thematic areas of child rights*

Out of the total news stories presented through online news portals as much as 44 percent are found to be on child-protection. Likewise, as much as 23, 19 and 3 percent news stories are found to be concerned with the themes of survival, development and participation respectively.
Out of the total news stories presented through online news portals as much as 21 percent are found to be on the Pandemic. Likewise, as much as 17, 14, 13 and 11 percent news stories are found to be concerned with the current contexts such as education, disaster/accident, abuse as well as exploitation and health.
Out of the total news stories presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 57 percent news stories are found to event/ incident reporting. Likewise, as much as 29 percent news stories are found to be situation reporting. Whereas as much as 14 percent news stories are found to be based on press release or report.

*Fig 32: Quality of the news-stories on children*

Out of the total news stories presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 75 percent news stories are found to be satisfactorily explained. Likewise, as much as 24 and 1 percent news stories are found to be well explained about the core issues and poorly explained respectively.

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*
Out of the total news stories presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 59 percent are found to be useful for general awareness. Likewise, as much as 15 and 5 percent news stories are found to be useful for the exposition of wrongdoing and for making the offices accountable respectively.

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
Out of the total news stories on child abuse and exploitation of children presented through online news portals most of the news, as much as 87 percent, are found to be about sex abuse. Likewise, as much as 6 percent of news stories are found to be concerned with child marriage.

Total 51 child related articles are found to have appeared in the aforementioned 3 online news portals during the two months between August and September 2020.

*Fig 35: Articles by the four major themes of child rights*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020*

Out of the total opinion-articles presented through online news portals as much as 35 percent are found to be related to the issues of protection. Likewise, as much as 35 percent of articles are found to be concerned with the issues of development. As much as 14 percent of articles are related to the issues of survival and as much as 2 percent of articles are found to be related to child participation.
Out of the total opinion-articles presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 49 percent of articles are found to be entirely focused on children. Likewise, as much as 29 and 22 percent opinion-articles are found to be just touched children issue and partly focused on children respectively.

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020
Out of the total opinion-articles presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 31 percent are found to be related to education. Likewise, as much as 20, 10, 4 and 2 percent opinion-articles are found to be concerned with the other current contexts such as health, the pandemic, abuse as well as exploitation and disaster/accident.

Fig 38: Conceptual clarity on the issue of child rights on the articles in online news portals

Source: Aryal and Dhital, 2020

Out of the total opinion-articles presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 80 percent are found to be average and as much as 20 percent of articles are found to be well crafted.

5. Findings out of all three techniques of data collection

Based on the data explored by the content analysis, key-informant interview and the FGD, it could be summed up that the Nepali newspapers or the Nepali media in many instances have not been played a role of surveillance in the cases related to children. Many time the issues used to be escalated because of the mounting public
pressure. For instance, in September, news of the rape of a minor and subsequently killing was published with low priority, in the fifth page. The general public continued the protest. After three days, the news appeared on the front page. The first news was silent about the offender, while the third explicitly exposed the rapist accused.

On September 25, 2020, Nagarik daily published a piece of short news on the fifth page with Bajhang dateline. The news story was about an incident where a minor girl was found dead inside a temple. The 12-year-old girl was killed after rape. Though the news story has mentioned about accused, the tone is soft as it quotes police that the case is being investigated. The news reported that the accused boy is 16-year-old. After two days of follow-up news on the incident was published. The main point of the news was the body of the slain girl was not cremated as the locals are demanding for the proper investigation process. The news reported that the police has arrested that accused boy. But it was also published on the fifth page. As the protest spread over to other places of the country, the follow-up news stories get the space in media. After four days, on September 28, follow up news on the incident got coverage on the front page with dateline from Dhangadhi bureau and Bajhang. The news story has a highlight that reads: Police states that shreds of evidence concerning the facts on the incident of killing after the rape of 12-year-old Samjhana Kami has been collected. The news story has also revealed that Rajendra Bohora, who is under control of the police in the course of the investigation, was also involved in the rape case in the past. It has mentioned that his age is 18. The news has appeared across three columns with prime importance.

A couple of news stories appeared in the newspapers indicates an attempt to priming the issue regarding children such as child marriage. On September 15, the main news of Annapurna Post was about child
marriage. It was published with a catchy photograph of young mothers carrying infants. The news is based on extensive reporting.

Most of the news-stories, around 80 percent, concerning children appear around the inside-pages. As the afore-mentioned case, in most of the instances, the news-stories on children get front-page coverage due to the activism of the pressure group.

Followings are the major findings in summary:

- A total number of all kinds of reading materials comprises of news, articles, editorials and interview in selected five newspapers between August and September 2020 is as many as 11,530. Of those total materials, as much as 6 percent (671) materials have mentioned the child or child-related issues.  
- Out of 671 children related materials, only 33 percent are entirely focused on children’s issues and 22 percent materials are partly focused on children. As much as 45 percent of materials have just mentioned about children or merely touched children’s issue in a single word or a sentence.  
- In comparison to entire published materials, as much as 2 percent of materials are found to be entirely focused on children’s issues. As much as 1 percent of materials are found to be partly focused. Whereas 3 percent of materials have just touched the children’s issue.  
- The study reveals that of the total 9,832 news-stories published in newspapers during the study period of two months as much as 5 percent are related to children.  
- The news-stories entirely focused and partly focused on children are as much as 36 and 24 percent respectively; whereas 40 percent news-stories on children are included in data just they have touched the issue.  
- In the total number of child-related news-stories, as much as
33 percent news-stories are about child development. News regarding the survival, protection and child participation, is as much as 31, 28 and 1 percent respectively. About 8 percent news-stories are not directly related to any of the four themes.

- Among the child-related news-stories, 29 percent are directly related to education, 18 percent to the pandemic, 14 percent to disaster/accident, 12 percent to the abuse and exploitation, 9 percent to health and 17 percent are related to others.
- Out of the total news-stories on abuse and exploitation cases, 72 percent are about sex abuse, 8 percent are about child marriage and 20 percent are about others.
- About 20 percent of the total published news-stories on children found to be sensitive, where the right to privacy is applied.
- Among the sensitive news-stories where the right to privacy applied (total 99 news) in 27 percent right to privacy are not maintained.
- As much as 9 percent of the news-stories on children are well explained, whereas 8 percent news-stories on children are poorly explained and 83 percent are satisfactorily explained.
- Out of the total number of 1,376 articles published in the newspapers as much as 10 percent of articles are found to be related to children’s issue. However, within 10 percent (as many as 138) of the total articles that are considered to be child-related, all of them are not entirely focused on children. Most of the articles have just touched the children’s issue.
- Out of the total number of articles on children up to 43 percent are related to the right to development. Likewise, articles on the thematic areas of protection, survival and participation are 25, 11 and 1 percent respectively. As much as 20 percent of the articles on children fall under other categories.
• Out of the different themes, most of the articles of the newspapers have found to be dealt with the theme of education.

• As much as 80 percent of the articles related to children are average in terms of the argument. The articles that are not focused and slightly related to the children are also included in this category. As much as 16 percent of articles on children are found to be well-crafted and 4 percent are found to be confused.

• Out of the total 262 editorials published in the selected newspapers during the study period as much as 12 percent (as many as 32) editorials are found to have mentioned the child-related issues.

• Out of the total editorials related to the child as much as 47 are found to be concerned with the right to development.

• In the course of dealing with the current context, the editorials have selected the range of issues right from the pandemic up to education and health. As much as 34 percent editorials found to be related to education and as much as 13 percent are found to be related to abuse and exploitation. Likewise, as much as 13 percent of editorials are concerned with health. Whereas much as 3 percent editorials are found to be related to the pandemic and as much as 3 percent to disaster and accident.

• Out of the total news stories presented through online news portals as much as 44 percent are found to be on child-protection. Likewise, as much as 23, 19 and 3 percent news stories are found to be concerned with the themes of survival, development and participation respectively. Most of the news, as much as 21 percent, is found to be about sex abuse. Likewise, as much as 6 percent of news stories are found to be concerned with child marriage. As much as 57 percent of news stories found online are event/ incident reporting. Likewise,
as much as 29 percent news stories are found to be situation reporting. As much as 14 percent news stories are found to be based on press release or report. Out of the total news stories presented through online news portals as much as 21 percent are found to be on the Pandemic. Likewise, as much as 17, 14, 13 and 11 percent news stories are found to be concerned with the current contexts such as education, disaster/accident, abuse as well as exploitation and health.

- Out of the total news stories presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 59 percent are found to be useful for general awareness. Likewise, as much as 15 and 5 percent news stories are found to be useful for the exposition of wrong-doing and for making the offices accountable respectively.
- Out of the total opinion-articles presented through the selected three online news portals as much as 80 percent are found to be average and as much as 20 percent of articles are found to be well crafted. As much as 49 percent of articles are found to be entirely focused on children. Likewise, as much as 29 and 22 percent opinion-articles are found to be just touched children issue and partly focused on children respectively.

Unit V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study indicates that children’s issues are not in priority in the process of gatekeeping in the Nepali newspapers and news portals. The conclusion applies to the entire Nepali media outlets.

Since the materials that just uttered the words such as child or children have been included in the data the ratio of the children, related news
and views might have escalated to some extent. Albeit various news and views are found to be surficial mentioned about children the number of substantial reading materials on children is very low. The study reveals that out of all reading materials on children published in the newspapers as 2 percent are found to be entirely focused on children. Hence, materials with substance and sound arguments concerning the different aspects of child rights, i.e., development, protection, survival and participation, have been given low priorities in the Nepali newspapers and news portals. Especially, issues and sub-issues concerning the protection are very poorly covered.

In terms of themes, the news-stories concerning development occupies the largest pie followed by the theme of protection. Since the school calendars are disturbed by the outbreak of Covid-19 and issue of the life protection of the human beings of all age have been jeopardised, the issue of development and protection gets more coverage. As the outbreak of COVID-19 is the most prevailing reality of the present time, most of the coverage is about the pandemic and its impact on education and protection. Another visible area of coverage is about disasters. The impact of the pandemic got wider coverage. Likewise, victimization of children along with their guardians is covered in the news stories. Hence, the coverage of children is relatively high during the two selected months. It would have been less than current statistics of 6 percent of total news-stories in absence of the pandemic and the disaster. Hence, the news coverage on children would be reduced during the normalcy.

The study has provided a baseline for any further effort to sensitize the media to abide by the child-friendly guidelines adopted by the Press Council Nepal. Children or the issues related to the children are not being given significant coverage. Hence, the data reveals that the process of the gatekeeping in the Nepali media shows that gatekeeping
is the way to fix the information in a hierarchy.

The contents of the Nepali mass media, especially the print and digital news media signals the nature of Gatekeeping, their process of determining news worthiness. Because of the dominant perception of the news on children as the soft-news, most of the news stories appear on the inside-pages. Hardly 20 percent news, mostly about the agitation and child abuses, gets covered on the front-page.

Most of the news stories are found to be based on the formal source. It indicates that the news stories on children are not in-depth in nature. It also indicates that newspapers lack trained human resources for child-sensitive and child-friendly reporting. The contents demonstrate that they were not prepared, treated and presented properly in absence of skilled human resources for covering the news on children or the issues of child rights.

Against the background followings are the recommendations for different stakeholders:

Most of the news stories are found to be related to education, the impact of Covid-19 and incidences such as natural disasters and cases of child abuses. However, the coverage could not be found as examples of the well-treatment of the issues. Hence, a series of activities need to be undertaken concerning the capacity building of the journalists covering children. Journalists need to be clear on the concept of child rights and CFMD. Under the protection issue, the majority of the news stories are about sex abuse, and some other deep-rooted problems, e.g., child labour, corporal punishment, child marriage etc. are not covered well. The news-stories and the views are not found well researched, skilfully crafted and comprehensively presented. A few materials are well crafted from the child rights perspective. Since the issue of privacy has not been maintained well in several materials,
an effort to uphold the quality of the materials on children is required. Institutions working for child rights need to work closely with media person primarily with reporters and also with editors/desk editors to socialize them and enhance their capacity to cover the children’s issues in proper way. Efforts such as training, exposure trip and production of reference materials and media-kit would be instrumental to uplift the child sensitive journalism. Hence, appropriate socialization would be effective to develop common understanding on CFDM including conceptual clarity on child rights among the communicators. Trainings comprise of the practical exercise on evaluation and presentation of news and other materials would encourage them to abide by the CFDM Media organizations and journalists need to undergo through the socialization process with the understating that covering children issues require more sensitivity, knowledge and skills.

Federation of Nepali Journalists, Press Council Nepal and National Child Rights Council need to collaborate again to make an effort in socializing the Nepali journalists with the letter and spirit of CFMD. Once a joint initiation will start, the areas of further modifications or improvement on the document will be visible.

Child rights activists as well as academia need to increase their efforts to provide well-articulated articles and opinions in the form of an interview. Child rights networks and organization need to come forward to sensitise media by providing background materials and by creating newsworthy events and documents. They could supply the relevant materials regarding the various aspects of children to impress the gatekeepers of the mass media outlets. Since the children’s day, September 14, the celebration was affected by the pandemic in 2020, newspapers are seen with very low coverage of children even on that special day. Frequency and intensity of the activities from pressure groups are directly proportional to the state of media
coverage on children. In comparison to other themes, coverage on child participation is found to be very low. Since child clubs are active in local areas for the promotion and protection of the child rights, media need to be encouraged to establish link with such child clubs. Coordination between child clubs and media would be instrumental to publicize children’s initiatives, their success stories of universal nature as well the problems faced by children in their perspectives. Programmes targeted to enhance the capacity of the child clubs to engage with media would be relevant in this regard.

A media-monitoring desk needs to be established at the National Child Rights Council for regular monitoring of the media contents on children. Such an initiative would be helpful to reduce the potential harm of insensitive reporting and would be instrumental to create learning opportunities for the working journalists as they could receive immediate feedback.

Periodic and regular interaction among the government, non-government child rights institutions and the media gatekeepers such as editor/desk editors need to be organized to enhance the capabilities of media outlets in terms of the child-friendly coverage. Government agency such as National Child Rights Council in federal level needs to take initiation in regular basis to engage media people in three aspects. First NCRC can provide issues and information newsworthy to media. Second, It can work to enhance the capacity of journalists in terms of sensitivity on children’s issue and clarity on the child rights perspective. It can capacitated journalists with technical know-how on international instruments on child rights and reporting procedures. They need to be capable to examine the hindrances towards the implementation of child rights in Nepal. They need to have understanding about the impact of state of children on overall all social development and human development indicators. Likewise,
they need to be capable to assess the present domestic as well as international provisions for the protection and promotion of children’s rights. The media persons who cover the children’s issues need to have understanding that why does a nation give priority on child rights. Third, in provincial level, Province Child Rights Committee and/or Social Development Division of Social Development Ministry can coordinate such activities. In local level Local Child Rights Committee can be effective with such activities. The government agencies from all three levels can mobilise child rights and media experts to conduct the activities effectively.

The study shows that the National News Agency (RSS) of Nepal is one of the major sources of news on children. However, the materials need to be more functional to spread the message of child rights. Thus, RSS needs to establish a separate desk for its journalists to treat children’s issue in line with the general principle of child rights. Since the government is committed on the rights of children the government owned news agency RSS need to be requested to give priority to the activities of Child Clubs to encourage the young activists.

**Reference**


**Annex-I**

**Glossary**

**Inappropriate Language:**

Language of the write up that includes degrading or insensitive terms for the children. Such language also includes the way of presentation that undermines the dignity of children.

**Priming:**

In the field of media studies priming refers to a concept regarding the process of production which believes media as a powerful tool for
priming how people think to behave. It is a way of creating effects of the content on people’s behaviour and judgements.

Annex-II

Participants of FGD

Following are the person presented at the FGD conducted in the course of the study in the alphabetical order.

Participants comprises from senior to young Child Rights activists along with the experts in the field. The participants were from the government agency, UN Agency, INGOs, NGOs, and the networks working for child rights in different parts of country.

1. Mr. Brij Mohan Kuswaha, Bara
2. Mr. Madhu Dawadi
3. Mr. Milan Dharel
4. Ms. Nupur Bhattacharya
5. Mr. Prakash Khatiwada, Hetauda
6. Mr. Rajan Burlakoti
7. Mr. Sanjog Thakuri
8. Ms. Sumnima Tuladhar
9. Mr. Shiv Paudel
10. Mr. Tilottam Paudel

Annex-III

Key Informative Interviewees

1. Mr. Akhanda Bhandary, Editor in Chief Annapurna Post
2. Mr. Subash Ghimire, Editor in Chief TheRepublica
3. Mr. Guna Raj Luitel, Editor in Chief Nagarik
4. Mr. Sudheer Sharma, Editor in Chief Kantipur
5. Mr. Shreedhar Acharya, Editor in Chief Gorakhapatra

Annex-IV

List of Questions for FGD

1. To what extent you are satisfied with space to the materials in the form of news and views that have been covered in the newspapers and online news portals in Nepal?

2. In your opinion, in explicit points, what types of subject matters related to children need to be covered in media? Present your observation in points that what are the subject matter that was given less priority or not given priority at all?

3. What are the five major things to be remembered while published the materials concerning children?

Annex-V

List of Questions to the Key-informant Interviewees

1. What are the gatekeeping parameters in your newspaper/ news portal?

2. Is there any standing instructions regarding the selection and prioritization of the material in your newspaper?

3. To what extent do you give priority to the materials related to children?
Annex-VI

Research Team

Researchers: Kundan Aryal, PhD and Tarak Dhital

Kundan Aryal, PhD

Besides numerous journalistic products including newspaper columns and articles, Aryal has several media-related publications, research work and journal articles to his credit. In the late 1980s while studying physics and mathematics in his early college years he, along with some friends, voluntarily started a youth magazine and subsequently joined left-wing weekly newspapers, one after another. He was appointed as the editor of the some of the popular weeklies of the time such as Chhalphal, Drishti and Budhabar, and later ran a popular current affairs programme Ghatana Ra Bichar in Radio Nepal. He is also known as former editor of Himal newsmagazine and former executive chairperson of Nepal Television. Aryal has earned his master’s in Journalism and Mass Communication, MPhil in English (with focus on media studies) and PhD in Journalism from Tribhuvan University with the topic TRANSITION OF NEWSPAPER JOURNALISM FROM PARTISANSHIP TO COMMERCIALISM IN POST-1990 NEPAL. Currently, he is associated with the Central Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of T U, Nepal.

Tarak Dhital

Mr. Tarak Dhital is a prominent social activist and child rights defender in Nepal. He is a trained lawyer and child rights, human rights advocate with more than 3 decades of experience. Mr. Dhital completed his tenure of 5 years (2013 to 2018) as an Executive Director in Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB: a statutory body created by the Children’s Act 1990) as of the decision of Council of Ministers, Government of Nepal. He used to work as General Secretary and Spokesperson of Child Workers in Nepal Concerned
Center (CWIN-Nepal), a pioneer child rights organization established in 1987, for more than two decades. His main areas of work are child rights advocacy, policy analysis, research, training and capacity building, child rights-based planning, monitoring and evaluation.

He is a renowned trainer, facilitator and resource person for inter-agency policy advocacy and human rights, child rights issues at the national level. At grass-root level, he has worked extensively in social mobilization, child protection, child participation and human rights education. He has attended numerous international and regional conferences, seminars, workshops, dialogues and training on human rights, child rights and social development issues as a keynote speaker, advisor and participant.

He used to work for child rights advocate and practitioner. He played a key role in the incorporation of child rights in constitution along with civil society, drafting of new child act, guidelines to rescue and management of street children etc. He played a key role in the development and launch of the nation-wide CZOP (children as a zone of peace) campaign in Nepal and has worked as a key member of the group to develop National Framework and Implementation Guideline of School of Zones of Peace issued by Nepal government.

His experience includes working extensively with government agencies on policy and legal issues about child rights in Nepal. He has been involved in various researches on child rights issues and has served as a consultant for UN agencies, I/NGOs, GOs on various initiatives related to child rights and peace-building, including formation and/or amendment of child-related laws, developing of plans and policies, designing & organizing workshops training seminars, publishing IEC materials, evaluation and monitoring etc. After the restructuring of state-system, he led to developing a campaign on Child Protection in Federal System and Child Rights-Based Local Planning. He has authored several books on child rights.