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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Investigating the Feasibility of Enforcing Article 6 of the Child Protection Law in the Islamic Republic of Iran National Media

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interdiction:

Since children and adolescents constitute the future of any society, attending to their needs is of particular importance. Due to specific age-related vulnerabilities, this group is at greater risk of victimization. The Iranian Broadcasting Organization (IRIB) is one of the most significant institutions responsible for the protection of this group, as stipulated in Article 6 of the Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents. The primary objectives of this research are threefold: first, to elucidate the duties of the IRIB under the aforementioned law; second, to conduct a field-based assessment of how these duties are being implemented; and third, to identify the challenges the organization faces in fulfilling its prescribed responsibilities, thereby enabling the development of tailored solutions to improve and properly execute these duties.

Method:

The data for this research were collected using a descriptive and analytical approach, drawing on both library (documentary) and field resources. The field data were gathered through observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Following the preparation of the questionnaire, the IRIB offices in Tehran Province and Kashan City were approached. After reviewing the questionnaires, senior officials of the IRIB designated managers from the Planning and Program Unit, the General Department of Legal Affairs, the Parliamentary Affairs Unit, and the Commercial Unit as competent respondents for the questionnaires and interviews. Given the limited number of responsible individuals, the author conducted targeted interviews. To mitigate the possibility of bias among interviewees, the author only cited information that was consistently repeated across interviews, continuing until data saturation was achieved. Despite numerous obstacles, the author successfully collected information through targeted interviews and questionnaires from all competent individuals, including the head of Kashan Radio, and in Tehran, from four senior managers in planning and programming, four legal unit officials, and two commercial managers. Given the importance of the National Authority for Children's Rights in relation to the IRIB, an interview was also conducted with the secretary of this authority (the Deputy Minister of Justice). Furthermore, due to the connection between the IRIB's duties and welfare organizations, interviews were conducted with ten welfare officials from Tehran Province and Kashan City. The distribution of the centers surveyed ensures that the resulting inferences are representative of the national situation. Data collection continued until information saturation was achieved.

Findings:

Although the duties outlined in Article 6 of the Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents are conceptually desirable, the existence of a well-formulated law is insufficient for societal transformation; the proper implementation of the law is even more critical than its text. The IRIB faces serious challenges in several areas, including the lack of prioritization of law enforcement, budget constraints, multiplicity of tasks, insufficient inter-organizational coordination, and inadequate monitoring of duty implementation. The absence of an age-rating system for IRIB programs and the broadcast of advertising content harmful to children and adolescents are among the most significant challenges facing the organization. Regarding the age-rating system, scientific research should be conducted to determine appropriate methods for communicating danger signals and warning numbers to parents, children, and adolescents. A supra-organizational entity, such as the National Authority for Children's Rights foreseen in Article 6, is essential for monitoring the implementation of these duties and facilitating inter-organizational coordination. Although this authority is provided for in the executive regulations of Article 6 to oversee the IRIB's performance of its duties, due to various reasons—including a lack of human resources and insufficient recognition of the authority's competence by the organizations subject to Article 6—adequate supervision of the proper implementation of these duties is currently not being carried out.

Conclusions:

The IRIB is one of the most important organizations that, pursuant to paragraph "H" of Article 6 of the Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents, adopts an educational approach, with a legal mission to provide information about the rights of children and adolescents. According to Article 6, this organization has five key duties concerning the protection of at-risk and victimized children and adolescents. The field assessment revealed significant challenges in the implementation of this article. These challenges persist despite the fact that more than four years have passed since the approval of the Protection Law, and IRIB employees remain unaware of some of the duties stipulated therein. The organization should place training programs for its employees on its agenda. Furthermore, it is necessary to prioritize the

implementation of Article 6 and its executive regulations within the IRIB's major policies. To protect the rights of children and adolescents, the IRIB must regularly broadcast programs in accordance with Article 6. Many interviewees stated that the effective execution of the duties under Article 6 requires a senior IRIB official to actively demand their implementation. The IRIB receives a significant annual budget increase compared to other organizations; therefore, it should be in a more favorable position to carry out its duties under Article 6. However, due to budget constraints, it continues to broadcast advertisements harmful to children and adolescents. The existence of these challenges has resulted in the incomplete implementation of the process for protecting at-risk and victimized children and adolescents.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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