**Children or Commercial Commodities**

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Last year, the participation of a 4 years old child in the morning and Ramadan shows opened a debate on society’s ethics and media standards. The debate was initially started when a 4 year Pathan boy appeared in a morning show. In his very first show, he was presented as an angry Pathan and audiences were enjoying hisrudecomments and remarks in Pashtoaccent.

The show made him a star overnight. Now he is part of several programson various TV channels. Once again, the month of Ramadan is not far away and media houses will soon start their working on Ramadan transmission, from finalizing the concept of the programs to guests and surely, the child we are talking aboutwill not be skipped. Some people think that the child is being exploited and in some videos his uncomfortable interaction with adults is visible.

From the entire story, who gains and what? The answer is not difficult. TV channels earned ranking and the family earned money. Is it fair from the perspective of child wellbeing or the best interest of the child? Absolutely it is not fair. A busy schedule coupled with extensive travel is ruining his childhood and his school attendance as well as performance might becompromised. Nobodyknows about the consent of the child and what protection arrangements are placed at media houses to reduce the risk of abuse and exploitation as adults are involved in all the processesofthe program either recorded or live. It seems that the child has been turned into a money-making machine. Turning children into earning machines is not a constructive trend for society. The use of children as a [commercial commodity](https://dailytimes.com.pk/515872/the-120000-banana-wins-art-basel-daily-times/) is against the best interest of the childrenas well as their wellbeing.

Whatisour media presenting or promoting? Our media must think about our cultural values where insulting elders or showing rudeness is considered against basic ethics and values and angry behavior does not represent the mid-set of the majority. Showcasing children’s talent at the cost of destroying their wellbeing and social ethics is not entertainment. TV is a medium that plays an imperative role in shaping the behavior of society and has a significant influence on the general public especially children. Presenting a child as a symbol of angerisagainst the general wellbeing of the children.

This trend is neither constructive for those children who are participating in such types of programs nor for those who are watching. It ispromoting impolite behavior among children.It would further create obstacles in personality development.Media celebritiesare considered role models and children try to replicate their styles. Furthermore, minors are not able to understand their best interests.

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Let’s understand the best interest of the child with an example. If a 14-16 aged child is skillful to drive a bike and usually he goes alone to the nearest location on the bike. But one day he asks his parents to allow him for a world tour on the bike as he is fully trained to drive the bike. It makes no sense to allow himbecause he is not mature enough to handle the worst situation, he might face during the trip.Similarly, a 4-year child is not able to pick his best interest, i-e; he should focus on TV shows or education?This is the responsibility of the family to protect the best interest and wellbeing of the child. If a family fails then the state has to play its due role.

In developed countries, media houses like BBC placed all appropriate measures to safeguard children from the risk of exploitation and abuse by introducing child protection policies and code of conduct including editorial guidelines for reverent media personals to aware them on their obligations regarding involving children in Programs or interacting with children.

The BBC’s child protection policy cited a law called “Child Performance License” which describes”The arrangements that must be made to safeguard children when they take part in certain types of performances. Licenses are granted by the local authority for the area where the child lives. Body of person Approval (BOPA) is given by the local authority where the event is taking place but does not sanction the child missing school”.It is one of the conditions of the license that the child’s education will not suffer. In the UK, children of compulsory school age are required to have a license if they want to be part of the broadcast performance or modeling.

Pakistan doesn’t have any such type of arrangements. Government of Pakistan has established PEMRA, an authority to facilitate and regulate the privateelectronic media. It has the mandate to improve the standards of information, education, and entertainment and to expand the choices available to the people of Pakistan Including news, current affairs, religious knowledge, art, and culture as well as science and technology.

At present,PEMRA has various codes but these codes do not have sufficient provisions to protect the children’s wellbeing. Although rules 2009 prohibit programs that contain objectionable and adversely affect children’s general wellbeing.The electronic media code of conduct, 2015 also states that programs and advertisements meant for children shall not:”Be presented in a manner which may be disturbing or distressing to children or which many in any way adversely affect their general wellbeing.”

Keeping in mind the best interest of the children and their wellbeing, a comprehensive child protection code of conduct is crucial in protecting children from the risk of exploitation and abuse while interacting with adults as well as ensuring the content quality in terms of social ethics as well as age-sensitive. Media and child rights experts should engage in the consultation process to make the document child-friendly.

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