

Role and Impact of Cartoons in Building Children's Attitude at Primary Level

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore the impact on the attitudes and language of children after watching cartoon programs. It is considered that cartoons are the safest and most popular entertainment for children. Plenty of TV channels non-stop broadcast different cartoons for children. Kids spend far more time watching cartoons on electronic gadgets than on any other task. It not only attracts the children through its contents but also inculcates some positive and negative habits in them. Violence is a vital part of most cartoon programs, which affects badly children's attitudes and language because they are not able to distinguish between good or bad and reality or fantasy aspects of cartoon content. Children watch cartoon characters and they try to imitate and use aggressive attitudes at home and school. Children are induced and attracted by violent content by broadcasters and children act accordingly. The researcher adopted a survey research design to explore deeply the cause-and-effect relationship among the variables. The targeted population of this study was the parents of these cartoon-watching children who use to watch long hours daily in Karachi. 100 children's mothers were randomly selected from ten private schools at the Pre-Primary level of Central District, Karachi. Five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect the data. Findings show the impacts of violence presented in cartoons on children's behavior. They not only imitate their favorite cartoon characters, and use aggressive attitudes at home and school.

Keywords: Children behavior, violence, cartoons, pro-social behaviors, animations

Introduction

Cartoons are the most popular entertainment for children. Currently, there are plenty of TV channels that broadcast different cartoons for children non-stop on regular basis. Prior to this trend, children used to spend more of their time in outdoor activities playing with their peers and enjoying different physical and mental games. Now they prefer watching their favorite characters on TV and get stuck in front of TV sets at home for long hours. Many children, now a days, have become habitual of using mobile phones, computers, laptops, and other social media accessories at very early age. Small children spend a lot of time watching cartoons or video games on android mobiles, computers, or laptops. In this modern era in many houses where both parents are working, they feel convenient to engage and keep their children busy in watching cartoons or in other similar activities due to having a very less time for proper bringing up of their children as it used to be in the past. Because of these unnecessary activities, these children don't pay complete attention to their studies from early childhood, and most of the time many of these children accept the good or bad effects of these cartoons. Many children learn good things as well as bad things because some of these cartoon programs show prohibited sides to the children. According to many past research, it is found that children spend most of their time watching cartoons or video games which ultimately affect their learning process.

Literature Review

In many cartoon movies and series, there are animated characters intended to design for the entertainment of children (Thompson, 2010). It is a general perception all over the world, including Pakistan, that cartoons are the safest and most appropriate entertainment for children. Children watch cartoons so frequently during the age of four to ten years and they watch these cartoons with great enthusiasm and they turn into cartoon addicts. Electronic devices are the most important item in children's lives, and Cartoons are the most popular kind of transmissions children see on gadgets (Irkin, 2012). The effects of gadgets last for too long in the lives of children (Bagli, 2005). Kids spend far more time watching smartphones than any other task (Aral & Ceylan, 2011). It is reported in a study that young children in American, European, and Asian countries watched television an average of three hours a day (Larson, 2001). On average, children in Turkey watch TV for 3 to 4 hours a day (Gunter & Charlton 2000). The research found that, on average, electronic devices were on in family homes for four to five hours a day. Animated movies and cartoons have been introduced to kids on several platforms, without their valuable or destructive aspects being recognized (Köşker, 2005).

There are several destructive elements that can be seen in these cartoon movies. These elements include fantasy, violence, subliminal messages, and western orientation. Children have grown much more interested in cartoons in recent years and it has become the main pastime for them. Children do not like watching any cartoon without fairies, dragons, princes, superheroes, and time machines. Moreover, cartoon characters are shown jumping, flying, or falling from heights without being harmed. All this displays a false sense of reality. A child is not able to make a distinction between reality and fantasy. Children pretend to be like the cartoon heroes they watch, and they try to imitate whatever they have observed. So, fantasy encourages imitation and increases the risks of injury in children. Violence is shown repeatedly, realistically, and often unpunished. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescence, this violence speaks to the impressionable mind of the child. As the children watch violence so often, they neither feel fear from it nor are they are bothered about it in general and gradually it becomes quite normal thing in their lives. They become less sensitive towards the pain of others and can use harmful actions towards others (Ergün, 2012). The violence shown in the cartoons often spoils school children's minds; they often use guns, swords, and rods to play games. Cartoon programs have used violence as an integral part (Potter & Warren, 1998). The Subliminal message is another destructive element used in cartoon movies.

According to the Cambridge Learner's Dictionary, a subliminal message does not provoke conscious awareness, but it evokes a response unconsciously. These hidden messages can be auditory or visual. The basic purpose of placing hidden/subconscious messages in cartoon movies is to secretly brainwash the children. According to a study, children from the age group of 6 to 11 are the core audience of the Cartoon Network (Stabile and Harrison, 2003). Most children begin watching cartoons on television at the early age of six months, and by the age of two or three children become enthusiastic viewers.

Parents often are not willing to send their children outside to play and consider cartoons as a safe and most proper entertainment for their kids to stay at the home in front of their elders. Children from the age group 3 to 11 are the core audience of the Cartoon Network (Stabile and Harrison, 2003). Most of these Cartoon programs contain physical violence and sexual content instead of serial plays and comedies (Potter and Warren, 1998). As the result, children are more exposed to violence shown in the cartoon program than in any other television program broadcast (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli, 1994). Most of the audience is nearly 78% children in the age range of 3-11 years, while others are youngsters. Cartoons are playing a vital role in the changing behaviour/attitude of growing children. In this busy life where both

parents go out to work in order to run home economic affairs due to increasing household expenses, most mothers give android mobiles to their children or busy their children watching TV Cartoons, Video games, etc. to pass the time at home safely and contently.

Because of this entertaining activity at home children avoid playing physical games, and gets lazier in their daily life. They involve themselves more and behave like the heroes of these cartoons. Kids adopt their way of talking, walking, dressing, and eating. The violence shown in the cartoons is spoiling the minds of school-going children; they always use guns and swords during playing games. “Some of the cartoon programs contain violence as its integral part. It is noticed that cartoon content is full of violence than serial plays and comedies” (Potter and Warren, 1998).

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the children’s choice of selecting cartoons to watch among the different types of cartoons that affect children’s attitudes.
2. To explore the impacts of cartoons on students’ attitudes at pre-primary and primary levels.
3. To explore the impacts of cartoons on children’s interest in learning academic material at the pre-primary and primary levels.

Research Questions

Main Research Question

Do Cartoon programs play a significant role in moulding Children’s attitudes at the Primary levels?

Subsidiary Research Questions

- i) Do children choose academic cartoons among the different types of cartoons?
- ii) Do cartoons play a positive role in moulding Children’s attitudes at the primary levels?
- iii) Does the violence present in the cartoons inculcate aggression among the children?

Research Methodology

The researcher selected the quantitative method for collecting the data and the numeric data was collected using a close-ended questionnaire developed by the researchers. The tool was tested and piloted on a sample group of people from the population. After pilot results, necessary modifications and changes to the instrument were made to make it more reliable and valid for conducting the study. Parents are the population of the study from which the researcher selected the sample. The sample size was 100 respondents. The researcher selected

a survey research design. The researcher analysed and obtained the numerical data using descriptive statistics. The researcher employed Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyse the numerical data.

Results and Findings

The researcher found a detailed picture of the role that cartoons played in moulding the children’s attitudes. Further, researcher found what kind of cartoons among different types of cartoons children watch habitually. As well as researcher explored that cartoon play either positive or negative roles in moulding children’s attitudes. Simultaneously researcher examined that the violence presented in the cartoons inculcates aggression among the children. Descriptive statistics are given below and present the concrete empirical evidence obtained inductively from the real-life situation of our local context.

Table 1: My children like to watch cartoons.

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	31	62.0	62.0	62.0
	Agree	19	38.0	38.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 represents in column 1, categories; Agree and Strongly Agree; selected by respondents. In column 2, the frequency of the subjects of the study is presented. In column 3, the Percentage of the frequency of subjects is presented. Valid percent of the same frequency and its Cumulative Percent are presented in columns 4 and column 5 respectively. The total number of subjects shown is 50. Each row shows the number of subjects who selected one of the categories given in the questionnaire. 62% of the respondents strongly agreed, whereas 38% of the sample selected the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “*My children like to watch cartoons every time.*”

Table 2: Cartoon characters inspire my children a lot

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	29	58.0	58.0	58.0
	Agree	21	42.0	42.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 2, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 58% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree. 42% of the sample selected the category of agree. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “*Cartoon Characters inspire my children a lot always.*” They often act like famous cartoon characters.

Table 3: My children like Cartoons that are based on physical violence

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	31	62.0	62.0	62.0
	Agree	19	38.0	38.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 3, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 62% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree. 38% of the sample selected the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “*Physical violence Cartoons are my children's favorite cartoons.*”

Table 4: Often my children like to act like cartoon characters

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	24	48.0	48.0	48.0
	Agree	26	52.0	52.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 4, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 52% of the sample selected the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “*Often my children quarrel with their brothers and friends like cartoon characters fight with each other.*”

Table 5: My children prefer watching cartoons rather than doing physical activities.

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	25	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	25	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 5, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 50% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree. 50% of the sample selected

the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “my children avoid physical activities for watching cartoons”

Table 6: The theme the of cartoons that attracts my children the most is related to

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	24	48.0	48.0	48.0
	Agree	26	52.0	52.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 6, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 48% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree. 52% of the sample selected the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “physical violence is my children's favorite among the different themes of cartoons.”

Table 7: The language of Cartoons has a negative influence on my children's behaviour and language

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	22	44.0	44.0	44.0
	Agree	28	56.0	56.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 7, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 44% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree. 56% of the sample selected the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “the language of Cartoons has a negative influence on my children's behavior and language.”

Table 8: By watching cartoons my children think that killing or destroying enemies is the right thing to do

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	24	48.0	48.0	48.0
	Agree	26	52.0	52.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 8, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 48% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree whereas 52 % of the respondents agreed. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories.

This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “By watching cartoons my children always think that killing or destroying enemies is the right thing to do.”

Table 9: My children usually spend most of their time watching Cartoons daily

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	24	48.0	48.0	48.0
	Agree	26	52.0	52.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 9, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 48% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree. 52% of the sample selected the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “my children spend their most of time watching Cartoons daily.”

Table 10: By watching Cartoons my children become habitual to use foul language with others.

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	22	44.0	44.0	44.0
	Agree	28	56.0	56.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 10, shows the same general explanation as table 1. The subjects shown are 50 as a whole. 44% of the sample selected the category of strongly agree. 56% of the sample selected the category of agree. Respondents have not selected any from the rest of all three categories. This table shows that most of the respondents have found agree with the statement that “Watching Cartoons make my children habitual to speaking the foul language.”

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussion

The researcher conducted the research to find the answer to the research question “Do Cartoon programs play a significant role in moulding Children’s attitudes at the Primary levels?” to make the variable more observable and measurable in further subdivided the research question into more specific subsidiary questions those are; “Do children choose academic cartoons among the different types of cartoons?”, “Do cartoons play a positive role in moulding Children’s attitudes at the primary levels?”, and “Do the violence present in the cartoons inculcate aggression among the children?”. The findings of this study presented that

children often select un-academic cartoons, which are full of thrill and violence. Such cartoons cannot play a positive role in moulding children's attitudes positively. They often inculcate negative attitude and develops undesirable habits such as fighting with others, using foul language, and other Behavioral issues among the children. It is concluded that, if children watch academic and moral base cartoons they learn positive attitudes, and good habits as well as academic learning.

On the other hand, perception questionnaire through which data was collected from the children's mothers about the impacts of cartoons on their children's attitudes and learning at the primary level, consisted of the following questions. 1. "My children like to watch cartoons every time." This shows that children become habitual to watching cartoons daily and waste their precious time in that activity which in turn have less time for their learning. 2. "Cartoon Characters inspire my children a lot always." It shows that children follow these cartoon characters in their lives and start acting according to these cartoon characters at home and in school. They often act like famous cartoon characters," 3. "Physical violence Cartoons are my children's favourite cartoons." It is a fact that children like physical activities so when they watch cartoons in quarrelling as Tom and Jerry, they also start quarrelling with their brothers and sisters at home or in school with their classmates. 4. Often my children quarrel with their brothers and friends like cartoon characters fight each other." As explained that it is the impact of watching cartoons, that children become aggressive and emotional by watching cartoon films for long hours daily. Watching cartoons that depict violence can encourage children to become violent in real life. Also, children may believe that no one gets hurt or feels pain since cartoons escape unharmed after experiencing violence or an accident. For example, characters in Tom and Jerry, and The Road Runner, the characters often hit each other or cause each other to fall from heights, often without any real consequences. 5. "My children avoid physical activities by watching cartoons", actually children take interest in cartoons so they don't want to go out for playing games or for other work. 6. "Physical violence is my children's favourite among the different themes of cartoons." this belongs to cartoon channels that consider the preferences of children's psychology that children like the cartoons which are full of actions and violence. 7. "The language of Cartoons has a negative influence on my children's behaviour and language." Cartoons often include language that is unfit for children. Children are sensitive and don't know about its good or bad effects, so they may start using bad language that they learn from cartoons in real life. 8. "My children are facing health issues like obesity and laziness by watching cartoons". Too many hours of sitting in front of a screen watching cartoons cause numerous health issues due to inactivity and a sedentary lifestyle. These include obesity, vision

problems, and nutritional deficiencies due to bad food habits. 9. “By watching cartoons my children always think that killing or destroying enemies is the right thing to do”. Cartoon films’ content consists of such material which destroys innocent children’s emotions. Many cartoon characters display rude or disobedient Behavior towards their teachers and elders. Children may mimic this behaviour and challenge their parents or teachers when they are disciplined for bad behaviour. 10. “Watching Cartoons make my children habitual to speaking the foul language.” All these are the effects of watching cartoons on the children that they accept the bad effects of cartoons at once and repeat these actions at home.

Conclusion

It is concluded, that there is a strong impact of Cartoons on school-going kids which can be seen in their lifestyle, dressing, aggressive and violent attitude, and use of foul language. Due to their tender minds, most children try to imitate the actions performed by different cartoon characters. Violence is also an essential part of cartoon films which are comedic in their type. Cartoon characters like Tom and Jerry fight with each other which are liked by most kids. Many children like to fight with their classmates and other children after watching these comedic fights and pay less attention to their studies which in turn affects their learning. Children prefer to watch cartoons instead of playing games and physical activities which affects mentally as well as physically on the grooming children.

Recommendations

In the light of obtained findings and a detailed review of relevant literature, the researcher presents some implications in order to prevent children from the impact of watching cartoons. Parents should select the cartoon program while tuning the television. They should prefer academic cartoons in the early childhood period that develops children cognitively as well as good habits. It is necessary to change the content of cartoons for children. This also would add the academic cartoon to their liked program list. When children watch comedic cartoons, parents should allocate time for them to watch the cartoon as well as they also should watch the cartoon with their children, and criticize every negative action in the cartoon program.

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