



RESEARCH PAPER

Observations about the Effects of Animated Cartoons on Children in View of Mothers and their Intervention Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study explores children's engagement with animated cartoons and reserachers the intervention strategies used by mothers. Childrens' mothers may use different staregies based on their observations concerning viewing these animated cartoons, therefore, the the gap is filled by analyzing these observations. The purposive sampling technique is used to select mothers of children between the ages of 5 and 8 years in Lahore. The focus group method was used to collect data from the mothers of 11 boys and 9 girls. The most popular animated cartoons among children are Motu Patlu. The time that children spend viewing animated cartoons increases on weekends. The most preferable media for viewing animated cartoons are smartphones. Irrespective of gender, the mothers involve their children in household work and use storytelling techniques and art to make their children busy. Mothers may involve children in house hold work.

Keywords: Social Learning, Uses and Gratifications, Animated Cartoons, Children, Mothers

Introduction

Social earning is a complex procedure that occurs through the relationships of the elements of conditioning, reinforcing, and punishing (Nonglait et al., 2022). Kidenda (2018) analyzes that today cartoons are the most common source of amusement for children who watch 8 to 9 cartoons on weekends.

Betti and Igaab (2022) find that language, used in the cartoon programs influences children more potentially than the languages used locally. The "Ryan's Slime" video based on a science experiment and the "Baby Shark" video based on music and dance movements gained recognition (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020). Abbasi et al. (2021) identified that the children achieve satisfaction and pleasure after engaging in the usage of smartphones.

Goldstein and Alperson (2018) argue that that the imaginative worlds that children create in their minds are filled with magic, fiction, and the element of personification. The children also tend to learn many negative traits such as lying, absent-mindedness, superstitions, and exaggerated and false imagination after watching cartoon programs (Parvin & Islam, 2020). of females, categorization of activities, professions, and toys (Ward & Grower, 2020).

The current study fills the gap by analyzing the observations of mothers about the viewing habits of animated cartoons of their children and the intervention startegies they use for reducing the time for such viewership.

Literacture Review

The framework of this research is extended by reviewing the previous literature related to uses and gratification theory and social learning theory. Katz et al., (1974) mention that the audience actively uses media, however, the degree of being active depends on the content and medium, in addition to this, the audience adapts to the changing circumstances and makes informed decisions by analyzing the potential outcomes of the specific media they focus upon.

Palmgreen and Rayburn (1985) made a clear distinction between “gratification sought” which includes what people seek from media and “gratification obtained” which includes what people have gained or experienced from media. McQuail (2010) presented the concept of gratification set and mentioned that it is the platform that amalgamates a group of people with shared interests and media-related essentials.

Social learning theory was proposed by Albert Bandura which provides a comprehensive understanding of how people learn by observing and modeling others in their social environments (Baran & Davis, 2012). The theory accentuates that learning also occurs through observational learning and is not limited to direct experience or reinforcement. It emphasizes the role of social interactions, cognitive processes, and the media’s influence in framing the behavior (Baran & Davis, 2012, 2015). The observation acts as a source of information for the individual which is retained by the individual in their memory for later retrieval and reproduction in their behavior (Baran & Davis, 2012).

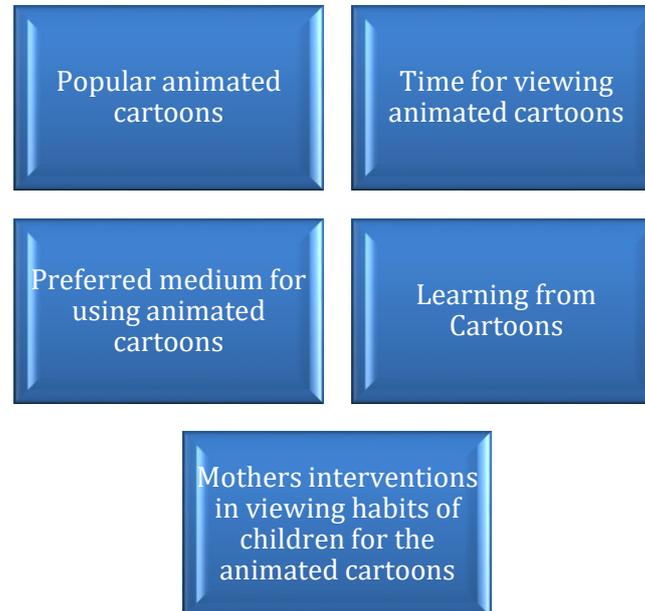
The characters named superheroes played a huge role in the development of false beliefs among children (Parvin & Islam, 2020). Zia et al., (2017) find that a large mass of children frequently watches targeted cartoons with an understanding of beliefs and principles of Hindu religion that contradicts with the faiths, values and ethics of Pakistani Muslim children. Lodhi et al. (2018) explored that children have the potential to improve their language learning abilities and proficiencies by watching cartoons. Another study signified the importance of parents’ supervision when their children watch animated cartoons and develop their orientation toward certain characteristics (Emmanuel, 2022).

The characters of cartoon programs become the role models of children who are aggressive and the children ultimately demonstrate aggression by following their role-model cartoon characters (Parvin & Islam, 2020). It was highlighted that in comparison to males, females are supposed to be typical in their characteristics, limited to performing household activities and acting as subjects (Zaheen & Khan, 2019). The researchers found that in comparison to the female characters, the male characters tended to have more screen time and were mainly represented in leading roles whereas, female characters lacked these opportunities (Zaheen et al., 2020). The mainstream media develops the attitudes of young people regarding perception towards the appearances.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher has used the approaches of Uses and Gratification Theory to explore the uses of animated cartoons to understand both how and why children aged 5 to 8 years old use media (the needs associated with this age group of children which are already under the phase of development) and what kind of gratifications are experienced (the developments and satisfactions experienced during and after the process) as the Uses and Gratification Theory is an audience-centered approach so it directly relates to the targeted sample of the researcher that is the mothers who have children between the age of 5 to 8 years old. The researcher has also used Social Learning Theory to acquire an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the parents' perception (mothers) about the effects of Hindi dubbed animated cartoons on 5 to 8-year-old children in this age of digitalization.

Figure 1. Operational Model for Researching Observations about the Effects of Animated Cartoons on Children in View of Mothers and their Intervention Strategies



Material and Methods

The study uses the interpretive approach. The study uses the qualitative methodology. According to Neuman (2014) qualitative methods the soft data which includes verbal communication/ words, sentences, and symbols. The focus group is conducted for the data collection. The universe in this study is the mothers of children. The population for the study is the mothers of children between the ages of 5 to 8 years old who watch animated cartoons. The researcher uses purposive sampling. The sample of mothers of children between the age group of 5 to 8 years is selected from the Lahore city of Pakistan. The city is selected because of the blend of different ethnicities and social classes. The sample of mothers of children between 5 to 8 years of age is rationalized/ validated on the reason; as most of the mothers in Pakistan are housewives/stay-at-home mothers and supervise their children all by themselves and play a pivotal role in shaping the minds of their children as they explore and interact socially. The sample size for the study is 20 mothers who have children of age between 5 to 8 years. The operationalization of the variables, questionnaires, demographic profile of respondents, results about uses and gratifications of cartoons, and the results about social learning and parental strategies can be found online by Hussain and Saif (2024) because of the increased number of words. Descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage are used for analyzing the close-ended questions and the thematic analysis is used to analyze the open-ended questions.

Results and Discussion

The average age of both male and female children falls between 5 to 8 years. The age of 7 children was 5 years, the age of 6 children was 6 years, the age of 2 children was 7 years and the age of 5 children was 8 years. The focus group consisted of mothers of two groups of 11 male and 9 female children respectively. The respondents (mothers of children) ranged between the ages of 24 and 40 years. The demographic results can be accessed online (Hussain and Saif, 2024). As per the results, all twenty respondents answered that their children do watch cartoons. The most popular animated cartoons among children according to mothers are Motu Patlu (9.9) and Masha and The Bear (9.9). The results reflect

that the children were viewing animated cartoons between 4 and 35 hours in an overall week. The results reflect that the children were viewing animated cartoons between half an hour and 5 hours daily. The results reflect that among children, eight of them preferred smartphones over other mediums while four children preferred smart television connection, two preferred cable television sets, one preferred USB connection, and another preferred tablets or iPads to watch animated cartoons. The results demonstrate that fourteen children preferred to watch animated cartoons in both national and international languages.

The respondents stated that their children use different words in their daily conversations which they learn from animated cartoons. According to Anaya's mother, her child Anaya (Female) often uses the Hindi word "Rakshash" which means protection. According to Zainab's mother, her child Zainab (Female) used words in Hindi, Korean, and English languages are sometimes used in daily conversations after watching animated cartoons. According to Fabiha's mother, her child Fabiha (Female) uses simple words to construct sentences in simple English language like please help me. According to Hareem's mother, her child Hareem (Female) speaks words in Hindi language like shanti and Sapna. According to Hammal's mother, her child Hammal (Female) often uses words of the Hindi language which are: Shanti, tiranga or flag, rakshasa or protection, and chinta or curiosity, According to Rabail's mother, her child Rabail (Female) often uses words of Hindi language which are sundar or beautiful, and chinta. According to Abeeha's mother, her child often uses the word "Sundar" in the Hindi language in daily communication. According to Zoha's mother, her child often used English language word like excuse me, splash, pair or tree in Hindi, sundar, and bhasha or language.

According to Arshman's mother, her child uses words of Hindi language like swedish or tasty, and sapna or dream. According to Ayan's mother, her child used words like chunna, and sapna. According to Muhammad Taqi's mother, her child used words like sundar, sapna, and sawadisht. According to Mikael's mother, her child often uses words like, hey, I will hit you, and Do you want to fight with me? According to Mahad's mother, her child uses are the slang of the English language and her child also makes sounds of different powers learned from Japanese animated cartoons. According to Muhammad Dawood's mother, her child used words like, sapna, and shanti. According to Muhamad Ismail's mother, her child more often uses words, sleeping, eyes, chinta, swadisht, and sapna. According to Mujtaba's mother, her child Mujtaba (Male) communicates in Hindi language. The words more often used are, chunna, oye motu, oye panday, and oye saalay. According to Abdul Haq's mother, her child Abdul Haq (Male) communicates in other languages and especially uses many words in Hindi language. The words he uses more often are vishwas or trust, atma or dead person's spirit, sundar, swadeshi, oye motu or hey fat, abay salay or hay brother-in-law, and rakshasa. According to Abdul Sami's mother, her child Abdul Sami (Male) uses words of Hindi language. The words he uses more often are, sundar, sapna, vishwas, atma, swadisht, rakshasa, and oye motu.

Muhammad Taqi learns and performs the acts of reciting magical spells for various supernatural activities performed individually or in groups and also performs the superheroic acts as performed by many superheroes in animated cartoons. Mahad (Male) performs the acts of having powers of Iron Man (a fictional character, who recognizes as a superhero). The child also throws cards while reciting specific words and spells for the cars to transform into gigantic robots that follow the instructions of the card holders and the robots ultimately fight with each other in the battle.

Anaya's mother turns off the television and involves her child in the kitchen and other household activities by which her child observes her performing different tasks in the house. She also uses the storytelling method to divert the attention of her children to engage with them. Zainab's mother humbly asks her child to stop watching cartoons or from other activities anytime, her child keenly listens to her mother and acts accordingly. Hammal's

mother teaches her child about the religious practices of Islam portrayed in “Kaneez Fatima” animated cartoons. She adopts various techniques to discipline her child by encouraging her to perform little tasks such as offering a glass of water to his father when he comes home. Rida’s mother turns off the television and takes away the mobile phone. Her child is afraid of her and does not disobey her in any case so the child abides by the instructions. To control the media usage of her child Abeeha’s mother focuses on her studies to cut down the usage of smartphones. She urges her child to watch educational videos that will help her enhance her knowledge. Furthermore, she also focuses on the writing practice of her child.

Hassan’s mother adopts simple steps to control the media usage of her child. She turns off the television set and to act one step ahead of this, the child is scolded and threatened by both of his parents (mother and father) for excessive media usage. Arshman’s mother actively controls the media usage of her child. To divert the attention of her child Arshman she involves him in artwork which includes drawing and coloring. She also conducts family outings to change the environment of her child and encourages physical activities. Mahad’s mother uses various strategies to control the media usage of her child. She disconnects the internet connection from the smart television to make it a traditional television set. In addition to this, the mother also sets privacy by activating a security password on her smartphone. Moreover, she involves her child in the kitchen and other activities to divert his attention and control media usage. The strategies used by Muhammad Dawood’s mother include setting a limit to screen time. To change the routine of his child, she involves him in different activities like cycling which ensures physical fitness as the goal of the child is to be a commando, and other creative activities. Muhammad Ismail’s mother turns off the television set to control the media usage of her child. She engages her child in different educational practices for learning by conducting various artwork activities. Mujtaba’s mother adopts a simple strategy to control the media usage of her child including setting a timer of 30 minutes for usage of YouTube Kids as screen time. Abdul Haq’s mother takes back the mobile phone to control the media usage of her child. She also sets a time limit for mobile usage. The child is encouraged to perform physical activities to change his routine. Abdul Sami’s mother sets a time limit for mobile usage and takes back the mobile afterward. She involves her child in physical activities that include playing cricket and cycling along with other creative activities of drawing and coloring.

Anaya’s mother mentioned that her child questioned her about “Mowgli” a character from the animated cartoon named “The Jungle Book” Shere Khan one of the characters of the cartoon series tries to eat Mowgli repeatedly, how Mowgli managed to escape him every time. The mother replied that Mowgli is a character of great bravery who struggles to live and survive among animals due to unfortunate incidents. But he managed to seek the love and support of other animals of the jungle who protected him from the villain of the cartoon series Shere Khan. However, the child was told that in the real world, it is not possible for a human being to survive among wild animals like that, the concept contradicts the reality.

Zainab’s mother mentioned that she discussed with her child about performing good deeds and the rewards it holds in return. As it is shown in many animated cartoons that on doing a good deed one is rewarded with something good. She discussed that if we also perform good deeds then we are also rewarded with Jannat on the day of Judgement. Apart from this, Zainab’s mother discussed landscapes, interior design, and decor in animated cartoons with her child Zainab (Female). Hammal’s mother discussed the practices she must adopt, inspired by the religious cartoon program “Kaneez Fatima” which portrays the importance of discipline, character development, and learning practices from a very young age. She disciplines her child to follow religious practices just like the cartoon character of “Kaneez Fatima”, Hammal (Female) is asked to recite kalima when the electrical power source disconnects.

Zoha’s mother discussed with her child the effects of gaming channels and instead of watching gaming channels and cartoon programs she should engage herself in physical

activities. In addition to this, the child was educated about the differences between social classes that exist regarding their education, lifestyle, and priorities unlike in animated cartoons where various aspects of the differences are intended to be kept hidden under different events.

Hassan's mother discussed the differences between imagination and reality in the context of animated cartoons. The child was enlightened about the details of the events that cannot happen in the real and physical world but the media displays it realistically. Moreover, the child was guided to always look for the positive aspects of the happenings and neglect the negative details to be optimistic.

Muhammad Taqi's mother recently discussed the importance of cooperation and its advantages in life. The mother also advised his child Muhammad Taqi (Male) to not make haste in doing his work as one creates difficulties for oneself by making unnecessary haste but instead one should manage his activities timely and properly. The mother also signified the benefits of discipline for a stable and well-organized life.

Mahad's mother discussed the difference between real and imaginary events exhibited on screens in animated cartoons and also cleared out the misconceptions he had regarding supernatural powers. For this purpose, the child was directed to analyze the difference between the fictional superheroes of today projected on screens and the real heroes we find in Islamic history. Also, the religious differences and historical perspectives and philosophies were discussed and explained to the child. Muhammad Dawood's mother discussed the existence of two different worlds, one that is the real, physical world and the other that is projected on screens through media, in animated cartoons for children. The child has clearly explained the difference between real and fake world life and the events that can occur in reality and those that were limited to screens and animated cartoons. Moreover, the fascination of children with the characters of animated cartoons was discussed and the child was made clear to re-think about the characters of animated cartoons as his role models and inspiration.

Discussion

The results showed that popular animated cartoons, children of Pakistan watch regularly were the productions of India, broadcasted in the Hindi language and its various dialects. The children had easy access to the animated cartoons through television and smartphones with internet connection. The media of Pakistan broadcasted Indian cartoon programs on its few channels that became popular among children of Pakistan. According to demonstrated results of the research, the most popular animated cartoon programs among children of Pakistan were "Motu Patlu", "Masha and the Bear", "The Jungle Book", and "Mr. Bean". In addition to this, the other popular animated cartoon programs were "Doraemon", "Abdul Bari", "Ghulam Rasool", "Miraculous" and many others animated cartoon programs. It was also identified that the children had an excess of multiple devices and mediums at a time, they shifted their preferences according to the availability of the devices. These results indicated that animated cartoons are affecting young minds negatively, which makes them delusional and makes their belief strong in the existence of such supernatural powers and creatures. Consequently, the children develop their thoughts according to the content displayed in the animated cartoon programs, and as a result, they make the characters their role models for different reasons. The results depicted that the inclination to learn a language and its application was more towards the Hindi language than the English language.

The most significant observations of the mothers included the imitation of superheroes- the acts of flying, jumping, and fighting the enemies, transformation acts learned from various animated cartoon programs, styling themselves by imitating their favorite cartoon characters, imitating the speech and articulation of their favorite characters

in daily communication. Furthermore, the children imitate the acts of saving the people by fighting off the enemies and becoming heroes of society.

The significant acts of aggression displayed by children included the change in facial expressions, clenching and protruding of the jaw, raising of voice and shouting to show aggression, showing bare teeth, throwing away things, fighting with siblings, staring and calling others by different names. Moreover, the other signs exhibited with a lesser degree of aggression included being silent for some time, sitting quietly, and sleeping.

The male gender practices rough acts of fighting and playing whereas, the female gender along with the practice and imitation of displaying strength was also inclined towards the learning and practices of feminine characteristics daily.

The noteworthy strategies used by mothers to control the media usage of their children included the involvement of their children irrespective of gender whether male or female, in kitchen and household activities, to divert attention, putting time limits to the media usage, and strictly monitoring their screen time. In addition to this, they diligently invigilated the content their children were exposed to on different platforms of media and laid out their strategies accordingly. The mothers turned off the television sets, took away the smartphone devices, associated their children with different healthy and physical activities, adopted the art of storytelling and narration, engaging in creative activities of drawing and painting, educational and religious discussions were highly focused. Moreover, the children were also threatened to take them to doctors to make them obey the rules and orders of their mothers/ parents.

The mothers engage with their children actively and conduct healthy discussions with their children to identify and clear the queries of their children regarding the content, concepts, events, and actions displayed in the animated cartoon programs. They answered the questions of their children about the existence of supernatural powers and acts, the differences between the real, and physical world, and the portrayal of fake worlds on screens in animated cartoon programs. They also narrated the background and themes of the animated cartoon programs and explained the logical and rational reasons behind the different events of the animated cartoon programs. Moreover, the differences between the social classes of society, their living standards, and preferences were also explained to the children. Lastly, the mothers decoded and differentiated between the concepts of luxuries that exist in the real world and those displayed on the screens in animated cartoon programs.

Conclusion

The results of this research reinforce the insights about the effects of Hindi dubbed animated cartoons according to the perception of parents are unavoidable even in the age of digitalization. Based on the results of this research, it can be understood that the Hindi dubbed animated cartoons affect the children's social learning and formulate the application of uses and gratifications accordingly. Media has the potential to influence the minds of individuals especially children who develop their minds in the light of media and the content they encounter daily. The preference for the Hindi language can be understood in the context of history that Pakistan and India shared many cultural similarities before partition when there were no permanent boundaries and after partition the media played an effective role in making the boundaries porous. The role of globalization cannot be excluded in this perspective, where the learning and exchange of cultural activities and ideas became unconstrained of national boundaries. It was concluded that the Hindi dubbed animated cartoons affect the children of Pakistani society and the parents have actively initiated to reduce and overcome the effects of the Hindi language and formulated strategies to explain the assumptions and realities of media and the real world to clear the misconceptions of young and fragile minds.

Recommendations

The study recommends that there is an urgent need for the Pakistani media to focus and develop its original content and productions in the context of its society that will fulfill the needs of the individuals of the society so that they would not have a limited choice of media content and for media usage and gratifications they would not have to look up to the other societies.

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