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Cartoon Network and its Impact on Behavior of School Going Children: A Case Study of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

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The objective of this study is to trace the impact on the behavior of the children after watching cartoon programs. Cartoon network is one of the most favorite cartoon channels for children. As cartoon network is 24 hours channel, so children spend most of their leisure time in front of it. It not only attracts the children through its contents but also inculcates some positive and negative habits in them. One of the main factors which influence the children while watching cartoons is violence. Violence is a vital part of most of the cartoon programs. Children are induced and attracted by violent content by broadcasters. The study design is survey research and non-parametric statistics is used for data analysis. This study explores the impact of violence presented in cartoons on children behavior. They not only imitate their favorite cartoon characters but even force their parents to buy the same costumes or accessories as displayed by different cartoon characters. This study also depicts this fact that the behavior of the children in class is influenced by watching different cartoon programs.

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

JEL: L82, M14

Television shows and animated films, for over 80 years, have been entertaining the kids. *Felix the Cat* the first ever cartoon icon, which started its journey in 1920s. In the next 10 years, Donald duck, Mickey Mouse and Pluto was the cartoon character which are being introduce by Disney Brother' s Cartoon Studios (Box Office Mojo.com, 2004). Now a day, children' s physical activities are limited by excessive watching of television. As cartoon watching is the most favorite hobby of children in their leisure time, so they like to watch the cartoons on television rather than to do any physical activity.

Cartoon watching affects the attitude and behavior of kids i.e. their liking and disliking, way of talking, and behaving with other children. It also has a strong affect on their language and the way of their dressing and eating.

Cartoon Network is the most favorite cartoon channel in the world. Cartoon network started its transmission in 1992, and has gained record breaking popularity. Since August 2002, it has been watched in more than 80 million homes in United States of America and in 145 countries throughout the world. It is one of the top ad-supported channels for cable television network. Cartoon Network is the 24/7 channel and broadcasting only "Cartoons", yet its 68 percent audience belongs to children of the age

group from 2 to 17 years, whereas, rest 32 percent belongs to the age group of above 18 years and adults. The children from the age group from 6 to 11 are the core audience of the Cartoon Network (Stabile and Harrison, 2003). Cartoon programs contained violence as its integral part. It is noted that cartoon content is full of violence than serial plays and comedies (Potter and Warren, 1998). As the result, children are more exposed to violence showed in the cartoon program than any other television program broadcasted during prime time i.e. 8pm to 11pm (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli, 1994).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cartoons and animated films were once the favorite program of viewers of the different age groups in the society. These cartoons and films were enjoyed but all most every person, from different walks of life on their television sets and theatres. In the beginning when the animated movies and cartoons started their journey, the program contents of both contained humor and entertainment for all ages and sophistication levels. Cartoons, however, now lacked their cross-generational appeal and converted into “kids stuff” (Kellogg, 1992). Cartoon is not a precise term now a day as it is applied to multifaceted graphic form. It is the most entertaining source for kids as they developed a strong affiliation and attachment with it (Kemnitz, 1973). Animated programs and cartoons are playing a vital role in enhancing the profit of companies manufacturing toys as cartoons are source of advertisement for corporate companies. It can be said that cartoon are

generally half-hour commercials for profit oriented companies. The last decade has seen an astronomical change in the genre of animated programs broadcasted on television. We are in the midst of “toon-boom” (Kellogg, 1992).

Cable television network is now available to about 75 percent of the US houses. Nickelodeon and Cartoon network broadcasts 16 hours/day and 24 hours/day respectively, having a Lion's Share of TV viewership and about 80 percent of advertising impacts. Revenue generated by Cartoon Network in the year 2000 was \$500 million (Westcott, 2002). Most of the classic animations on Cartoon Network are now no longer broadcasted on regular basis with the exception of *Tom and Jerry* and *Loony Tunes* due to their popularity in kids (Susan, 2000).

The main stream press, however, did not highlight the harmful effects of Cartoons and animations on kids. Cartoon Network is now no longer safe for kids due to its adult contents. Before it was believed by both the parents and children that cartoons which are being presented on television is safe e.g. a cartoon character of *Joe Camel*. But it is obviously having an adverse affects on children, if they watch cartoon character is smoking. We must assure the safe contents of cartoon programs and address the harmful effects of cartoon programs like *Space Ghost* and *Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law* on kids.

Cartoon related injuries are now becoming a serious problem, which is now needed to be addressed in America. Due to strong affiliation with these supernatural characters, many of our children fall prey to some serious injuries

(Saturnine, 2004). Under the guise of “having fun” how many more kids will get injured? It must be kept in minds that it is the result of balanced coverage of Animation World Network that it is willing to publish my case study on the harmful effects of cartoons on kids. The parents and guardians of kids may be disturbed by the results of this study, but hopefully everybody will respond positively on this call to ban all the harmful cartoons.

Clara and Marian (1980) studied the impact of TV cartoons on children free play behavior. Some children were observed both by researchers and the kindergarten teachers. Sixty-five children and their teachers (n=18) were studied. Every child was individually asked following questions. (1) Which programs do you like most on television? (2) Which cartoon programs do you like the most? (3) Name your favorite cartoon characters? (4) What are the reasons of your liking for these characters? After observing the free play activities (recess/outdoor play activities) of kids, their teachers were asked the following questions. What is your clear evidence from classroom that children have effects of cartoons on them? Do you know about children favorite programs? The results of the study have shown that cartoons were the most favorite program among the children on television. Children like those cartoons which are broadcasted on weekday afternoon. Teachers believed that cartoon viewing have a strong impact on “in-class” behavior of children. Children often demonstrate television-related behaviors in the classroom. Research on the violence shown in television programs and video games is clear cut

evidence that violent contents will increase aggressive and violent behavior of youngsters in both short-term and long-term context (Anderson, 2003).

Now a day, in social communication research, the impact of cartoons has gained a new status. Today, animation is used to convey the messages to target audience, e.g. in marketing and learning (Ginmann, 2003). The results of the research has shown that there are different variables having affects such as liking and disliking of cartoon characters, based on their gender, accessories and costumes they use, physical attractiveness, age, intelligence, anti and pro-social behaviors and over goodness and badness (Klein and Shiffman, 2006).

The influence of the media especially television in learning mechanism is considered to be very important. Television has a strong impact on all of its viewers including all age groups. Today, our mother tongue is greatly affected by the different linguistic expressions which are being presented on television e.g. “break ke bad” (After the break). Likewise, children also affected up to a large extent by the different linguistic terms presented on television in their favorite dramas and cartoons (Gokulsing, 2009). Kottak (1990) believes that television programs and all types of cartoons and animated movies are the main factors which are playing a key role in enculturation of American children. It should be understood now that which type of culture these different television contents are presenting, in order to bring some drastic changes in popular cultures. On the bases of literature review hypotheses are:

H₁: Behavior of school going kids in class is influenced by the frequency they watch cartoons.

H₂: Violence presented in the cartoons influence the behavior of the children.

METHODOLOGY

The design used in this study was survey. The school going children of the age group 6–13 years, from different public and private schools of Bahawalpur City were selected through Simple Random Sampling. A sample of 300 children having television set and cable in their homes was selected. The children were given questionnaire based on Clara and Marian (1980) work and researcher also explained all the questions asked in the questionnaire. In order to remove any ambiguity, they were entertained one by one so that they might not confuse and can easily respond to questions. The data were analyzed by using non-parametric test in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 15.

Test of association

1. For testing the first hypothesis, we used the chi-square test of association to measure the strength of relationship between the behavior of the children in class and the frequency they watch the cartoons. The study showed that the result is significant at 5% confidence level because $p < 0.05$. Chi-square result is shown in Table-1 below.

	Value	Degree of freedom	p -value
Pearson Chi-Square	6.75	2	.03
Likelihood Ratio	6.93	2	.03

	Value	Degree of freedom	p -value
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.22	1	.01
N of Valid Cases	300		

Table 1. Chi-square Test between the behavior of the students in class and the frequency they watch cartoons

2. For testing the second hypothesis, that the behavior of children is influenced by the violence presented in the cartoons, the chi-square test of association was used. The study gave the significant result at $p < .05$, so we can come to the conclusion that the violence present in the cartoons has strong association with the behavior of the children.

	Value	Degree of freedom	p -value
Pearson Chi-Square	32.00	4	.00
Likelihood Ratio	27.19	4	.00
Linear-by-Linear Association	23.79	1	.00
N of Valid Cases	300		

Table 2. Chi-square Test between the violence presented in the cartoons and the behavior of the children

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to see the impact on the behavior of the children after watching cartoon programs. Our study revealed two facts that (i) there exists strong association between watching cartoon programs and the behavior of the children in class and (ii) the violence present in the cartoons has strong association with the behavior of the children. The result of our study supports the study of Clara and Marian (1980) in

which they showed that the teachers believe that cartoons have strong impact on the “ in-class” behavior of the children. Children often used to demonstrate television-related behaviors in the classroom. We observed strong association between violence and the behavior of the children. Our study is supported by the study of Anderson (2003) in which he showed that violence shown in television programs and video games is clear cut evidence that violent contents will increase aggressive and violent behavior of youngsters in both short-term and long-term context.

CONCLUSION

In the current era of powerful media, the children also affected by their most favorite program on television i.e. cartoons. To conclude the recent study, we can say that there is a strong impact of Cartoon Network on school going kids which can be seen on their life style, dressing, aggressive and violent behavior and their language. We found from our study that most of the kids i.e. 80 percent often spend their time in watching cartoons and more over Cartoon Network is the most favorite cartoon channel of 84 percents children. Most of the students i.e. 65.2 percent spend daily 1 to 3 hours in watching cartoons on television in their leisure time. So it can be said in view of above mentioned facts that cartoon watching is the most favorite hobby of the children.

It is also revealed from the study that *Tom and Jerry* and *Loony Tunes* are ranked by the kids 1st and 2nd with the average of 35.8 percent and 23 percent respectively. The most favorite cartoon

character of the school going kids is Jerry with 41.2 percent.

The children are the most important faction of the society which is being affected by the television contents and cartoons that is why children like dresses and accessories/ belongings of their favorite cartoon characters. It was observed that 78 percent of the children are attracted by the dresses of cartoon character. Moreover, 44 percent children like to buy different accessories related to different cartoon characters and 39.9 percent of the kids buy these accessories sometimes. It was observed that majority of the children (63%) like to watch comedy and a very low number like to watch love and action in cartoon programs. Due to their tender minds, most of the children try to imitate the actions performed by different characters.

Violence is also integral part of the even those cartoons which are comedic in their genre. Even in comedic cartoons, characters fight with each other which are liked by the kids. 82.6 percent like fight scenes between two characters e.g. Tom and Jerry. Many children i.e. 57.8 percent like to fight with their classmates and other children after watching these comedic fights.

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