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A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON PARENTS PERCEPTION REGARDING CARTOON VIEWING OF CHILDREN AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THEIR BEHAVIOUR

Dr. Priyanka Suryavanshi[1,] Radhika Awasthi[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, [2]Research Scholar

Department of Home Science,

KMC Language State Government University, Lucknow, U.P., India.

Email: priyankagoldi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This manuscript reviews the literature concerning the influence of watching cartoons on children's behaviour and does qualitative study of parent's perception on influence of watching cartoons on children's behavior. It begins with an overview of the research on children and parents' perception of watching cartoons. The modern-day technology is changing at exponential speed. In the digital era of television screen, mobile phones and internet, child's behaviour and personality are definitely affected as it has over ruled the field of recreational activities. Due to deep penetration of cartoon watching it has been seen that it has affected the behaviour of children. Whatever they see on cartoon channels they try to mimic and copy and behave in that manner. Parents of early childhood years were contacted and interviewed in depth for their views on cartoon viewing and its impact that they observe in their children. It has not only affected the language of child affirmatively but has also affected their habits. Parents in the study reported using cartoon viewing for making children eat their meals often. Food which was a part of family culture and also society due to modern fast life had become a work or duty which parents find comfortable in completing with the help of cartoon viewing. In this process children do not focus on food or eating manners instead fill their stomach mechanically and their mind remains focussed on cartoons. Thus, this habit appears to be unhealthy and alarming for child development. Parents use cartoon viewing often for engaging children in their busy life style thus the content being watched is of concern and requires immediate attention and awareness.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Cartoon Viewing, Eating habits, Parents perception

INTRODUCTION

Present generation is attracted towards digital media as they are born and being raised in the environment where phones, T.V, Internet smart, I-pod are accessible 24/7 to children of every age. Children begin watching cartoons at an early age and by the time they start going to school they become enthusiastic viewers. Over many years, watching cartoons has replaced their field activity and has become a primary part of their life.

Almost all have grown up watching cartoons and it can be said that they keep children engaged with information and entertainment. But on the negative side it is seen that violence shown in cartoons make children violent and aggressive. The screen time of children had increased and physical activities reduced. .One cannot avoid the negative sides of digital media. Adopting positive strategies and engaging children hobby courses can reduce the negative side of digital media. Steve Hostler alludes that those children who watch too much cartoons become too much violent and addictive. He also stated that the content they see on television in cartoon is not appropriate as per their age group. Excessive watching of cartoons has affected children's innate health like mental and emotional. On the other side, some of the studies advocated that some of the

content shown in cartoon not only make children independent but also increases their vocabulary and improve communication skills.

In the entertainment sector cartoon characters and channels has brought a big revolution. Zimmerman and Christakis et al. (2007) stated that the 3 different types of content shown in cartoon series; they are educational, non-violent entertainment, and violent entertainment. Signature characters such as Chhota Bheem, Motu- Patlu, Barbie and Rapunzel gained stardom through cartoon (Furniss, 2007). Zahid Yousaf stated that Ben Ten character in cartoon series influences not only the children behaviour but also their language. A drastic change was seen among the children that they were more interested in watching cartoons rather than playing physical games.

In early 1960s, cartoons were an established television feature. At that time they were facing big disputes among their fraternities on commercialization and violence. These issues rose because cartoon characters were showing some unacceptable and irrelevant characters which were not appropriate to the age of child. This issue is yet to be resolved, as, content shown in the cartoons are still violent (Butler, N.D).

Habib & Soliman (2015) stated that childhood is the stage where moral values are if inculcated will develop in to strong ethics. If children are exposed to too much violence on the television, especially through cartoon characters, it could ruin an individual's personality and it could not contribute to raise a healthy child by teaching them good habits.

Schmidt and Vandewater (2008) conclude in their study that content shown on television programmes matters and if quality educational program is shown it will definitely have positive influence on children's learning .A study done by Adak (2004) explains that Children cannot fully distinguish between real world and virtual world so they tend to imitate what they see in cartoons. Impersonate positive behaviour is seen among those children who mostly spend time viewing educational programs (Rideout & Hamel, 2006). Review of literature motivated to undertake present study with the following objectives.

OBJECTIVES

1. To know the influence of watching cartoons on children's behaviour through analysing secondary data
2. To study parents' perception on cartoon viewing of children and its influence on their behaviour

METHODOLOGY

1. Tools used: Secondary data have been gathered from various research journals, books and websites.
2. An interview Schedule was mailed through goggle form and was filled by children's parents and their views were taken in detail telephonically. Twenty parents were interviewed in depth about their perception of cartoons impact on children's behaviour.

Parents of different play schools of Lucknow city were contacted for interviewing on their perception of cartoon viewing of children and its influence on their behaviour. Finally out of thirty five parents twenty gave their time and data for the study.

a. Inclusion criteria for second objective: -Parents of those children who watch cartoons daily for at least two hours daily.

b. Exclusion criteria: - Parents of children who did not watch cartoons daily minimum for 2 hours.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parental Supervision: This part is an important part to be discussed in the study because this clearly shows how much parents are aware with respect to their child's exposure of cartoon they were watching. Abelard (1999) says that in an era where both parents are generally working and children spent most of the time unsupervised. It is essential for them to take out time for children and regularly keep on checking what they are doing in their absence. Josephson (1995) says that there are many things through which parents can control their child from watching violence and irrelevant stuff on television. Abanto (2014) notes that 'child developed self-confidence, grew responsible when cohesion in family is strong. It can be developed through communication, sitting together, watching cartoons and laughing together.

Cognitive behaviour: Some studies have shown that watching cartoons on television has greatly affected the cognitive functioning of child. Wartella & Robb (2007) in their findings state that children learn quickly from watching cartoon or movie when compared to human teaching... On the other side Diehl and Toelle, (2011) said that children who watch educational programmes, reading books, engaging themselves in their hobby courses are more likely to have better cognition.

Child development: According to Baran &Davis (2009) the child's development starts since the time they started mimicry and they recall the sounds, Buonanno (2008) says that television pretend to convoy children to do those activities which are not appropriate to their age. Meyrowitz (1985) observes that television forces children to ask the meanings of actions and words. Positively, television cartoon provides a medium of family cohesion because it is something that families can together get entertainment. An observational study done by the American Paediatrics Association has concluded that the television has become a widely used tool for teaching the children (Muss, 1999). On the negative side, it is a complained that excessive exposure to cartoons by children has hindered the growth of children by not getting enough time for their participation in recreational activities.

Impulse food purchasing behaviour: A research was conducted by Tanvir & Arif (2012) on parent's perception towards children behaviour- how their children behave when they encounter the cartoon endorsed product. The results suggested that children buy cartoon endorsed items more as compared to other food products but there is no difference between the impulse buying behaviour among boys and girls. Although class difference in the impulse buying behaviours of the children is seen as children of higher income group tend to buy things more impulsively as compared to parents with low income.

Social behaviour: A study done in Nigeria by Oyero & Oyesomi (2014) reported that cartoons had influenced the children and said that cartoons have both positive and negative influence on shaping the behaviour of children.

Violence: A study done by Hassan &Daniyal (2013) stated that there is a relation between the violence shown in the cartoon programs with the behaviour of the children in the class.

Aggressive behaviour: According to Kirsh (2005) comedic elements in cartoons camouflage animated violence, thereby reducing the negative effects of violent imagery on aggressive behaviour. This study suggested that intervening the negative effects of cartoon violence may be as simple as making an active mediation statement during viewing.

Education: According to a report by Gill and Robert Children have a tendency to simulate character of cartoons more easily than adults. In educational content if emphasis is put on cartoon characters for teaching the children then the speed of learning increases.

Role Models: Cartoon characters can set a good example to children as a role model that encourages good moral behaviour. For example, Superman character is honest and brave; it plays a role of constantly standing up for the rights of others.

Health Problems: Study done by Bowling Green State University stated that watching too much cartoons has reported the harmful effect on the brains of children who watch too much cartoons specifically the attention deficit disorder. Too much watching cartoons force children to sit in front of TV for longer times, this on other hand limit their time for physical activity. Lesser physical activity leads to the problems like obesity, etc.

Eating disorders: Researchers from the University of Colorado Boulder collected data from approximately 300 children and found that cartoon characters are completely imaginary, kids still attributed human body norms to character's body shapes. After watching a cartoon with a plump character, it was found that children were almost twice as likely to consume high-calorie, indulgent foods when compared to children who viewed healthier looking characters or no characters at all.

Observational learning: According to Bandura (1986) learning has four stages that is attention, retain, reproduce and repetition. Humans are much socialised and that is why he can quickly adapt new behaviour patterns. Children pay a lot of attention to cartoons because the characters they watch, they retain the things then they reproduce and finally they repeat from the things they saw.

Linguistic development: Clark (2002) studied watching cartoon from pedagogical point of view. He said Cartoons give the child that atmosphere in which he engages himself and create the scene to enhance his abilities and his listening and speaking abilities unconsciously. Doring (2002) said that watching cartoons make child's brain more productive. Learner creates his oral capabilities so that he can answer the question.

Social learning theory: Social learning theory explains imitation occurs in four stages that is close contact, imitation of influencers, understanding of concepts, and role played by the characters. According to Baran and Davis (2003), the components of observational learning are attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation.

Hence, from these two theories it can be concluded that television cartoons help in shaping the social behaviour of children because the characters they watch on television they put attention to the characters they see, they retain the things then they reproduce and finally they repeat from the things they saw.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Graph 1: Relationship of respondents with the child:

Relationship with the child
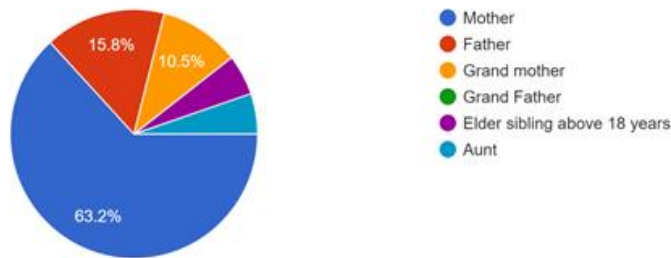
A pilot study was done on 20 respondents among which 52.6% were female child and 47.4% were males. Among them, 63.2% were living in joint family and 36.8% in the nuclear family. It was seen that 63.2% guardian of the child was mother, 15.8% had father and 10.5% had grandmother as their guardian. None had grandfather as the guardian. Hence, it is clear from the study that mothers are generally the caretaker of a child. She played a major role in molding the personality if a child.
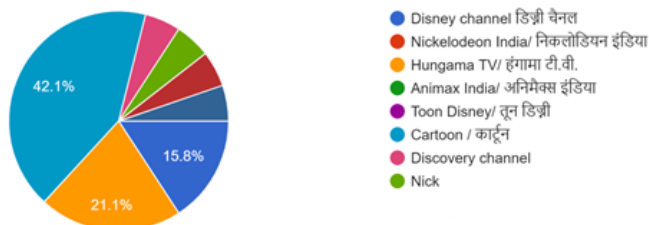
Graph 2.: Age of child

Age of Child
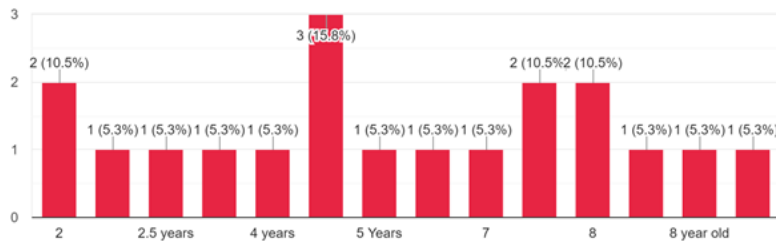
The data shows that 15.8% among the respondent's child were in the age between four to five years and 10.5 % have the child of age group eight years. An article written by Nocola KS Davis in ''The Guardian'' stated that until a child reaches to its puberty child speaks according to the adults he is surrounded by.

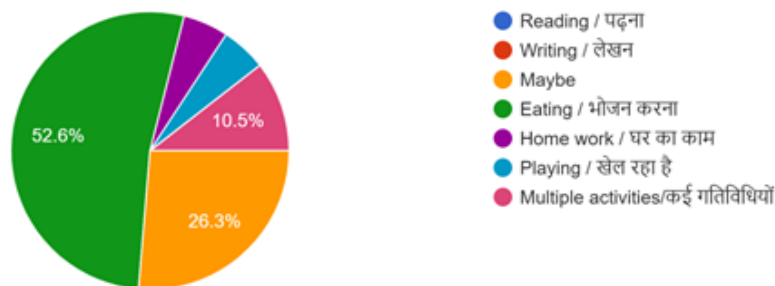**Graph 3**. Type of channel the child watches

Which channel does your child watches the most?

- Disney channel डिज्नी चैनल
- Nickelodeon India/ निकलोडियन इंडिया
- Hungama TV/ हंगामा टी.वी.
- Animax India/ अनिमैक्स इंडिया
- Toon Disney/ तून डिज्नी
- Cartoon / कार्टून
- Discovery channel
- Nick

The study revealed that 42.1% children watched cartoon channel, 21.1% watched Hungama channel, 15.8% watched the Disney channel and 5.25% watched Nickelodeon, Toon Disney and Nick and Discovery channel respectively. Majority of the children were watching cartoon channel. The reason can be as the channel has a name cartoon in it and the content shown on this channel may entertain the child very much.

**Graph 4: Engagement of the child while watching T.V.**

Do you engage your child in any other activity while watching cartoons

- Reading / पढ़ना
- Writing / लेखन
- Maybe
- Eating / भोजन करना
- Home work / घर का काम
- Playing / खेल रहा है
- Multiple activities/कई गतिविधियों

About 52.6% gave their child a food to eat ,26.3 % parents were not sure whether they engaged their child in other activities while their child was watching cartoons ,10.5% parents engaged their child in multiple activities when their child is watching the cartoons while 5.3 % parents may give a child something to read or write respectively. A big reason for parents to engage their child to eat food or doing multiple activities or other work is that they may get rest or take out some time for themselves.

**Graph 5: Physical position of a child while watching cartoon**

Mention the physical position of child's viewing cartoon on t.v/mobile ./ T.v
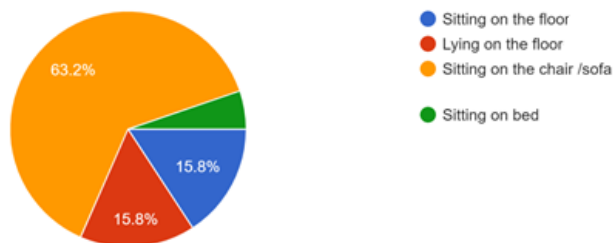
Majority of parents said that their child watch cartoon while sitting on the chair/sofa, 15.8% child watch cartoon while sitting on the floor or while lying on the floor respectively and 31.6 % watch cartoon while sitting on a bed. The reason for this could be that the parents are not paying attention towards the posture of a child. It can also be said that as the duration of a child for cartoon watching is too long because of tiredness or laziness the posture keeps changing.

**Graph-6: Timing of watching cartoons by a child**

As a parent do you think is it ok with your child to watch cartoons more than 3 hours a day?
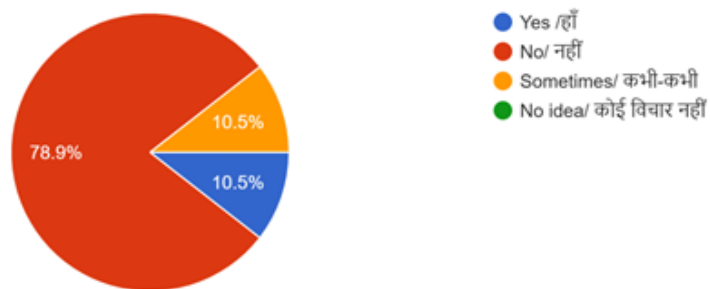
Majority of the parents said that they were not 'ok' with the fact that their child is watching cartoon for too long time. 10.5% either said 'yes' or 'sometimes' they are 'OK'if their child is watching cartoons for more than 3 hours. The reason could be if parents are too much busy or they are not getting a time for children then they may have no problem. On the other hand, all those parents who were not ok may have noticed some behavioral changes in their child.

Graph7: Type of cartoon a child enjoys

Which cartoon does your hild enjoys a lot ?
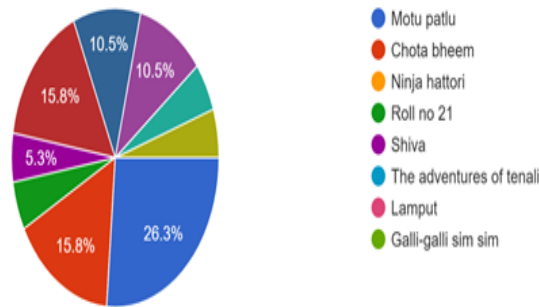
From the study it is clear that 26.3% children enjoy the adventures of Tenali, 15.8 % children enjoy cartoon chotabheem and Lamput respectively, 10.5% children enjoyed cartoon Shiva and Motu Patlu. About 5.2% children enjoyed watching cartoon Galli-Galli sim-sim, roll no 21 respectively. From the study it was also clear that about 21.1 %children watch cartoon on mobile at the time of interview taken by the researcher. About 78.9% children watch cartoon on television. From the study it was also found that about 15.8% children imitate cartoon character Mr. Bean, Chota Bheem, Doremon respectively. 10.5% children imitate cartoon character of Motu Patlu, 5.3% children imitate character of Tom and Jerry. About 18.4 % children imitate cartoon characters of Pakadam Pakdai, Ben ten respectively.

## Graph 8: Behavior of a child -Aggression

Does your child shows aggression after watching cartoon or enact aggressively.
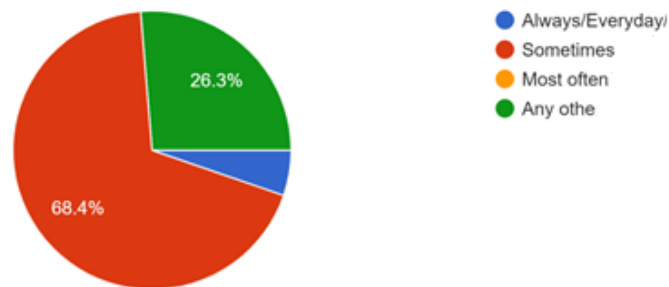
About 68.4% children sometimes show aggression after watching cartoon or enact aggressively. About 26.3% any other behavior while watching cartoon and about 5.3% children always/everyday show aggressive behavior or enact aggressively.

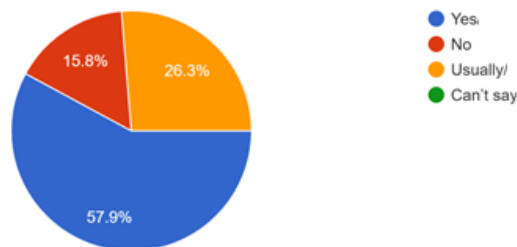### Graph 9: Type of food eaten by a child while watching cartoon
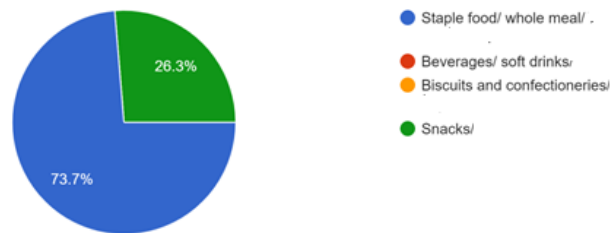
About 73.7 % children were eating staple food or whole meal while watching cartoon and about 26.3% were eating snacks.

### Graph 10: Cartoon watching helping in making child eat food

From the study it was clear that about 57.9% children were comfortable before the screen while eating food. Their parents/guardian said it was helpful for them. About 26.3% usually eat food while watching cartoons and about 15.8% said no that it is not helpful in making their child eat food while watching cartoon.

Graph 11: Child skips meal if not allowed to watch cartoons

If your child is not allowed to watch cartoon does, he/she skips meal..
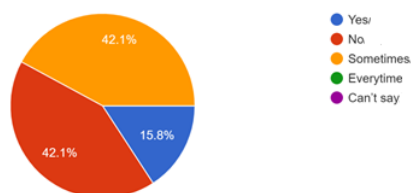
About 42.1% children do not skip meal and about 42.1% children sometimes and 15.8% skip meal if not allowed to watch cartoon. It was clear from the study that 47.4% children finished all their food given to them while watching cartoons and 31.6% children usually did not finish all their food during they watch cartoons. About 57.9% parents said that watching cartoon is helpful to the child to eat his/her food and about 26.3% said usually cartoon is helpful for their child to eat his/her food and about 15.8% said no to cartoon watching for helping their child to eat his/her food. The reason can be when the child is watching cartoons no one is observing them or interfering them.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to study the influence of watching cartoon on behaviour of children. Various studies have shown that watching cartoons had significant influence on behaviour of children. Changes are both positive as well as negative. Parents should keep bird eye view on the content showing in the cartoons. They need to spend time with children. From the study it can be concluded that the production of more informative and educational programs will help to create the awareness among the children.

Majority parents reported to utilize cartoon viewing of child for making them eat food. They gave different reasons as 'children don't eat but watching cartoon is a distraction or engagement that involves them thus easy to make them eat'. This throws light on the fact that food and eating manners were an important part of our culture. Families sat together food preparation food serving and eating together is an important part of way of living in a culture and was an important aspect of a family environment. Now a day's families don't eat together thus even parents in their fast life are not able to provide an environment to child where food and eating together is happiness and satisfaction not just for hunger but psychological thus often food presented to them is disapproved with various reasons as taste, appearance or boredom. Researches have proved that for children observation and imitation are powerful tools of learning at that early years of life but eating together not only introduced children to various foods being consumed by different family members but also gave opportunity to eat by observing and copying. Instead of that we are moving

towards television and mobiles cartoon viewing to displace their attention and feed mechanically. That's a concern that needs attention and improvement if we want children to not just eat as a type of work but enjoy food as part of our culture.

Majority children sit on sofa and chair to watch cartoons others lie or sit on floor or bed. But the point is their posture while watching cartoons for long hours, of which, parents felt they are not at all conscious. Parents reported often once the child is comfortable and engaged in watching they hardly pay attention to their postures.

Majority of the parents feel their children should not watch cartoons for more than three hours but there was difference in their thought and practice. Parents need cognitive and behaviour therapy for this concern as per this qualitative study. Parents told about various cartoons watched by their children which depend on age group, region, language etc. In this study majority liked "Motu Patlu". As parents it is important to analyse the cartoon character that your child is observing. Example in the cartoon "motu patlu" the main character eats "Samosa"- a junk food - often and gains energy and power from that. So such fairy and wrong perceptions for eating or other important things needs to be analysed and counselled.

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