

Sri Lankan Parents' Perception towards Children Viewing TV Cartoons

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Abstract: Television is an inevitable part of every family in Sri Lanka, and for children the TV cartoons are one of the main entertainments in their daily life. Children love cartoons due to many reasons such as characters, stories, colors, theme songs, animations etc. Being one of the easily accessible sources of fun and entertainment, cartoons in turn influence the children's life in various ways. Cartoons have a direct impact on child's social, cognitive, behavioral and emotional development. In the present study, Sri Lankan parents' perception towards children viewing TV cartoons was investigated. 160 parents (43.75% males and 56.25% females) from Uva and Western provinces of Sri Lanka were selected as the sample of the study, using convenient sampling method. It was found that all parents allow their children to watch cartoons freely. 74% of children watch television three hours or more, per day. Majority of the parents are not aware that there are inappropriate cartoons broadcasted on television. Majority of the parents do not know that cartoons should be carefully selected for their child. 97% of parents do not know that there are hidden sexual innuendoes in cartoons watched by their children. 82% of parents are not aware that some cartoons use inappropriate language. The findings of this study clearly indicate that the attention and knowledge of parents about TV cartoons are grossly inadequate and need to be enhanced.

Key Words: Cartoon, Television, Children, Parents, Perception.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Sri Lanka, it is a widespread practice that parents feed the child while she/he is watching the television. It is very convenient for parents because the child's full attention is on TV and child eats whatever given to her/him. Further, turning on the television to watch a cartoon program is a very common alternative for working parents in their busy life. The parents can get their work done easily while children are watching cartoons. Moreover, playing with other kids also brings many problems such as fighting, falling, complaining etc., and yet again allowing the child to watch a TV cartoon program is an easy solution.

On the other hand, the child's mind is full of curiosity and they always look for something to learn. In this context, the children experience the world through what they see in the television. Especially, the small kids (i.e. under age six) are not matured enough to understand the reality of cartoons. They trust whatever they see and hear in their favorite cartoon shows. Cartoons affect the thinking, intellectual and communicative abilities of children. Cartoons have a direct impact on children's social, cognitive, behavioral and emotional development. According to the researchers, cartoon effect children's imaginative play (Valkenburg & Van der Voort, 1994), creativity (Singer et al., 1995) and education (Huston et al., 1999).

Watching cartoons on a regular basis might affect the children's mind and behavior positively as well as negatively. When the positive side is considered, the cartoons provide children the opportunities to observe and explore. By watching cartoons, children observe new things and surroundings and explore the world via the given imaginary world. Many cartoon characters always seek to discover new inventions. In many instances, the child who watch cartoons become more active and smart. Further, cartoons make children laugh and happy and this is good for their health.

On the hand, the cartoons might affect children negatively. Cartoons contain several things that promote violence and aggression, and a number of researches focused on the effect of visual media on children have confirmed a correlation between media, violence and aggressive behavior. As a result of the repeated exposure to aggressive media, children may exhibit sleep problems (Cantor & Omdahl, 1991), and various kind of mental issues (Singer et al., 1998). The language used in some cartoons are also very inappropriate for children and they tend to adopt these inappropriate words. They even imitate the style and language of cartoons (Ghilzai et al., 2017). Some cartoons use derogatory, offensive and taboo words and slangs which are not acceptable for children. Furthermore, some researchers have found that children who are high consumers of television diagnosed with disruptive behaviors, emotional problems and learning disabilities. (Grimes, Bergen, Nichols,

Vernberg, & Fonagy, 2004; Grimes, Vernberg, & Cathers, 1997). According to some psychologists (Mussen, P., & Rutherford, E. 1961; Berkowitz, L. 1962), children who watch aggressive and violent cartoons are more inclined to harshness and violence. Overall, it has been established that the cartoon series could affect children both physically and psychologically (Yousaf, Dr. Zahir, Shehzad Munham, Hassan S. Ali 2015). Hence, it is imperative for parents to know what their children watch regularly and how watching TV cartoons affect children. The present study is aimed at investigating the parents' perception towards children viewing TV cartoons.

II. METHODOLOGY

To analyze the parent's perception towards children viewing cartoons, the both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data has been collected through self-administrated questionnaire among 160 parents and secondary data were collected from e-resources, such as journals, magazines and websites.

Sample

The participants of the research were selected from Uva and Western provinces of Sri Lanka based on convenient sampling method. The size of the sample was 160 parents, with 70 male and 90 female respondents. The parents were 20-50 years and all of them have children under the age of six (6). Among the 160 parents, 88% were employed and 12% were house-wives. All parents are educated at least to the GCE Ordinary Level, and there were graduates and post-graduates as well.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed through frequencies and percentages. The data presented in figures and tables were obtained using excel and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the study sample, and there were 70 (43.75%) male and 90 (56.25%) female respondents.

Table 1. Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	70	43.75%
Female	90	56.25%

With regard to the education level of the respondents, the majority of the sample were in the level of GCE Advanced Level (90) and the percentage is 56.25%. 18.75% of the sample (30) have GCE Ordinary Level education. There were 28 graduates in the sample and 12 respondents have post-graduate level education. (Table 2 and Figure 1)

Table 2. Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Post-Graduate	12	7.50%
Graduate	28	17.50%
GCE A/L	90	56.25%
GCE O/L	30	18.25%

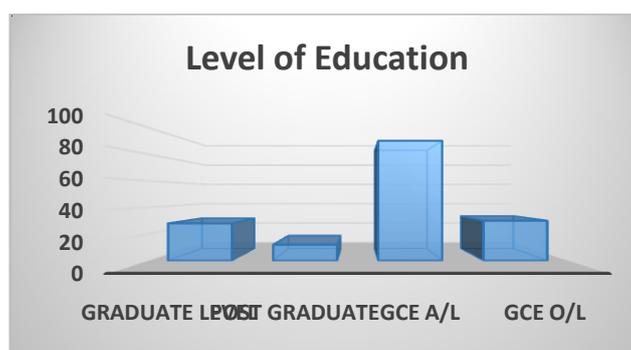


Figure 1. Level of Education

Figure 2 presents the age levels of respondents and it has to be noted that all respondents were in the age group of 20-50 years. Among them, 90 were in the age group of 31-40 and 45 were in the age group of 20-30. Further, 25 were in the age group of 41-50.

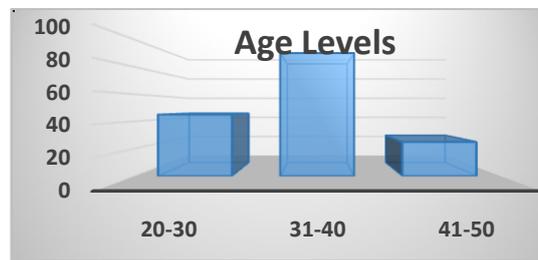


Figure 2. Age Levels

As it can be seen from Table 3, all parents agreed that their children watch cartoons every day.

Table 3. Children Watching Cartoons

Children Watching Cartoons	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	160	100%
No	0	0%

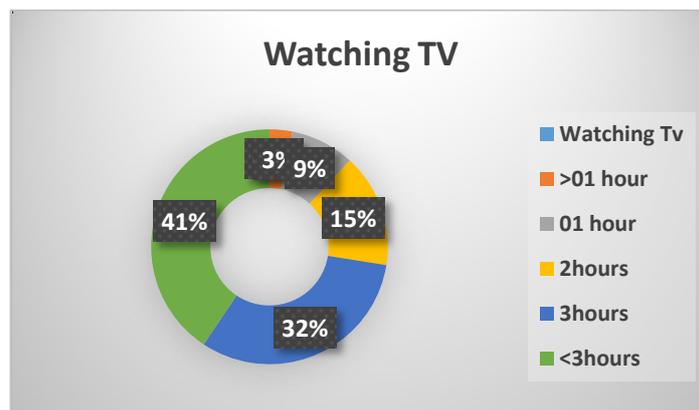


Figure 3. Children Watching TV

It was revealed that all children watch television more than one hour per day. Majority of the children (41%) watch television more than three hours per day. 32% watch television at least 3 hours per day and 15% two hours per day. Only 3% watch less than one hour per day. (Figure 3)

Table 4. Cartoons Should Be Filtered

Cartoons Should Be Filtered	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	18.75%
No	08	5.00 %
No Idea	122	76.25%

When parents were asked whether cartoons should be filtered for their child, majority of the sample (76.25%) did not have an idea about it. 30 parents (18.75%) said 'Yes', and 8 parents (5%) said 'No'. (Table 4)

Table 5. Knowledge of Inappropriate Cartoons

There are Inappropriate Cartoons	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	3.75%
No	30	18.75 %
No Idea	124	77.50%

Answering the question of 'Do you know that there are inappropriate cartoons watch by your child?', only 6 parents (3.75%) said 'Yes'. 30 (18.75%) said 'No', and 124 (77.5%) did not have any idea about it. (Table 5)

Table 6. Cartoons Help Child to Learn

Cartoons Help Child to Learn	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	100	62.5%
No	32	20.0 %
No Idea	28	17.5%

Majority of the respondents (62%) agreed that cartoons help children to learn. 20% of the sample did not agree that cartoon help children to learn. 17.5% of the sample did not have an idea about whether cartoons could help their children to learn or not. (Table 6)

Table 7. Cartoons Consist of Violence

Cartoons Consist of Violence	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	60	37.500%
No	21	13.125 %
No Idea	79	49.375%

As it can be seen from Table 7, most of the parents (49.375%) did not know that cartoons consist of violence. 21 parents (13.125%) directly answered and said 'No'. However, 60 parents (37.5%) agreed that cartoons consist of violence.

Table 8. Hidden Sexual Innuendoes in Cartoons

Hidden Sexual Innuendoes in Cartoons	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	2.500%
No	21	13.125 %
No Idea	135	84.375%

As Table 8 indicates, most of the parents did not know that there are hidden sexual innuendoes in some cartoons. Only four parents (2.5%) knew about that and 21 parents (13.125%) did not even believe that there are such hidden hints in cartoons.

Table 9. Cartoons Use Inappropriate Defensive Language

Cartoons Use Inappropriate Defensive Language	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	17.500%
No	13	8.125 %
No Idea	119	74.375%

When parents were asked whether they know that cartoon use inappropriate language, 17.5% responded as 'Yes'. 8.125% responded as 'No' and majority (73.375%) did not have an idea about it. (Table 9)

It was confirmed by all the 160 parents of this study that their children watch television regularly and all of them watch cartoon daily. This agree with the findings of a number of previous researches, which have revealed that children watch cartoons daily. (Rai et al, 2016). Further, it was found in this study that 73% of the children watch television three hours or more, daily. This also agree with the findings of a previous study done by Habib&Soliman. (2015). In that study, it was revealed that 2-5 years old children watch cartoons 32 hours weekly, which means more than four hours a day. (Habib K, &Soliman T., 2015) In the present study, the parents were asked whether they watch cartoons along with their children, and the majority answer was 'No'. This is mainly because the majority, sometimes both parents in the family, are working parents, and hence have no time to spend with their children. Obviously, the absence of both parents adversely affect the children's behavior. Earlier studies have shown that when both parents are absent at home, children tend to behave badly as seen in the television. (Ghilzai S.A 2017)

Further, in this study, the parents were asked whether the cartoons should be filtered for their children, but most of the respondents did not have a clear answer for that question. 76.25% said they have no idea about

it. In our opinion, this situation is of serious concern, as many research work have clearly proven that cartoons cause adverse effects for children. Though, some cartoons purely meant for entertainment, there are some cartoons which are violent to the core. Findings of some psychological researches have confirmed that cartoon violence has numerous adverse effects on the behavior of children. As they point out, children imitate the violence and crime they see on television, and become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others. Many children, who are exposed to cartoon violence, become aggressive or do harmful action towards others. (Sudha, A.G, 2011) Rai and others have conducted an observational cross sectional study on the effect of cartoon program on behavioral, habitual and communicative changes in children (Rai et al, 2016). In that study, a 33% of increase in violence behavior of children after watching violent cartoons, was observed. On the other hand, in the present study, it was revealed that most of the parents (49.375%) did not know that some cartoons consist of violence. Out of the sample, only 60 parents (37.5%) agreed that some cartoon consists of violence.

Moreover, in general, most of the parents do not know that there are hidden sexual innuendoes in some cartoons, though it is a well-known fact there are hidden sexual innuendoes in some cartoons targeted for children. In the present study, it was found that 13.125% respondents did not even believe that there are hidden sexual hints in cartoons. According to Ghilzai, children watch cartoon for three reasons, namely for fun, action and learning. (Ghilzai, 2017) In the present study, 62% of the respondents agreed that cartoons help children to learn, while 20% did not agree and 17.5% did not have an idea about it.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study clearly indicate that the attention and knowledge of parents about TV cartoons are grossly inadequate and need to be enhanced. There is a need for parents to scrutinize (and filter) the TV cartoons that their children watch. Allowing the child to watch only the selected cartoons, might be helpful to minimize the potential adverse effects caused by the TV cartoons. Furthermore, it is imperative for parents to spend a considerable time with their children so that the child's physical and psychological development is ensured.

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