

HOW DO CARTOONS AFFECT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR?

- **Abstract**

Cartoons are a powerful influence on children's daily lives, as they convey concepts, ideas, and messages that can impact them positively and negatively. On the one hand, they can help children learn, stimulate their imagination, improve their language skills, and encourage them to dream about their future aspirations. On the other hand, cartoons can also have adverse effects on children. As qualitative research, this critical report aims to shed light on some of the main effects that cartoons can have on children.

- **Key Words**

Cartoons, Children, Impacts, Development, Language, Behaviour, Learning.

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1. Introduction

The young minds of children are an open canvas, poised to absorb the world around them. They are like sponges, highly receptive to all forms of information, whether it is positive or negative, and can be easily influenced by it. Cartoons, with their vivid, bright colours, whimsical shapes, and delightful sounds, have an unparalleled ability to captivate young minds. Due to these alluring visuals, cartoons have become a daily habit for many children, and they hold a special place in the hearts of many kids.

Over the years, cartoons have undergone a significant transformation, captivating even children as young as 5 months old. As young ones progress to ages 2 to 4, they often develop a strong affection for cartoons, which can have an impact on their behaviour, attitudes, and communication approach. This study aims to explore how cartoons have influenced children.

2. Literature Review

The main resource that I have used for my research is “*Effect of Cartoons on Children*” by Thanuja Wijethilaka (2020). This insightful book provided me with detailed information on the effects of cartoons on children's lives, including both positive and negative impacts. The author's concise yet informative writing style made it easy to understand the complex psychological concepts involved.

Additionally, “*Understanding Children's Responses to TV*” by Nicki Caret, helped me gain a deeper understanding of how cartoons can influence a child's mind, which was instrumental in my research.

3. Why are Children Affected by Cartoons?

Despite learning from various scholarly books and teachers, why are children more affected by cartoons? Research conducted at the University of Michigan by Sherman indicates that cartoon content has a unique structure that attracts and influences children more than any other form of entertainment. Unlike traditional methods, cartoons offer the added benefits of audio, visual effects, and beautiful colour schemes that capture the attention of young viewers. Additionally, cartoons often feature well-written stories, scenes, and themes with

sweet and smooth transitions that make learning fun and effective. This helps children to absorb information engagingly, surpassing the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods such as books and teachers (Jensen, E., 1998).

According to Ales, D. (1998), children are like explorers, always in search of new experiences, and they crave various forms of entertainment. Cartoons inspire children to adopt the characteristics of their favourite characters who save the world or live in castles, fuelling their imagination and creativity. They offer a world of possibilities where children can create their stories and adventures. This is what teachers and books often fail to provide to children, which makes them more addicted to cartoons. In essence, cartoons offer children a world of possibilities, where they can create their characters, stories, and adventures, and this fuels their imagination and creativity.

4. Effects of Cartoons on Children:

Cartoons can have varying impacts on a child's behaviour and development. While cartoons can be entertaining and help develop skills, boost imagination, and teach valuable life lessons, they can also have negative effects if consumed excessively. Overexposure to cartoons can hinder mental growth, lead to behavioural issues, and even cause health problems if not properly monitored. Let's see some of the effects that cartoons can have on children:

A. Early Learning and Development:

Our mind grasps things faster when it is in a visual format, and hence even for adults when we learn there are various presentations or seminars in the form of visual tutorials. In the same way, children too have a remarkable ability to learn quickly. Cartoons can be a great tool to teach them valuable lessons engagingly. Hence various schools conduct visual classes so that children can observe and learn. Many different types of cartoons can help children learn about shapes, colours, and numbers through interactive elements like songs, poems, and stories. This makes the learning experience enjoyable for children, making them more creative and coming up with various new concepts independently. For example, making and drawing imaginative concepts such as flying cars, building flying high with the help of balloons, making their super pets which have wings and many more. (Shailesh Rai, 2016).

Cartoons also have a huge impact on the development of children. It helps them with gaining various skills such as the development of logic, auditory and visual processing, and various other cognitive skills such as perception, helping with their movement as they mimic the characters in the cartoons and increasing their memory. While this is true, it can also be harmful to the child if the person that the child is mimicking is clumsy. For example, in various cartoons such as Tom and Jerry, and Oggy and the Cockroaches, the characters are generally rats and cockroaches and portray their emotions in a very harsh way. They repeatedly bang their heads on the wall, jumping off places which would be unsafe and many more scenarios just for fun. At this time, instead of learning positive things, the children start to panic and feel uncomfortable and hence they cannot predict proper results for the actions they would be learning. Due to their habit of copying the movements of any character, it becomes harmful rather than fun.

Cartoons are an excellent resource for children to learn multiple languages. They offer an immersive experience that helps children learn their native language or mother tongue in a comprehensive manner. Cartoons provide an exciting way for children to explore new words that are not commonly used in everyday conversations, which enriches their vocabulary and helps them understand the language better. Moreover, watching cartoons is critical for children as it assists them in improving their pronunciation and speaking style by mimicking what they hear. Overall, cartoons are an effective tool in helping children learn and develop their language skills in a fun and engaging way. R. Cooke (2002) argues with this idea by saying that when this aspect is not taken under observation by the parents it might also have negative effects on their language. Cartoons frequently contain inappropriate language that is not suitable for kids. They would start using a language which is unfit for a child. A child's innocent mind makes them grasp things/words whose meaning they won't understand but they would be using these abusive words just because they hear it.

B. Behavioural and Health Impacts:

The basic principle of animation is the exaggeration of feelings. This includes anger, attitude, violence, foul language, etc. As per P. Tripathi, children tend to learn things quickly, which can sometimes lead to them becoming more aggressive as they grow up. This can have a negative impact on their mental health, resulting in them developing anger issues at an early age. In many cases, when parents turn off the television after a child has been watching it for

a long time, the child may become angry and start yelling, crying, throwing things, and even injuring themselves. Additionally, they may begin to exhibit behaviour of ignoring people who are trying to talk to them. At the same time, there are various cartoons which are more amusing, calm and happy causing the children to be healthy. The reason for this is the laughter and fun activities that take place in the cartoons. Laughter plays a crucial role in both children's and adult's lifestyles. Due to the endorphins released into our bodies, stress levels are reduced at the same time even boosts immunity resulting in positive feelings. This shows that the content which the child sees is what it adapts. If it is negative, the children often become more violent or else if it is taken positively, they turn out to be healthy and emotionally happy. (N. Cart, 2004). When a child excessively watches cartoons, it increases the likelihood of adverse health effects. Sitting for extended periods in front of a screen can lead to a sedentary lifestyle, which can cause obesity, vision problems, and nutritional deficiencies. These consequences can arise due to a lack of physical activity and a failure to consume a balanced diet, which is essential for maintaining good health.

Research by Koeijmans tells us that these negative side results in excessive adrenaline output, making the child more aggressive, uncomfortable and in a depressed mood. The mechanism of "becoming a certain someone" is common in the minds of children. They tend to emulate the behaviour, style, and language of their role models. However, sometimes the person they aspire to be like can have negative traits such as violence or insensitivity, which can adversely affect the child's growth. This can lead to anti-social behaviour, aggression, and hyper-reactivity in the child due to which children start to challenge their parents and teachers when they are being disciplined. (Mahrukh Khan, 2010).

5. Conclusion

Children's innocent minds are highly susceptible to influence from their surroundings, and cartoons are one of the most significant mediums for this influence. While properly monitored by parents' cartoons can help children expand their imagination and serve as a platform for learning different concepts such as entertainment, acquiring new knowledge and providing comic relief. If its influence is overlooked, it can cause as much harm as the benefits, causing the children to be unhealthy, and hyper-reactive while making children aggressive, violent as well as emotionally unstable. This paper highlights the potential benefits and drawbacks of cartoons if they are overlooked.

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