

# Children's Cartoon Consumption Behavior: With Special Reference To Parental Perspective

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**Abstract:** This study undertakes an in-depth exploration into the nuanced perceptions held by parents regarding their children's consumption of cartoons. It seeks to uncover the complex influences that cartoons exert on children's development as perceived by their caregivers. The prevalence of cartoons as a primary form of entertainment for primary school going children from six years old, with dedicated viewership emerging by the age of 12 years, highlights the significance of understanding of parental attitudes towards this medium.

While cartoons may offer benefits such as educational content, nurturing creativity, and providing entertainment, there exists a parallel concern regarding the potential negative effects they may impart. This study focuses on these divisions and complexities inherent in children's engagement with cartoons.

By investigating into the perceptions and judgments of parents, this research seeks to illuminate the intricate interplay between cartoons and children's development. It aims to promote awareness and informed discourse surrounding the impacts of cartoon consumption on young minds. Through an exploration of parental perspectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse influences that cartoons can have on children, both positive and negative, within the context of their developmental journey.

**Keywords:** Television cartoon, parents and children, co-viewing, perception

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indian television premiered animated cartoon shows on Doordarshan during the late 80's. There were many factors underlying the enduring popularity of Doordarshan's cartoon shows, integrating elements such as narrative construction and visual aesthetics. These programs, characterized their imaginative narratives through captivating visuals, influenced audiences of diverse demographics, marking themselves deeply within the consciousness of the public.

Over time, technological advancements and cultural influences shaped the evolution of cartoons into a global form of entertainment, reaching millions of households worldwide. In an era dominated by globalization and technology, the landscape of daily life in Indian family has undergone profound changes. With both parents increasingly participating in the workforce, traditional family dynamics have shifted, leaving children often with the TV remote. This shift has raised concerns about the behavioral and linguistic influences encountered by children in their formative years. Among the countless number of television programs, cartoons still attract children. Cartoons provide entertainment and stimulation; they may also pose challenges in distinguishing fantasy from reality among children.

On the contrary parents of these children, were nurtured in a home environment where grand parental, parental and familial values were dominant. Outdoor activities and interpersonal interactions played a central role in children's development, nurturing both physical and mental well-being. However, in contemporary times, children are frequently left with television serving as their primary source of entertainment.

### Aim of the Study

To examine parental perspectives of their children's cartoon consuming behaviour.

## Objectives

To study the cartoon viewing interest of children on television.

To understand the parental insight towards cartoon viewing of their children and child development

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bandura A and Walters (1963) Social Learning and Personality Development has commented that the major impact of television may not be in the behaviours that it induces but rather in the behaviours that it pre-empts. Bandura's work draws both behavioural and cognitive views of learning. He believes that mind, behaviour and the environment all play an important role in the learning process.

Garcia, A., & Martinez, B.(2011) explored the potential effects of prolonged exposure to animated cartoons on children's physical and mental health. Findings revealed prolonged exposure to animated cartoons may contribute to sedentary behavior and unhealthy dietary habits in children. However, cartoons can also have positive effects on children's health by promoting pro-social behaviors and providing opportunities for learning and creativity.

Brown, K., & Jones, M.(2012) investigated the relationship between exposure to violent cartoons and aggressive behavior in children. Findings suggest that, Exposure to violent cartoons is associated with increased aggressive behavior in children, as well as desensitization to violence. The frequency and intensity of violent content in cartoons can impact children's emotional regulation and social interactions

Smith, J., & Johnson, L.(2013) examined the portrayal of gender roles in television cartoons and its influence on children's perceptions of gender stereotypes. Children exposed to gender-stereotypical cartoons may internalize these norms, influencing their attitudes and behaviors regarding gender roles.

Patel, R., & Nguyen, T.(2014) portrayal of cultural diversity in television cartoons and its implications for children's cultural identity and awareness. The study findings suggest that television cartoons often reflect and perpetuate cultural stereotypes, which can influence children's perceptions of different ethnicities and cultures. Cartoons that feature diverse and inclusive representations of culture can foster multicultural understanding and appreciation among children.

Nikken and Jansz (2015) identified a significant correlation between parents' perceptions of television content and children's viewing habits. Parents who perceived television as educational or beneficial were more likely to encourage their children's viewing, while those with concerns about violence or negative influences were more restrictive.

Nathanson and Aladé's (2015) cross-cultural study highlighted both similarities and differences in parental attitudes towards children's TV viewing between the United States and India. While concerns about content appropriateness and commercialization were universal, cultural norms and values influenced parental perceptions and strategies for managing children's media use.

Radesky, J. S., Christakis, D. A., & Council on Communications and Media (2016) found that parents' attitudes towards children's TV viewing varied across different countries, with cultural norms and digital media advancements influencing parental perceptions. While some parents embraced technology for educational purposes, others expressed concerns about excessive screen time and inappropriate content.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Survey method is used to investigate and comprehend the opinions and attitudes of parents towards their children's cartoon viewing habits. The research seeks to explore parental concerns, insights and perceived impacts of cartoons on children's behavior and development directly from parents. The survey involves a sample of 100 parents from Kolkata with children aged 6 to 12 years old from primary school children, ensuring representation across diverse demographics such as age, education, and socio-economic status.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

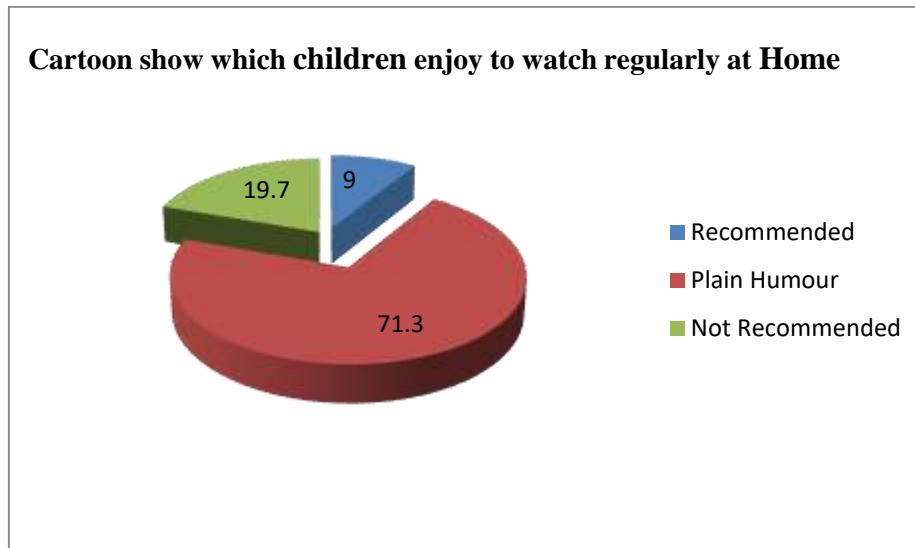


Fig 1

Parents of the respondents were asked to report the cartoon show their children watched whenever they were home. The parents of majority respondents reported that 71.1% children regularly watch Plain Humour cartoons, while 19.7% watch shows which are mostly not recommended and only 7% children watch shows which are strictly recommended. We can infer and confirm that majority respondents prefer Plain Humor over other shows.

<b>Reasons for watching particular cartoons (As reported by parents)</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3.9</b>
<b>Plain Humour</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>57.0</b>
<b>Besotted by Characters</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>31.5</b>
<b>Loves Action/Violence</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table :1

Parents are first to observe and understand children's behaviour and their affection for anything. The parents report, as evident from the table above, that 57% children like to watch humour content (Plain Humour) in the shows, while 31.5% believed that the fondness was as a result of the fact that their children were strongly besotted by their favourite characters. The observations go on to justify that children may simply watch a particular show because they like a particular character or type of humour or action content. 3.9% of the parents were not aware of the kind of shows their children watched which again calls for attention. It could be due to lack of parent child bonding. 7.6% children are fond of action or violence-based cartoons as the table suggests. Boys are again more inclined towards action animation than girls.

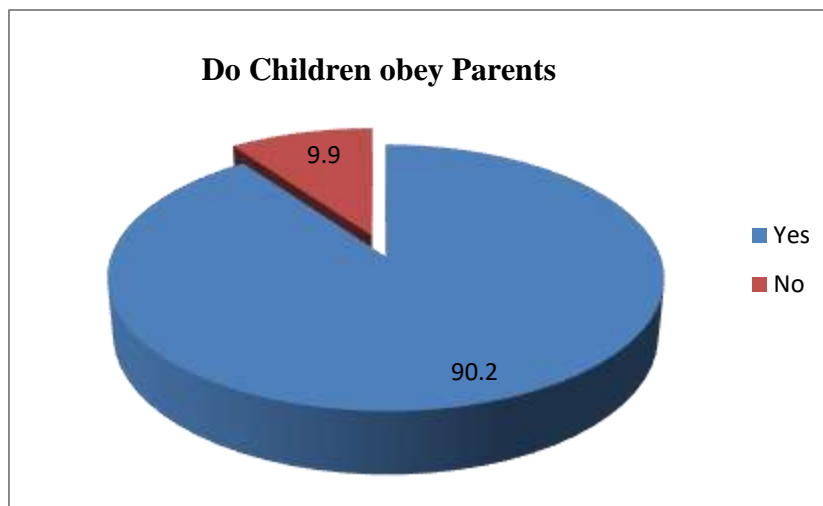


Fig:2

**Obedience** is a form of social influence where an individual acts in response to a direct order from another individual, who is usually an authority figure. It is assumed that without such an order the person would not have acted in this way. Piaget's moral development theory suggests that children see rules as absolute and unchangeable. Their judgments are based on consequences- wrong and right- punishment versus no punishment.

In order to gauge the obedience index among children, parents of all respondents were asked if their children followed their instructions. 90.2 % respondents were positive while 9.9 % said no, and that 9.9% deserves a caution call. These children, the latter, may need constant monitoring and counseling. The former group that claims to follow their parents' instructions proves the verdict true where majority of children claimed that watching TV cartoons did not affect studies and school work.

Parents accompany children while watching cartoons ( Co Viewing)		
Responses	Frequency	Percent
Never	30	8.4
Occasionally	79	22.2
Occasionally and whenever I am free	10	2.8
Often	237	66.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table :2

The term co viewing is all about parents accompanying their children while watching cartoons. Co viewing is an important factor here as it enlightens us about observant parents. 66.6% of the parents reported that they accompany them often while 22.2% reported occasionally. 2.8% accompanied their children occasionally and whenever they were free whereas 8.4 % never accompany. We have already observed in the previous fig.2 that there are many parents who do not bother to offer any kind of restriction to their children. These may be the same group of parents, ones who never accompany their children. Whenever children are watching TV, they are also learning. Thus it becomes a responsibility of every parent to keep a track, in order to provide positive guidance. In viewing groups involving parents and children, parents may enforce choices on children, especially in socio-oriented families (Chaffee, McLeod, & Atkin, 1971; McLeod, Atkin, & Chafee, 1972).

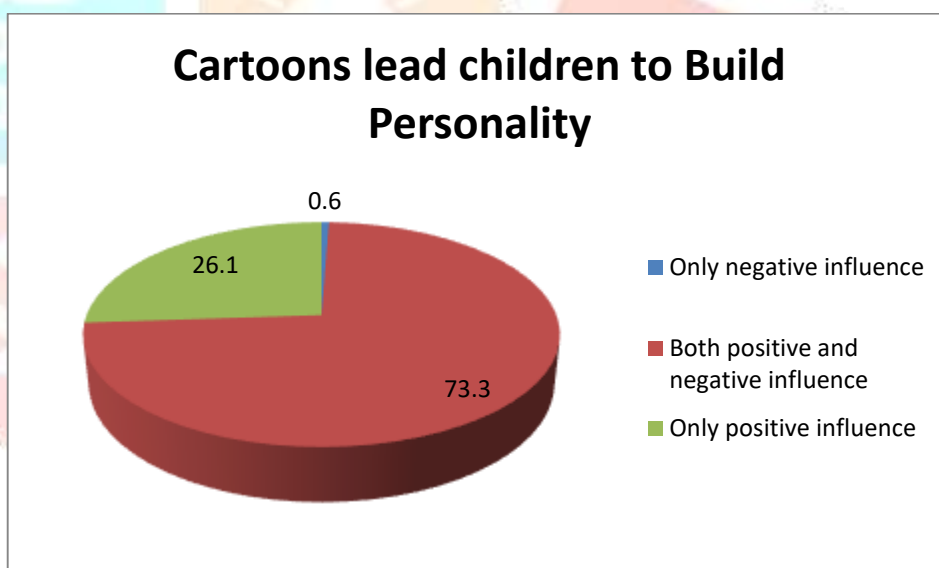


Parents perception of cartoons watched by children		
Responses	Frequency	Percent
Is interesting	284	79.8
Is hopeless	9	2.5
Informative	23	6.5
Informative and interesting	40	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table:3**

Understanding parents' perception of cartoons their children watch is hence important. 79.8% of the parents believe that the cartoon shows their children watch is "interesting" while 11.2% think them to be "informative and interesting". Only watchful parents recognize their children's TV cartoon viewing habits and preferences. 2.5% of the parents reported them to be "hopeless". These may be the troubled parents of children who prefer shows most of the time not recommended by them.

"It is important to acknowledge the causal relation between television, family and children" (Callejo, 2004: 16). Parental monitoring is thus a key factor since the research studies show that increasing guidance from parents is at least as important as simply reducing media violence. Children may learn negative behavior patterns and values from many other experiences as well as TV programs, and parental guidance is needed to help children sort out these influences and develop the ability to make sound decisions on their own.



**Fig:3**

Television is rarely the only source of social learning and its influence depends on other sources such as parents, friends, teachers, etc. (McQuail, 2005). Josephson (1995, p.15) notes that "parents are the best mediators of their children's viewing". The previous table provides a depiction of parents' perception of cartoons their children watch. The Pie diagram above will further justify the perception of these parents by understanding whether they think cartoon viewing plays a role in character building of their children. 73.3% of the parents reported cartoons to have both positive and negative influence on their children while .6 % reported, they have only negative influence. Almost 26.1 % believed in them to have only positive influence. Parents who reported positive influence may possibly be the ones whose children's performance improved in school. "Research warns us that the children that come off best from their relation with television are those whose parents deploy more interaction-triangulation strategies with them and the television screen" (Del-Río and Álvarez, 2004: 286).

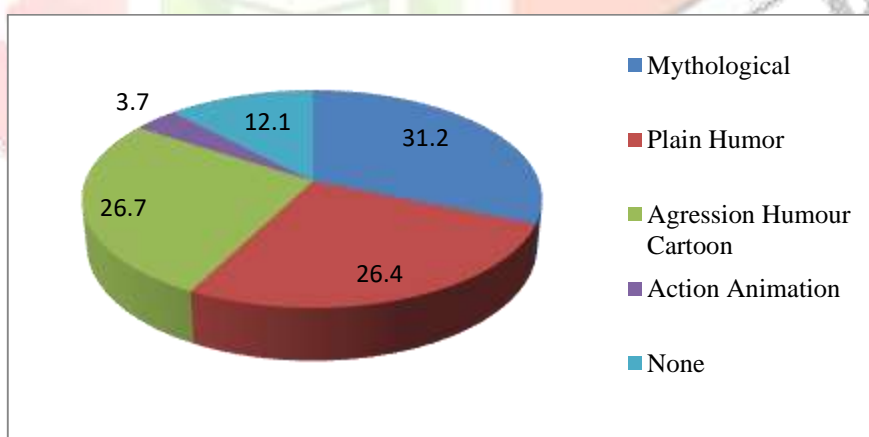
### Imitation of Favourite Characters: Child / Parent Response

Child / Parent Response	No	Yes	Total Response by parents
No	53.93	16.29	70.22
Yes	14.61	15.17	29.78
<b>Total Response by Children</b>	68.54	31.46	100

**Table:4**

It is apparent from the above table that 29.78% parents believe that children imitate their favourite characters. Parents are the best observers of children behaviour. 31.46% children claim they imitate their favourite characters. 15.17% of such children's parents agree with that fact while 16.29% of them don't. However, at many occasions child's behaviour may go unnoticed by parents. 14.61% children who believed that they imitate their favourite characters were unobserved by their parents. Study however shows that maximum children do not imitate their characters and their parents agree to the same. Children may create fantasy world where they may imagine their character actually exist but that does not mean they behave like their characters all the time (relate with fantasy figure). There is an affected lot who are so besotted by their favourite characters that they idolize them and start emulating them. However as per the survey this particular group is a minority.

Thus, it is observational learning, that occurs through observing the behaviour of others. Albert Bandura, who is known for the classic Bobo doll experiment, identified this basic form of learning in 1961. This form of learning does not need reinforcement to occur, but instead, requires a model. A social model can be a parent, sibling, friend, or teacher, but—particularly in childhood—a model is someone of authority or higher status. A social model is significantly important in observational learning because it facilitates cognitive process behavior. It helps the learner encode what they observe and store it in memory for later imitation.



**Fig:5**

The Pie diagram above reveals the fact that majority of the parents recommend Mythological genre of cartoon shows followed by Plain Humor and Aggression Humor. It can be inferred that all parents have similar dreams for their children. All parents want their children to exhibit and develop good manners, ambition, diligence, and responsibility. Therefore, most of the parents prefer mythological over others. Children are 24x7 surrounded by digital technology and TV channel and cartoon programs execute an overall impact on personality building.

## V. CONCLUSION

In today's media landscape, parental perceptions of children's cartoon viewing are shaped by concerns about content appropriateness, educational value, and potential behavioral impacts. The analysis of parental observations highlights a notable trend of younger children predominantly favouring cartoons featuring simple humour, indicative of their innocent enjoyment. Also, the high obedience index among children highlights discipline among children and the significant role which parents play in guiding their viewing habits. The increasing practice of co-viewing further emphasizes the need for careful content selection and parental oversight.

Despite acknowledging both positive and negative impacts, the overwhelming majority of parents perceive cartoons as beneficial. However, the emulation of favorite characters underlines the importance of nurturing in viewing choices, with a notable preference emerging for mythological cartoons due to their cultural and moral richness.

Cartoons hold immense potential for entertainment and education among children, they also require mindful moulding. As children absorb influences during their formative years, parental guidance remains paramount. By encouraging a balanced approach and prioritizing content aligned with positive values, parents and educators can ensure that children's cartoon consumption enriches rather than detracts from their development. Parents of this era are educated; they remain vigilant and actively engage in guiding their children's viewing experiences by developing a healthy media diet and support for their growth and development.

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