



VIDEOS HAVE THE POWER TO MANIPULATE CHILDREN'S THINKING

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Abstract

We are living in an era of mass media. Children from a very young age, say from infancy, are introduced to this mass media. In infancy to soothe them, songs will be played. Later along with audios, videos will be shown. Thus, they are introduced to the mass media at a very young age, where they are unable to understand what is right and wrong. A considerable number of YouTube and television channels are available for children now.

Children get a variety of knowledge at a young age through these videos. In contrast to older times where children gained their knowledge from teachers and parents, today's children get more knowledge from internet and other mass media. Earlier, by an age of three to four children were introduced to learning and they start distinguishing right and wrong. But today, children are pre equipped with knowledge even before they get into preschool learning.

The children's brain is readied with what they see, it has the power to mould their character too, to a certain extent. Many channels' programs are didactic in nature. So, it teaches and instructs children. Though it helps children to attain a wide range of knowledge, it has its negative impacts too. Children like to be in the virtual reality than the reality. Increased screen time constrain them from life experience. This, along with the environment children live in move them away from nature too.

Emergence of Artificial Intelligence gives a lively experience to children. Covid pandemic that struck the world, had struck the childhood of children. Screen time increased, and their education, growth and thinking relied on what they watched on screen. Children who approach adulthood change their video patterns from mere didactic videos to video games and other adult videos. Childhood is the period where a person is able to mould their character. It needs proper guidance. Videos they watch do not have the power to lead them to the right path, though it helps to induce multiple perception in children.

***Index Terms:* videos, YouTube channels, television programs, manipulation, cultures.**

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary the word 'manipulate' means "to control or use something in a skilful way" (Hornby 934). This paper tries to understand how the videos have the skill to control or use the brain of children to change their thinking?

Children from a very young age, say from infancy, are introduced to the usage of mass media. In infancy to soothe them, songs will be played. Later, along with audios, videos will be shown. Thus, they are introduced to the electronic media at a very young age. During this period of their growth, more than addiction they are enchanted with what they see. This delight makes them watch more videos. Since children's brain are readied with what they see, it has the power to manipulate their character to a certain extend.

II. VIDEOS HAVE THE POWER TO MANIPULATE CHILDREN'S THINKING

Many channels' programs are didactic in nature, which instruct and teach children. Children will be pre equipped with a plethora of knowledge before they get into schooling itself. So, these channels teach them alphabets, numbers, animals and so on. It also gives instructions, like, what children must do and must not do. For example, many channels teach what is good touch and bad touch, what one should do if they encounter a stranger alone and such related topics. These are the positive sides of these videos. Why children like to watch these videos is mainly because of the music and the colorful presentation rather than to grasp the idea of what they watch. Whereas, in a class room children will be learning from teachers. There they will be able to watch what a teacher says, how is the expression and the body language used. Here, child gets attention and even eye contact which help them to put their mind into it and understand the concept rather than mere watching.

The videos, which they watch recurrent, help children to understand various dos and don'ts in the society. But it lacks life experience because children are away from reality. Though they understand what they see, they may not be able to implement it when there arises a situation. Screen time, thus, constraints them from real life experience. Further, increased screen time reduces children's various skill developments. "A study was conducted by Catherine Birken, a paediatrician and scientist at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and she concluded that Hand-held screens might delay a child's ability to form words. It was further stated by her that for each 30-minute increase in handheld screen time, researchers found a 49% increased risk of expressive speech delay" (Nautiyal,2020). When a child is in front of a screen, he or she concentrates too much on screen, so that they will not bother much about what is happening around. The same study shows that many parents discover that the child is now least interested in a face-to-face interaction due to high screen time. In the early stage of childhood when children watch videos in multiple languages, it reduces their ability to master a language, even their mother tongue. Though videos have the potential to convert the thinking of children from a very young age, it lacks language acquisition. Even though children may be able to understand a few words from the videos and pick it, many children fail to use it in proper situations. "...a child who regularly hears language on the TV or radio but nowhere else will not learn to talk. Children acquire language through interaction - not only with their parents and other adults, but also with other children" ("FAQ: Language Acquisition").

On top of that, increased screen time restricts themselves from experiencing the nature and its relevance in one's life. When one reads literature, it can be clearly understood that the writers' childhood is connected with nature. When they think of childhood, nature becomes a part of it. For instance, Wordsworth's poem "Nutting", he recollects those days as "heavenly days".

It seems a day

(I speak of one from many singled out)

One of those heavenly days that cannot die;

When, in the eagerness of boyish hope, (Wordsworth, lines 1-4)

There he went for collecting hazel nuts. Another example is A K Ramanujan's "Ecology", where he remembers his childhood and his rage towards the red champak tree.

For I could see from a mile away

our three Red Champak trees

had done it again,

her burst into flower and given Mother

her first blinding migraine

of the season (Ramanujan, lines 4-9)

Though poet recollects the tree in a state of annoyance, because it caused migraine to her mother, he explains it gracefully. Today children lack connection with nature. It is either because of the environment they live in, with lack of trees and greenery, or because of the videos they watch. Videos give them pleasure much more than the nature provides.

Emergence of Artificial Intelligence gives children a lively experience, but that is far from the real life experience that a child must experience. It leads them to be in a virtual world than in a real world. Another cause for increased use of technology was the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Earlier, by an age of three a child will be introduced to formal learning by admitting them to Pre- Kindergarten where teachers help them learn various things other than studies, including taking food by themselves and even proper toilet habits too. Due to pandemic children were 'caged' inside their houses and their learnings were through online platform. Those years brought a drastic change in everyone's lives, especially children's. An increased level of interest

in using electronic gadgets too emerged in children during that time. The gadgets were the main relief and entertainment for children then. Later, they became inseparable from using it. They distant themselves from others, even after the restrictions got over. On one side it was because of the pertaining fear that get into their psyche and on the other it was because of their interest towards the virtual world.

When children reach late childhood the videos they watch too get changed. They may no longer interested in didactic videos. They start experiencing different video games and even adult videos. Even in this age, many children will not be capable of taking a right decision. So they believe what they watch. These games as well as videos easily allure their young minds. Much of the video games have violence and children unknowingly enjoy this violence. Even in the videos young children watch on the online platform have adult content advertisements and pop ups. If parents fail to notice this, they watch it without understanding the negative impacts.

Children accumulate a wide range of information through the videos they watch. Online platforms, especially You Tube channels, provide a wider world beyond their country of origin and children get a bird's eye view of different culture and tradition around the world. Halloween, for example, "is a costume party where children in Western countries dress up like witches, ghosts etc.". Children from Eastern countries too know about it through the videos they watch. In Kerela, there is a folk art named "Puli Kali" that is associated with Onam festival. It's a costumed celebration, where trained artists wear masks and paint their body to the form of tiger and leopard. Dubiously, much children in Kerala know about Halloween and 'trick or treat' than 'puli kali'.

BabyBus is a well known You Tube channel with 33.4 million subscribers. One of the episodes is about Halloween. It shows the above mentioned Halloween party in a spooky as well as joyful manner ("Trick or Treat BOO!", 00:00:13-00:02:30). Many other channels like Kids TV, Infobells etc. too telecast these videos and children are aware about this costume party. A young child of two- three years will not get this awareness from their formal learning atmosphere. Another episode helps children to understand what is bad touch and that was represented through three colours of light as if in traffic signal. It will make a child understand there are different types of touch and who can touch their body? ("I Can Say "No"- Don't Touch my Body", 00:00:48-00:02:12). Since its taught through representation how far the kid will be able to be conscious or aware of the matter is uncertain. Whereas if it is taught by a teacher or an elderly person, they will be able to recognize the importance of it. Also, if the child had already watched this in his/her video, they will be able to connect it.

Another well known channel is Masha and the Bear, which is a Russian origin animated show for kids, which has been translated to many languages. In an episode titled "The Magic Flute", they mention about India and her culture. Here Masha's friend Rosie, a pig, with the magic flute turns to an elephant and to console her Masha says "In India, being an elephant is an honour" ("The Magic Flute", 00:02:19-00:04:03). Here, a wide audience from other countries is able to understand that in India people worship a deity named Ganesha and this deity has the head of an elephant, which might be a new information for kids in Western countries. Also, in the same channel they introduce culture of different countries like Spain, China etc. Not only they mention about these countries, but they give a picture of various art forms, monuments, culture also. Likewise, a programme named Roll No 21 is an Indian animated television series, which has been translated to multiple languages. There are episodes that explain the culture of different states in India as well as foreign countries. Children get a knowledge of various cultures and practices of the neighbouring states and the countries through these videos. The positive phase is that they do not get annoyed. On the contrary, if they happened to learn this in their young age from schools, that might not have the same or better outcome. In an episode in Roll No 21, it portrays the culture of food, dress and art forms in Kerala, ("Kerela Mein Hogi Dhumdham", 00:00:05-00:01:42).

In the beginning of the paper, it was mentioned that the videos also instruct children. Many channels show house chores and for a particular member of the house, it should be done together. A channel named Cocomelon upload diverse videos regarding personal care, food habits, importance of sharing and so on. A video from this channel shows that parenting and house chores are joined responsibility ("Skidamarink", 00:00:05-00:02:30). Another video from the same channel shows the need of cleaning their own things ("Clean Up Song", 00:00:06- 00:02:36). This helps children to keep their belongings neat and tidy and arrange it in proper manner from an early stage.

In today's busy schedule many parents allow kids to operate even mobile phone, either to complete their works or to calm children. Without proper observation of parents, if children are prone to use electronic gadgets, especially those handy devices, there is a high risk of getting addicted to the videos at a very early

age of childhood. Inappropriate and adult-content pop-ups and advertisements will linger in the minds of children than the videos they watch. Moreover, once they open the pop-ups or advertisements similar contents will appear frequently when they watch even cartoons.

The videos have the ability to manipulate kids' perspective on variegated subjects that they deal every day. Through certain video games, involuntarily there develops violence or an ecstasy in the mind of children when they win the game. An urge for power through any means will be cherished. Some online games need to be purchased. Once they get into the habit of playing those games, they seek money for it and ultimately that leads to robbery and such means to get money. Games like Blue Whale suicide games will even make children to risk their life. In childhood, children may not know what is right and what is wrong until teachers or parents guide them. Also, the videos with inappropriate or adult theme will lead the young mind to accumulate misinformation on the matter of love and sex. They search for more such videos out of eagerness. While on the contrary the videos that teach children the importance of doing works jointly, cleanliness etc. will manipulate their mind to help in doing every day chores in their homes irrespective of what they experience in their own homes. Many families still consider parenting and household works are the responsibilities of mothers. If children give a try to implement what they watch, will be a breakthrough. Children also get a wide view of the world culture through many videos they watch, this ultimately help them to respect other's cultures too.

III. CONCLUSION

The videos have the power to manipulate children's mind in two ways. On the one hand without proper monitoring, children may fall into the pitfalls of games, pornography and like-minded subjects. On the other, videos that show the importance of family, friendship and togetherness will help for a self-improvement, once they start practicing it. Though young children may not be completely able to understand the instructive videos, they may get an idea of right and wrong. With the help of elders, it will be possible to have a clear picture of it. When they reach late childhood, their video pattern can be changed to world famous classics, speeches or even kids' movies.

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