THE EFFECTS OF TV CARTOON NETWORK ON THE

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR OF SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the effects of cartoon network on the aggressive behavior of school going children. Data are collected from 192 (96 boys & 96 girls) school going children representing four school of Sargodha district. Results show that children spend more time on watching cartoons and acquiring much information not only about type of cartoon characters but also they are familiar with the action, dress and name of almost all major cartoon characters. It was also observed from the empirical findings that watching cartoons on television screen has tremendously increased aggressive behavior among children particularly among the male children. The male children liked fighting more than the female children. It was further observed that significant majority of the overall, male, and female children often fought inside and outside homes, but the male children fought somewhat more with other children than the female children.

SIGNIFICANCE

Television has become a significant social phenomenon in Pakistan , though yet not greatly investigated empirically. TV viewing is, generally believed to generate social forces of undeniable influence. It is assumed to be the most popular entertainment mass medium for children and women. It is this section of daily programmes, which gets full attention of the viewers. One might say, whatever impact television is able to inculcate, it is because of various plays, films and musical shows etc. which are telecasted everyday (Zubari, 1992). Walt Disney created the first sound cartoon, the first all-colour cartoon, and the first animated feature length motion picture (cited at: www.disneydreamer.com).

A cartoon is any of several forms of art, with varied meanings that evolved from one to another. Cartoon Network is a main source of entertainment for children. Children keenly observe what cartoons' actions. Round the clock cartoons are on air on Cartoon Network. Because of this channel, we can see barren playgrounds, children's sloppy attitude towards studies. They have no time for the healthy activities. Children watch cartoons for entertainment. They prefer those cartoons which are understandable in terms of language. Pakistani children therefore, prefer to watch Hindi version cartoons. "Hindi" language resembles more to "Urdu", the national language of Pakistan . When children see cartoons in easy and understandable language, they enjoy more, and are involved more. Elementary school age (ages six to eleven) is considered a critical period for understanding the effects of television on aggression. At this stage, children develop the attention span and cognitive ability to follow continuous plots, to make inferences

about implicit content, and to recognize motivations and consequences to characters' actions. At this age children's learning ability is faster then adults (cited at: www.media-awareness.ca).

A number of early studies revealed negative relationships between amount of viewing and measures of IQ. Ability, or aptitude, Schramm et al. (1961) found that students with "high mental ability" watched more television than those with low ability, until ages 10-14: at this point, the low IQ students begin watching less and less. Consistent negative associations between viewing and IQ were also found by Scott (1956), Bilyn (1959), Himmelweit, Oppenheim & Vince (1958), La Blonde (1966), and Thompson(1964).

Several studies regarding TV exposure and children academic achievements have shown mixed results. Himmelweit et al. (1958) matched viewing and non-viewing 10 to 14 years old, finding slightly, but not significantly, better marks among non-viewers. In Japan , the availability of TV accompanied a decline in both time spend on homework and reading skills (Furu, 1962). Garcia, Castenada & Schiefelbein (1974) reported a positive association between television ownership and both language arts and mathematics among 10,000 high school students. Similarly, (Hornik, 1978) analyzed 3 years data for cohorts of E1 Salvadoran seventh acquisitions of television and long term reading skill.

Television viewing time rises from about 2 1/2 hours per day at the age of five to about four hours a day at age twelve. During late adolescence viewing time levels off at 2 to 3 hours per day (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988). The type of study carried out to examine the effects of watching violent content on television has changed over time. Initially, many of the studies were true experiments in which children who had been randomly assigned to different groups were exposed to different types of television programs. The strength of this approach is that differences in behavior between the treatment groups can be unequivocally attributed to differences in the content of the television shows rather than to differences between the types of children who chose to watch more or less violent television. These studies demonstrated that children exposed to either a real person or a cartoon character behaving aggressively on television would subsequently behave more aggressively than children who had not seen aggressive acts modeled (e.g. Bandura, 1965; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Liebert & Baron, 1972). In general, this research indicated that children are more likely to imitate aggression when the perpetrator of the violence is rewarded or at least not punished and when the violence is presented as justified. Although violence presented as real appears to promote aggression more in adults than violence described as fictional, fictional violence also seems to make aggression more likely than programming without violent content (Atkin, 1983). Whether aggression is presented in a realistic way or in cartoons may, however, make no difference to children' *s* propensity to imitate it (Hearold, 1986). When characters use aggressive means to reach pro-social ends (a frequent combination on television) young children understand less of the message of the show than when characters behave consistently in a totally good or totally bad fashion; they also act more aggressively after seeing a mixed pro-social-antisocial character than when the character has behaved consistently in a totally pro-social way (Liss, Reinhardt, & Fredriksen, 1983). Thus, for very young children, justifying the motivation for aggressive actions does not seem to eliminate the influence of exposure to aggressive acts (cited at: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca).

Series of studies by a group of researchers including Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder, and Huesmann have contributed substantially to our knowledge of how the violence portrayed on television affects children. The first of these studies initially assessed the aggressiveness of 875 children (as measured by the reports of their classmates) and their preference for violent television shows in grade 3 (as measured by maternal report). Ten years later about half of these subjects were reassessed on the same variables. The results indicated that children's preference for violent television in grade 3 was significantly related to aggressiveness 10 years later for boys but not for girls (Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder, & Huesmann, 1977). Further follow ups of this group of subjects indicated that boys' reports of how often they watched preferred violent television shows significantly predicted the rates and seriousness of criminal offenses at the age of thirty even after the influence of the boys' initial aggressiveness and IQ had been removed (cited at: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca).

Children often behave differently after they've been watching violent programs on television. In one study, preschool children were observed both before and after watching television; some watched cartoons that had many aggressive and violent acts; others watched shows that didn't have any kind of violence. Children who watched the violent shows were more likely to strike out at playmates, argue, disobey authority, and were less willing to wait for things than those children who watched nonviolent programs. Other research, however, suggests that the effect of watching violent TV content is only short-lasting and studies linking excessive TV watching and disruptive behavior in children are not always able to account for the influence of family and genetic factors underlying this association (cited at: www.Cfc-efc.ca).

Social researchers and media parishioners typically argued from the limited effect perspective, a new generation of critics charged that media were harming children and disrupting their lives. Television is an easy target because the action of watching is passive and its content is usually violent, sexual, or moronic. The most important outcome of the violence research was the gradual development of a set of middle-range theories the summarized findings and offered increasingly useful insight into the media's role in the lives of children. Taken together, they offer strong support for the viewing aggression link. As Aletha (1992) and her colleagues wrote after reviewing decades of scientific research on the question," The accumulated research clearly demonstrates a correlation between viewing violence and aggressive behavior," that is heavy viewers. Both experimental and longitudinal studies support the hypothesis that viewing violence is casually associated with aggression. When the "good guys" or heroes use violence, children may learn that it is okay to use force to solve problems. Younger children may become afraid of the world around them from media violence children learn to behave aggressively towards others. They are taught to use violence instead of self-control to take care of problems or conflicts. Violence in the media world may make children more accepting of real-world violence and less caring toward other. Although the effects of media on children might not be apparent right away, children are being negatively affected. Sometimes children may not act out violently until there teen or young –adult years (cited at: www.aap.org) .

The program of research carried out for the US Surgeon General at the end of the 1960s resulted, according to Lowery and DeFleur (1995), in three main conclusions: a) television content is heavily saturated with violence; b) children are spending more and more time exposed to violent content; and c) overall, the evidence supports the hypothesis that the viewing of violent

entertainment increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior. McQuail, (2005). Wilson and Smith (2002) found from the 1998 US National and Violence Study that programs targeted at children actually contained more violence than other type of programs. It is less easy to say if the average degree of exposure has increased or not over time, but the potential to see screen violence has gradually extended to most parts of the world, along with the means of viewing. Grobel (1998), reporting on a global survey of violence on television on behalf of Unesco, involving 5000 children in 23 countries , commented on the universality if media violence and on the widespread fascination with aggressive media hero figures, especially amongst boys. For instance, he found that 88%of the world's children knew (Arnold Schwarzenegger's Terminator, 1998:182 and McQuail, 2005).

The study's major findings published in 1971, concerned the effects of television on children. A content analysis of one week of prime-time programming conducted by George Gerbner of the University of Pennsylvania, reported that eight out of ten prime-time shows contained .the conclusions of Television and Social Behavior failed to make a direct connection between TV programming and violent behavior, however,, the report said that there was a "tentative" indication that television viewing caused aggressive behavior. According to the study, this connection between TV violence and aggressive behavior affected only same children who were already classified as aggressive children and only in some environments. A direct correlation exists between televised violence and aggressive behavior, yet there is no way to predict who will be affected and why. Heavy television viewers are more fearful, less trusting and more apprehensive than light viewers. Children who watch what the report called "pro-social" programs (programs that are socially constructive, such as Sesame Streets) are more likely to act responsibly (Baigi, 1999, pp.273-75). TV's captive audiences are children and those adults that idle away the hours in front of the magic box. Historically, each new development in communications' technology has generated rejoicing and dismay, as the means for imparting information, skills, instructions, and values have become amplified and extended (Michael and Gross, 1982).

A detailed survey of 1600 randomly selected London adolescents found that TV violence was the leading cause of violence out of 227 causes investigated. Movie and comic book violence were also found to have harmful effects. The viewing of cartoon violence (Tom & Jerry, etc.) was not found associated with increases in serious violence in adolescents, but was found associated with increases in minor violence (Belson, 1978). Results found that viewing violent fantasy programs (Incredible Hulk, Six Million Dollar Man, Wonder Woman) predicted lower average amount of time spent reading; that viewing these programs also predicted lower imaginative behavior; and that viewing cartoons (violent) predicts lower enthusiasm in school. Public television, comedies, and nonviolent dramas had no harmful effects (Zuckerman, Singer, Singer, 1980).

A very detailed 1-year field study of 138 nursery school children included the parents keeping a careful record of the programs watched at home for 2 week periods 4 times during the year. The viewing of violent television was found casually related to violence on the playground and explained 10-25% of the variance. Cartoon programming (Mighty Mouse, Spiderman, Bugs Bunny, Popeye) contributed to this effect. Public television (PBS), Captain Kangaroo, and Mister Roger's had the opposite effect. This is one of the most detailed studies ever done on the effects of violent TV on children (Singer, & Singer, 1981). A study of 1085 children in Perth , Australia

from second to eleventh grade found that viewing habits predicted their beliefs about the world. Crime adventure programs and cartoons were more likely to predict beliefs in exaggerated levels of violence in society. The violence of the cartoons appears to be retained and used to construct a false understanding of the social reality (Hawkins, & Pingree, 1981).120 8-10-year-old Toronto children saw 3 types of programs (aggressive vs neutral vs pro-social) in either a real-life or cartoon format. Aggressive programs were the violent chariot race from Ben Hur or a violent episode of Bugs Bunny/Roadrunner. Pro-social cartoon was Davy and Goliath (a boy and his dog) while a Donald Duck episode was the neutral cartoon. Children won tokens good for a prize and also had the opportunity to donate some of the tokens to help a needy child. Both the aggressive real-life and the aggressive cartoon TV shows caused a decrease in donating (Teachman, & Orme, 1981).

Children high in aggression were lower in imaginative play and had more negative play interactions. Aggressive children were much more likely to engage in play involving "superhero" themes (Kolpadoff, 1983). 96 male and female Arab Lebanese 6 to 8-year-olds were divided into four groups. One saw a ten minute film clip of "10 Days in Munich ," a thriller with numerous soldiers shooting other soldiers, hand-to-hand combat, and screams such as "I want to kill him." The second groups saw a violent Lebanese cartoon, "Granderizer," with shooting, fist-fights, and aggressive statements. A third group watched a clip of the non-violent Sound of Music movie. A fourth group, meant to be a control condition, experienced a massive and bloody shelling of beaches in the neighborhood near the West Beirut school on the day before the testing. A very high level of tension existed at the school on the actual day of testing. In each condition, children went into a playroom in groups of 4. Measures of imitative violence (shooting another child with a dart gun, hitting, holding down, kicking another child, shouting "kill him" or "shoot him") and non-imitative violence (pushing, shooting in the air, breaking play materials) were collected (Day, Richard, & Ghandour, 1984).

METHODOLOGY

This study was planned to identify the impact of Cartoon Network on school going children (A case of Sargodha). Keeping in view the nature and requirement of the study, survey research procedure was adapted to explore the impact of Cartoon Network on school going children. Stratified sampling procedure was adopted for classification of the respondents. "Stratification is the process of grouping the members of a population into relatively homogeneous strata before sampling. This practice has the effect of improving the representation of a sample by reducing the degree of sample error." (Babbie 1992). Selltez, Wrightsman, Cook (1976) explain that the degree of sample population is divided into two or more strata in stratified method. These strata may be based on a single criterion, for example, education, or on a combination of two or more criteria like age, sex, income and locations, etc. In the present study this procedure generated population subgroups or stratification variables that are to be represented in the sample. This approach adequately organized the population into homogeneous subsets and selected various elements from each. Travers (1978) asserts that stratification increases accuracy. For data collection purpose the target of 192 respondents (96 boys & 96 girls) were stratified on the basis of gender, who were frequently viewers of Cartoon Network, and they were taken from four different schools of Sargodha .

Cartoon Network is showing violent cartoons, and children absorb mindlessly whatever they see on television. Children act like cartoon characters. Television programmes based on violent temper, mood and passion ultimately sow the seeds of violence in the developing minds of children, and as they grow, they resort to it as the quickest way to settle a dispute (Moqaddam, 1997). Violence has been defined in a broader sense to include behaviour by people or against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm (www.comune.torino.it). Many psychologists seem to agree that the more violence viewed, the more accepting children are of violence, the more it desensitizes them, and the more likely they are to become violent.

The sample size was 192 that was divided equally on the basis of gender—male 96 and female 96. Ages of the respondents ranged from 7 to 10 years. A well-planned questionnaire was developed in the line of lengthy discussion made with the focused groups through four female students of the Department. Through deep contacts with the respondents an untiring attempt was made to explore the effects process on three levels- cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Constructing good survey questions involve two basic considerations: (a) The questions must clearly communicate the desired information to the respondents, and (b) the questions should be worded so to allow accurate transmission of respondents' answer to the specific research questions (Wimmer and Dominick, 1983). An attempt was further made to sort out possible answers to the following basic research questions: Whether the children's extent of exposure to cartoon network is differentiated on the basis of their heavy and light viewing habits? Whether the viewers' extent of exposure to cartoon network is differentiated on the basis of their gender? To what extent violent cartoons influence children's aggressive behavior? Whether the effects of exposure to violent cartoons are differentiated on the basis of children gender?

Many serious grammatical and conceptual mistakes and errors can be avoided by taking the time to make an adequate pre-test (Sonquist and Dunkelberg, 1977). Hence the questionnaire was pre-tested. In the light of pre-testing, several changes were made in finalizing the questionnaire. The format was revised and the order of the variables redesigned to facilitate the recording of sensitive and accurate responses. Further more on the basis of pre-testing results many changes were made to make questionnaire error-free and easily understandable by removing the ambiguities in the response categories. Open-ended question was also amended. In this study, the researcher used the questionnaire for the purpose of data collection through interview techniques.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cartoon network, one of the most favorite television programmes of successfully meets the psyche of a child aged 5 to 10 years. As evident from the results (fig. 1.1, & 1.2) that children of such age group very often watch cartoon network with paying close attention and consuming more time on watching television's cartoon programs. The results regarding male and female children's preference for watching cartoons of Hindi and English languages illustrate that cartoon networks were enjoying popularity among respondents of both the genders (fig. 1.3). However, male children a little more preferred to watch Hindi language cartoons than the female children. The children watching habits of English cartoons show somewhat different situation, here the female children a bit more preferred to watch English language cartoons as compared to the male children (fig. 1.4).
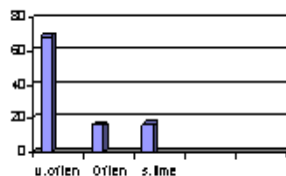
Figure 1.1 Watching Cartoons
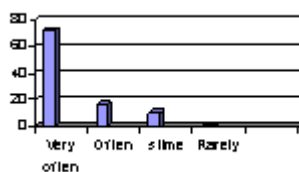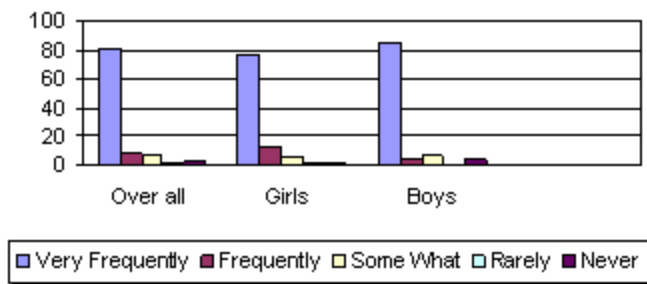

Figure 1.2 Watching cartoon network

Figure 1.3 Watching Cartoon in Hindi

The results about the children's extent of daily time spending habits on watching cartoons reveal no significant difference between the overall, male and female children (fig. 1.5). It was found that all children were spending more than two and half hours on watching cartoons. It is very higher amount of time spending if compared to their time spending habits on their home work. Their extent of interest is further checked by their amount of attention paying to cartoon network. The findings show that the children significantly pay very much attention to watching television when they watch cartoon network (fig. 1.6).

Figure 1.4 Watching Cartoons in English
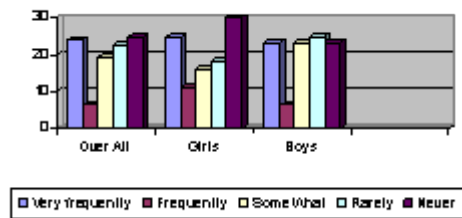
The respondents had a preference to watch every type of cartoon, but they were asked to tell about their most favorite cartoon. They revealed that Tom and Jerry was their most favorite cartoon series (fig. 1.7). It shows that they were selective in their cartoon watching habits. The reason behind liking this type of cartoon, they quoted, was the action of Jerry who beat Tom. Their response to the question that what type of cartoon character they like more revealed that Jerry was the most liked cartoon character followed by Riche Rich, and Popye which were some what liked cartoon characters (fig. 1.8).

Figure 1.5 Time spending
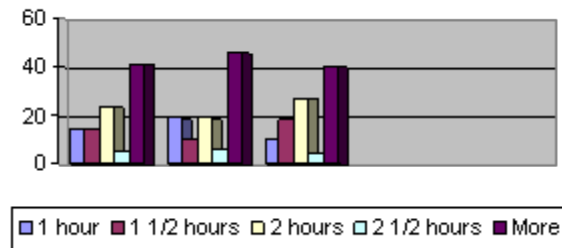
Figure 1.6 Attention paying
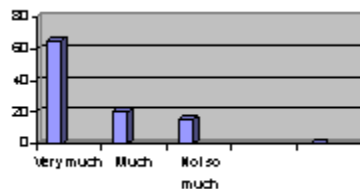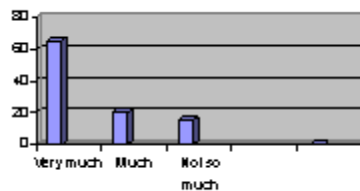
Figure 1.7 Cartoon preferences.
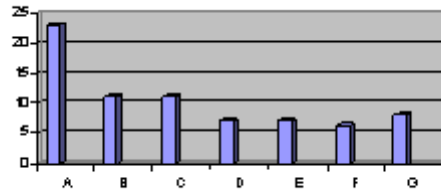
A Tom & Jerry, B Baby Loony Tunes, C Riche Rich, D Pokemon,

E Dragon tales, F Winks Club, G Popye the Sailor man

Figure 1.8 Cartoon character
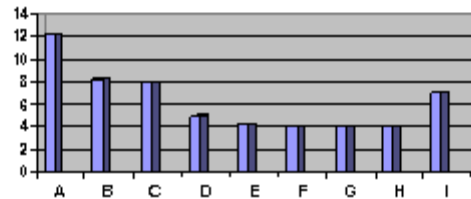
A Jerry, B Riche Rich, C Popye, D Picachu, E Tom,

F Gocho, G Stala, H Tweety, I Strawberry Short Cake

The children's extent of interest of cartoon was not confined only to cartoon action or character, as findings illustrate that they were taking much interest in the dresses used by the cartoon characters (fig. 1.9). In the light of obtained results, it can be summarized that cartoon networks containing multiple variation and attractive content have been efficiently meeting the psyche of the children. That is why they spend most of their time on watching cartoons and acquiring much information not only about type of cartoon character but they are also familiar with the actions, dresses and names of almost all major cartoon characters.

Figure 1.9 likelihood of characters' dresses
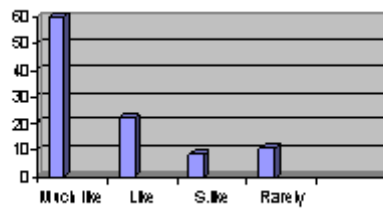
The children responses on attitude and behavior scales showed that majority of them were those who wanted to buy power/tools (34%) and costumes (32%) used by the cartoon character (1.10). However, the results indicated that they bought the accessories used by the cartoon character some what but not to the extent which they wished to buy them (fig. 1.11).

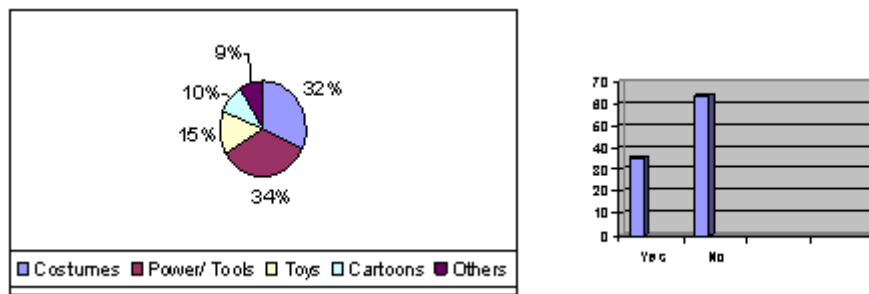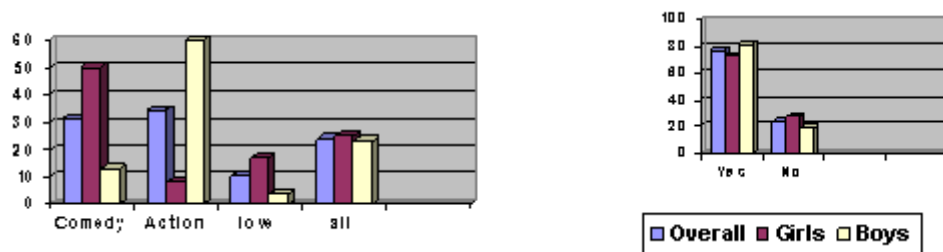Figure 1.10 Want to buy accessories Figure 1.11 Buy accessories

Figure 1.12 Cartoon scenes Figure 1.13 Act as carton

Why the children prefer to watch cartoon networks the most? The findings illustrate that action and comedy scenes were more attractive for the children. However, difference was observed between the choices of male and female children (fig. 1.12). Boys very significantly prefer to watch violence/action based scenes in cartoons as compared to female children, while female children significantly prefer to watch comedy based scenes of the cartoons. The children's response to the question that do they want to act as cartoon character shows that almost overall, male and female children want to act as cartoon character after watching the cartoons (fig. 1.13).

This situation is in line with the television violence theory and the researchers' assumption that watching cartoons on television screen increases aggressive behavior among children particularly among the male children. The children were asked that would they prefer to fight after watching the violent cartoon. The results showed their significant response on 'yes' category (fig. 1.14). The comparison of the male and female liking to fight revealed some what difference. The male children liked fighting more than the female children. The results regarding children's fighting habits showed that significant majority of the overall, male, and female children fight inside and outside home, but the male children relatively fight with other children more than the female children (fig. 1.15).

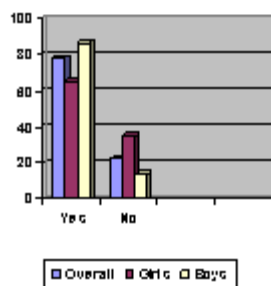Figure 1.14 Like to figh

t
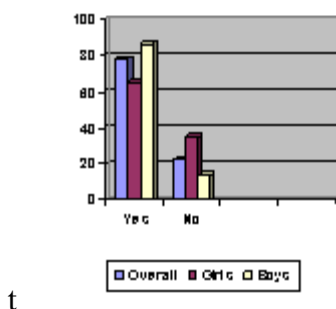
Figures 1.15 actual fight

Table 1.1 means of fighting

Overall boys girls

Exchanging hot word 27. 5* 8.9 23.5

Fight with tools 72. 5 91.1 76.5

N: 202 136 68

*: figures in the table show percentage.

The study's results further revealed significant difference between the aggressive behaviors of the male and female children or fighting with other children. The comparison of aggression with hot words and fighting with tools illustrates that almost all the focused children (overall 72.5%, boys 91.1%, and girls 76.5%) significantly fought by using tools compared to the use of hot words (see table 1.1). However, the comparison of male and female children's aggression shows that female children used more (23.5%) hot words than male children (8.9%) in fighting with other children while the male children used more tools (91.1%) in fighting with children than the female children (76.5%).

The results regarding the children understanding level of Hindi and English languages cartoon networks revealed that all the children equally understood the cartoon of Hindi language, while they understood less the cartoon of English language (fig. 1.17 & 1.18). But as evident from the findings that children took a lot of interest in both Hindi and English languages cartoon networks.
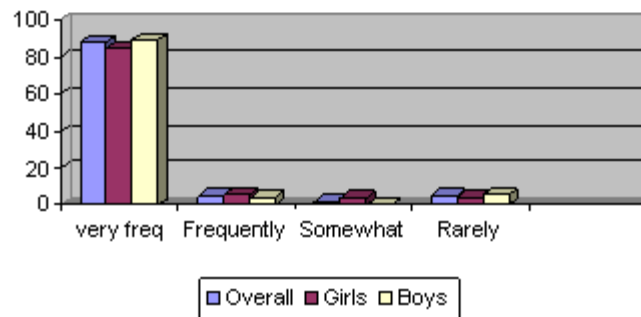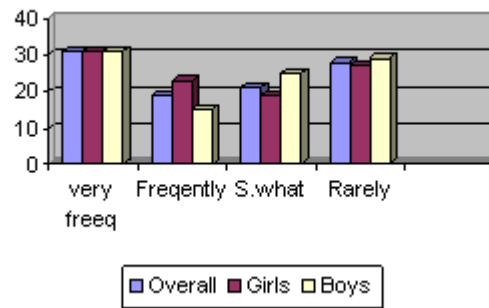
Figure 1.17 understanding of Hindi Cartoons

Figure 1.18 understanding of English cartoons

The children score on the index of liking Hindi language indicated that both male and female children with no significant difference liked Hindi language very much that was used by the cartoon characters (fig. 1. 19). Some of them used the words of Hindi language but not at significant level (fig. 1.20).
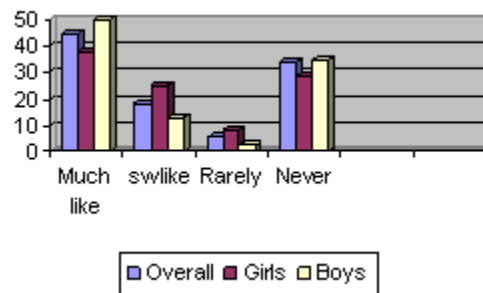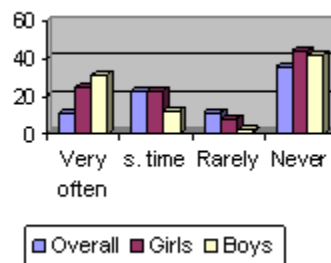
Figure 1.19 Liking Hindi Language

Figure 1.20 Use of Hindi languages

The findings of the table 1.2 reveal that significant majority of the respondents identified both Hindi and Urdu words. So both the languages were equally understandable for children. The children were asked 15 words of both Urdu and Hindi languages and they without any hesitation

not only identified them but also told the exact meaning of those particular words used by the cartoon characters. The most interesting point to be noted is that some of the children identified Hindi words as that of Urdu diction.

Table 1.2 Identifications of Hindi & Urdu words

	Hindi	Urdu
Shanti	79*	21
Shakti	82	18
Quat	22	78
Rakshus	81	19
Janib	32	68
Khafa	43	57
Madhu makhi	54	46
Wishvas	74	26
Anjam	28	72
Hadsa	27	73
Bhawishar	83	17
Yatra	82	18
Rouh	28	72
Dur ghatna	79	21

*: Figures in table show percentages

In the light of the obtained empirical evidence, it can be summarized that cartoon networks containing multiple variation and attractive content are effectively satisfying the psyche of the children. That is why they spend most of their time on watching cartoon and acquiring much information not only about type of cartoon characters but also they are familiar with the action, dress and name of almost all major cartoon characters. It was also observed from the empirical findings that watching cartoons on television screen has tremendously increased aggressive behavior among children particularly among the male children. For instance, the children were asked if they preferred to fight with sister/brother or other children after watching the violence based cartoons, the results showed their significant response on 'yes' category (fig. 1.14). The comparison of the male and female liking to fight revealed, however, somewhat difference.

The male children liked fighting more than the female children. It was further observed that significant majority of the overall, male, and female children often fought inside and outside home, but the male children fought somewhat more with other children than the female children (fig. 1.15). This findings of the study extended support not only to the television violence theory

and the research hypothesis that male children are likely to be affected more by the television violence-based cartoons than female children but also this situation is in line with Moqaddam's (1997) assertion that television programmes play an important role in morality and immorality of children. The results of the study further extended support to the Michael and Gross's (1982) view point that, each new development in communications technology has generated rejoicing and dismay, as the means for imparting information, skills, instructions, and values have become amplified and extended.

In view of the above empirical evidence, we advise parents to plan for a reasonable use of television, the most readily available medium of entertainment. As regards home work, parents should take care that watching TV does not cause children adversely in terms of home work if they ensure its use in their presence or in free and limited time. It should be borne in mind that TV is not the only factor that accounts for children's failure in their studies. No doubt that television violence sows the seeds of violence in the minds of children. Particularly violence in cartoon movies attracts the attention of the child. But the choice of character in cartoon movies/films for children should be such that it should not adversely affect the subjectivity of children.

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