

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DISNEY CARTOON PROGRAM WATCHING AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE OF CHILDREN AGED 7 TO 11 YEARS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Children's lives today are more than ever before greatly impacted by social media and this effect has resulted in certain traditional family lifestyles being replaced with modern lifestyles. Consequently, media has the ability to fundamentally influence societal views and alter behavior in subtle yet powerful ways. This study sought to determine the association between Disney cartoon program watching and prosocial behavior change of children aged 7 to 11 years in Nairobi County. The social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (1986) served as a guide for the investigation. The study used a correlational research strategy that targeted 7500 pupils in selected primary schools in Nairobi County. A sample size of 308 pupils participated in this study. The study utilized purposive sampling to select the Kasarani primary school and pupils aged 7 to 11 years who particularly watch a range of Disney cartoons. The pilot of the study was carried out among 29 pupils at Kahawa garrison primary school. To gather information from pupils, a structured questionnaire was used. Validity of the study was ensured by structuring the questions according to the objectives, while a Cronbach alpha score of 0.7 and above was established in all the scales indicating that they were reliable. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation, and inferential statistics in the form of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r). The analysis was aided by SPSS version 23. Findings from the study established a positive correlation between time spent watching Disney cartoons and prosocial behavior, $r(310) = 0.374, p < 0.05$. The findings imply that, the more time spent watching Disney cartoon programs with prosocial behavior, the more highly the prosocial behavior children acquire. The study therefore, concluded that students who watch Disney cartoons learn the importance of treating other people right, and the value of hard work, and shaped their language and speaking skills. The study recommends that parents control the amount of time their children spend watching cartoons because they can be addictive and too much of anything is bad. The study further recommends that parents should ensure that their children watch cartoons that portray acceptable behaviors or select the kinds of cartoon programs they would like their children to watch.

Keywords: *change, Disney cartoon program, prosocial behavior*

Introduction

The American Academy of Pediatrics (2001), observes that television has become widely accessible after the first part of the twentieth century. The media's promotion of hate and violence toward children has been well documented in communication and media studies. The twenty-first century has witnessed social media having a tremendous effect on how people live their daily lives across all ages. In addition, there is a significant change in the lives of the twenty-first century children, such as in the areas of education, play, and sociability, eating habits, and clothing styles. Social media has a profound effect on children's lives which has resulted in certain traditional family lifestyles being replaced with modern family lifestyles. Computers, smartphones, and television foster a sedentary lifestyle, this significantly affects the physical and mental wellbeing

of children. However, this vary based on the availability of TV, the child's upbringing, and the environment of the child. The former is demonstrated through children's interaction with each other be it at school or home by sharing, helping and responding to their peers.

The world is increasingly developing in technology and parents often have less or lack family time to spend with their children (Silver, 2021). The increased need to cater for families and cover the increasingly strenuous economic times, many parents are busy working leaving their children in the care of nannies who equally do not have enough time to engage with the children on one on one basis. Therefore, technology has been used to cover the absence of parents in their children's lives. Parents having less or no time to spend with their children has resulted in children spending time on televisions, computers, and other gadgets just to keep them entertained and in some cases for simple company (Chen, Chen, Wen & Snow, 2020). However, parents still have some control of what their children do with the gadgets as many direct and guide their children to watch only content appropriate for children. The latter increases the likelihood of children to watch cartoons because they are the greatest form of acceptable children programs globally. The former means that there are millions of children globally who watch cartoons on a daily basis (Wijethilaka, 2020).

A cartoon is a movie that uses only animated characters rather than actual actors, usually for children (Thompson, 2010). Cartoons are also defined as films created by recording a succession of gradually changing models or sketches as the scene is played again, they seem to move and transform. Cartoons are created in a way that they are attractive and funny and this makes children more interested and can watch one cartoon program over and over again without getting bored (Chu, 2020). People would see these brief cartoon content in cinema theaters before their big film, hence cartoons were initially brief (Ward, 2021). When cartoonists were able to broadcast their shows on television, they began to become lengthier, resulting in the half-hour block episodes that can now be found on the Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, and Nickelodeon. The cartoons needed to adapt to families in order to draw in more viewers (Kapelian, 2009). According to Shakir (2021), watching cartoons can help children develop cognitive skills, helping behaviors, language skills, and good connection with their parents and friends.

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2006), observes that behavior is how an individual or animal reacts to a situation or stimulus. Further, the concise Oxford English Dictionary also defines prosocial behavior as unrewarded behavior that is meant to benefit another person. This includes behaviors such as helping, sharing, or providing comfort to another person. This helping behavior is observable in young children but changes in the occurrence and its expression with age. Furthermore, even without exposure to television programs, children's minds have a large potential for storing what they encounter. "It is proven that a child may memorize any form of image with the help of cognitive ability. Cartoons' impact on children is briefly discussed in *The Role of Cartoons* by Sharmin (2014) in her essay. These memories are not only etched in their minds, but also in their actions and words (Sharmin, 2014). Children's minds are highly susceptible, and they assimilate things rapidly," according to Maqsood and Amer (2014). A child's intellect cannot distinguish between good and negative viewpoints of things at such a tender age."

The purpose of a cartoon is directly meant to portray the essence of the cartoon's author, by which an interaction between the maker and the recipient occurs. Indicating that the level of friction

required is deliberate enough to affect societal patterns or behavior, the ideological procedure involved in creating a cartoon points to causing a psychological difference in the social environment. (Habib & Soliman, 2015).

Children who are exposed to cartoons that are nonviolent with helpful qualities and traits being displayed are highly likely to model the same when with their family, friends or at school (Ghilzai, Alam, Ahmad, Shaukat & Noor, 2017). Cartoons are so frequently seen as having a major focus on children. The children set out on a journey to a new realm filled with novel ideas and are introduced to concepts they had not previously encountered, giving this inevitable fact a whole new meaning. Cartoon shows and animated films have been the most engaging activity for children for more than 80 years, according to boxofficemojo.com (Acheampong & Richmond, 2017). Children begin to watch cartoons at the age of two years and the consistency continues until the cartoon becomes more family-friendly, attracting more attention. Cartoons produce content that may or may not be inappropriate for children (Ghilzai et al., 2017). Often, the cartoon's content promotes views that are improper for children, whereas other ideologies are impressive, appropriate and informative.

Njiiri (2019), examined foreign cartoons' effects on Kenyan children's social behavior and demonstrated how the content of television cartoons affect kids' social behavior. A different study conducted in Kenya by Kidenda (2018), examined the effects of animated cartoons on children between the ages of seven and eleven in Nairobi County, Kenya, and found that cartoons may impair communication between parents and children at home. Kidenda (2018), further states that young children are inclined to imitate the language and social abilities displayed by the cartoon characters. Past researchers have greatly investigated the impact of cartoon programs on children. Majority of the literature reviewed shows that cartoons help children develop language, communication and learning skills. Literature has also indicated that children can acquire both social and aggressive behaviors through watching cartoons that have those characters. However, there is a lack of studies internationally, regionally and locally investigating the aspect of prosocial behavior as a result of watching cartoons among this population. This study therefore sought to determine the association between Disney cartoon program watching and prosocial behavior change of children aged 7 to 11 years in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

To determine the association between Disney cartoon program watching and prosocial behavior change of children aged 7 to 11 years in Nairobi County.

Research Questions

What is the association between Disney cartoon program watching and prosocial behavior change of children aged 7 to 11 years in Nairobi County?

Literature Review

Association between Prosocial Behavior in Children aged 7 to 11 and Disney cartoon program watching

De Leeuw and van der Laan (2018), looked into whether viewing Disney animated films may immediately motivate children to help others. The study included 113 Dutch children and their companions in total. The main character of the Disney animation that the experiment group viewed helped a friend, while the main character of the cartoon that the control group watched did not. Later, the children's eagerness to assist their peers was gauged through administration of a puzzle task. Children who watched a Disney short film featuring a helpful character were predisposed to offer their assistance to a friend when compared to their companions who watched a short film without the helpful behavior, according to the study's findings. The results showed that watching Disney cartoon with good natured or friendly characters immediately positively influenced the children who interacted with it. This supports research on the link between Disney cartoon viewing and prosocial conduct in kids between the ages of 7 and 11.

Ghilzai, Alam, Ahmad, Shaukat and Noor (2017), assessed how cartoon programming affected Pakistani children's language and conduct. The study found that cartoon viewing impacted children's conduct in both favorable and unfavorable ways. According to the research children watch cartoons for entertainment (41%), action (23%), and education (17%), respectively. The study also revealed that children who watch cartoons have higher rates of linguistic development and cognitive growth, as well as some being aggressive and acting violently around their siblings and friends. Additionally, the research revealed that some children behave antisocially because they spend most of time watching television. The research also showed that 70% of the Children imitate cartoons and as a direct result fantasize a lot in actual life. Cartoons' content influences children in obtainment and retention of other moral and social principles as well.

In the spring terms of the 2013 and 2014 academic years, Odukomaiya (2014), investigated how Nigerian children felt about cartoons at St International Nursery and Primary School and Apostolic Church Grammar School. The goal of the study was to ascertain whether violent and hostile cartoons have a long-term impact on children. This study also looked into whether or not the children's attitudes drastically differed statistically in any way. The results of the investigation revealed that there are some topics where there was a statistically significant difference between the responses of the school-age children. The study, however, found no evidence of an addiction to watching the animation. The most important finding is that young girls in Nigeria are more likely than males to be violent and aggressive. Borzekowski (2018), assessed the effects of a cartoon educational program, Akili and Me, in which respondents were randomly assigned to watch it versus other popular shows. An evaluation of 568 children with an average age of 4.8 years was conducted in Morogoro, Tanzania. To evaluate the program's effects before and after four weeks of exposure, the investigator spoke with children. After adjusting for the child's gender, age, and baseline abilities, the examined follow-up outcome showed significantly enhanced drawing abilities, form knowledge, number recognition, counting, and linguistic skills due to the exposure to Akili and Me.

A study by Kidenda (2018), sought to ascertain whether or not parents of children between seven and eleven years old should sit down and watch animated cartoons on television with them. The results of the study suggest that the duration of time children spend viewing cartoons on television may be contributing to their social withdrawal from interactions with friends, parents, and siblings. The results were significant in that they showed how children's acquired or "borrowed" vocabulary, sartorial preferences and attitudes toward various roles were all influenced by animated cartoons. Statistics demonstrate that the best linkages exist even though they may not be visible to the untrained eye (Kim Possible, Ben 10, and American Dragon) Children in Nairobi aspire to emulate cartoon characters as idols, idealized representations of themselves, and role models, yet neither of the cartoon characters is an accurate representation of the children they regularly contact with. The research resulted in the conclusion that children's views and attitudes are affected by the presence or lack thereof of realism in animated cartoons, which has ramifications for how they develop their worldviews and self-confidence.

The above studies have revealed that cartoons have various impacts on children's behavior whether negative or positive. Some of the influence cartoons have on kids found by the above literature included; advanced helping behavior, addiction to television, antisocial behavior, enhanced the ability to sketch, recognize shapes, count, recognize numbers, and use English perceptions, and attitudes. However, these studies did not focus explicitly on Disney cartoons which are the primary subject of the current study. The literature revealed scarcity in studies that precisely examined Disney cartoon influence on children's change in behavior hence the importance of the current study.

Methodology

The study used a correlational research strategy that targeted 7500 pupils in selected primary schools in Nairobi County. A sample size of 308 pupils was statistically determined using Yamane (1967) formula. The study utilized purposive sampling to select the Kasarani primary school and pupils aged 7 to 11 years who particularly watch a range of Disney cartoons. The pilot of the study was carried out among 29 pupils at Kahawa garrison primary school. To gather information from pupils a structured questionnaire was used to collect data on the relationship between time spent watching Disney cartoon and prosocial behavior. Validity of the study was ensured by structuring the items of the questionnaire as per the study objectives. The instrument was further determined reliable as all the likert items had a Cronbach alpha score of 0.7 and above. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation and and inferential statistics in the form of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r). The analysis was aided by SPSS version 23.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics

A total of 312 pupils responded to the study questionnaires from the sampled 380 participants, representing an 82% response rate.

Distribution of Respondents by Age

Table 1 shows the results of the distribution of participants by age groups

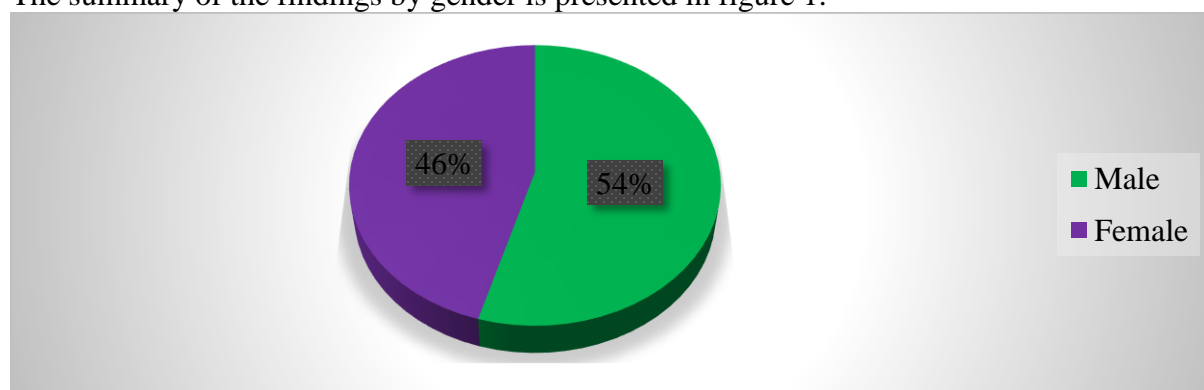
Table 1 Respondents age category

Age Category	Frequency	Percent
8-9 years	3	1.0
9-10 years	54	17.3
10-11 years	255	81.7
Total	312	100.0

According to table 1, the vast majority of participants (81.7%) were aged between 10 to 11 years, 17.3% were aged between 9 to 10 years, while only 1% were aged between 8 to 9 years.

Distribution of participants by Gender

The summary of the findings by gender is presented in figure 1.



From the findings on figure 1, 54% of the respondents were males, while 46% were females.

Association between Disney cartoon program watching and prosocial behavior of children aged 7 to 11.

Level of Prosocial Behaviour among Children aged 7 to 11 years

To determine the level of prosocial behaviour, participants were required to specify the degree to which they had portrayed a prosocial behaviour as a result of watching Disney cartoons, on a 5 point Likert scale. The summary of findings is presented in table 2.

Association between Disney Cartoon Program Watching and Prosocial Behavior Change of Children Aged 7 To 11 Years in Nairobi County.

Table 2. *Prosocial Behavior among Children aged 7 to 11 years*

Prosocial Behavior	SD	D	N	A	SD	Mean	SD
Disney cartoon has helped me shape my language and speaking skills	6	29	58	26	193	4.19	1.148
Disney cartoon has helped me learn a lot on different games	18	16	103	39	136	3.83	1.211
Disney cartoon has improved my learning in various subjects in school	7	20	57	33	195	4.25	1.100
I have learned how to do various activities in the house through watching Disney cartoon	22	35	70	39	146	3.81	1.321
I have learned on how to create and maintain relationships with friends through watching Disney cartoon	13	32	76	43	148	3.90	1.224
I have learned etiquette through watching Disney cartoon	9	17	51	44	191	4.25	1.092
I have learned the importance of treating other people right through watching Disney cartoon	8	6	48	41	209	4.40	0.987
Disney cartoon has taught me the value of hard work and honesty	7	15	56	35	199	4.29	1.062

As shown on table 2, participants agreed that have learned the importance of treating other people right through watching Disney cartoons as shown by a mean of 4.40, Disney cartoons has taught them value of hard work and honesty as shown by a mean of 4.29 and Disney cartoons has helped them shape language and speaking skills as shown by a mean of 4.19.

The levels of prosocial conduct were determined by additional data analysis. The scale comprised 8 items, hence the maximum score was 40 (8 x 5), while the minimum score was 8 (8 x 1). The sum of a person's individual total scores for each item was used to determine their overall score. The results were then divided into three groups, with scores between 8 and 19 denoting low levels of prosocial activity, 20 to 28 denoting moderate levels of prosocial behavior, and 29 to 40 denoting high levels of prosocial behavior. The findings are summarized in table 3.

Data was further analyzed to determine the levels of prosocial behavior. Since the scale had 8 items, the highest possible score was 40 (8x5) and the lowest possible score was 8 (8x1).

Table 3. *Levels of Prosocial behavior*

Prosocial behavior	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Level	8	2.6	8	40	32.92	4.881
Moderate Level	41	13.1				
High Level	263	84.3				
Total	328	100.0				

According to table 3, the majority of participants (84.3%) exhibited high levels of prosocial conduct, followed by moderate levels (13.1%) and low levels (2.6%). The lowest score attained was 8, and the highest score possible was 40. The individuals had a high level of prosocial conduct on average, as evidenced by the mean score of 32.92 (SD = 4.881) that was obtained.

Association between Disney cartoon program watching and prosocial behavior

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to analyze the findings about the association between the amount of time spent viewing Disney cartoons and behavior change. Because the independent and dependent variables were measured using interval scales based on cumulative scores and because there was a linear relationship between the variables, it was decided to use Pearson Correlation.

Table 4. *Relationship between Time Spent watching Disney Cartoons and Prosocial behavior*

		Prosocial behavior
Time Spent	Pearson Correlation	.374**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	312

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the findings on table 4, there was a noteworthy advantage between time spent watching Disney cartoons and prosocial behavior, $r(310) = 0.374$, $p < 0.05$. This implies that more time spent watching Disney cartoons was correlated with higher levels of prosocial behavior.

Conclusion

The study concluded that Disney cartoon program highly influenced children's behavior as the findings showed that students who watch Disney cartoons learn the importance of treating other people right, and the value of hard work, and shaped their language and speaking skills. The researcher, therefore, concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between time spent watching Disney cartoons and behavior change. The findings imply that, the more time spent watching Disney cartoon programs with prosocial behavior, the more highly the prosocial behavior children acquire. The findings of this study mean that children who regularly watch Disney cartoons with prosocial behavior are more likely to develop prosocial behaviors when compared with children who do not watch Disney cartoons.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends that parents control the amount of time their children spend watching cartoons because they can be addictive and too much of anything is bad. The study further recommends that parents should ensure that their children watch cartoons that portray acceptable behaviors or select the kinds of cartoon programs they would like their children to watch.

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