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A Survey on Children's Apprehension of Adult Content in Cartoon series

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Abstract

Children in India are busy watching cartoon series every evening after school. They spend at least two hours a day and more than two hours in the weekend. The television channels in India are telecasting cartoons that are not produced in India. The origin of the cartoons series are mostly from France, USA and Japan. Since the culture and lifestyle of these countries is different from India, we are naturally concerned with the content. Above all children are children whether its India or other country. Adult content is common and rampant in these foreign cartoons and it is a matter of worry and a serious issue to be considered when children are involved.

Key Words: Media, Cartoon series, Adult Content.

Introduction

With the object of supplying entertainment to home, rather than at public places, TV was invented. Initially, TV became the extension of radio programmes. The TV personalities were radio stars, who defected to the new medium because of its glamour. News, sports, political events and elections were the major programmes. With TV becoming a household medium, the incline towards programmes for children and women became prominent. Family entertainment assumed importance.

Children and youth are the vulnerable demographic sectors of TV. These groups watch TV most and get influenced by it. The severe changes in their approach to clothes, concept of beauty and inclination towards particular lifestyle images are due to TV. It emphasizes particular outline of consumption.

Many people have called TV as a “baby sitter”, “surrogate parent”, “substitute teacher”, “electronic peer”, “third parent”, and “pied piper”. Some have also called the act of TV viewing as the “Great Time Robbery” and “The Thief”. According to Schramm et.al., the dominance of TV may be noticed in the first 10 years of childhood. Age, Sex, mental ability and family background are the factors which govern their viewing pattern. They further he states that “From age three through 16, a child spends more time on TV than in school. During these years he devotes about one-sixth of all his waking time to TV. He is likely to devote more time to TV than any other activity except sleeping and perhaps play”.

TV and IQ in children

Television viewing is related to intelligence. One of the British Studies has revealed that intelligence was the major factor affecting TV viewing and that children with varied interests and activities viewed less TV. It was also observed that the IQ of a child was negatively correlated with the duration of TV viewing.

An Indian study has also revealed that among older children and teenagers, heavy TV viewing was co-related with low IQ and poor academic performance. This is because the TV content selected for viewing is mainly entertainment oriented and has little education.

Schramm and his colleagues have pointed out that “half of the children at elementary school level consider TV as the useful medium. Newspapers get a little less than a quarter of the votes. All other media get a less than 10 percent. But by the time children reach the high school, this too is changed.

TV and social relations

Martin Large strongly feels that TV dominates the social life of many children. Bits of conversation, eating, homework, knitting and other household work and even reading all carried out in front of the TV set. He also says that TV tends to crowd out everything else. Sports, gardening, games, songs, story-telling, conversation, regular meal times, outings, hobbies, homework, visiting friends and relatives all the fabric of activities that constitute family’s ‘social culture’ will be crowded out. One of the researchers has observed, “When you turn on television, you turn off the process of making human beings human.”

The impact of TV on daily life in daily life of children costs them sleep, social gathering away from home, leisure activities, conversation with the loved ones and household care. Indeed, children today are deprived of many first-hand human experiences because of television’s second-hand experiences.

Adult Content

The researcher has categorized the actions such as smoking drinking kissing (French kiss) provocative dressing, heart shape (symbol of love), grooming, body image, possessiveness of the beloved, lewd/ lecherous, as adult content. Not only actions, but also the feelings, expression of love interest and artifacts are also considered.

Review of Literature

Ray M. & Jat K.R. (2010) refers to “youth risk behavior surveillance-United States 2003” and say that one potential but largely unexplored factor that may contribute to sexual activity among adolescents is exposure to sexual content in the media. In India, there are reports of messaging of sexual contents through mobiles among school going children. They also opine that given the enormous influence that media in all forms exerts on the lives of children, it is astonishing how little parents, researchers, and policy makers have been spurred to action. In

India, there are limited studies on effect of media, especially newer media items, on child health and about interventions to improve role of media in child health.

James D. Sargent et.al. (2005) examined the link of adolescent smoking with movie smoking, by conducting a random-digit-dial survey of 6522 US adolescents aged 10-14 years. Using previously validated methods, they estimated exposure to movie smoking, in 532 recent box-office hits, and examined its relation with adolescents having ever tried smoking a cigarette. Through this study they found that overall 10% of the population had tried smoking. Quartile of movie smoking exposure was significantly associated with the prevalence of smoking initiation, in US adolescents in this age group. Smoking in movies is a risk factor for smoking initiation among US adolescents. Limiting exposure of young adolescents to movie smoking could have important public health implications.

Grunbaum, J.A., et.al. (2003, 2004) observes that initiation of sexual intercourse by younger adolescents is associated with risky sexual behaviours and increased risk of multiple partners, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and pelvic inflammatory disease. In the US approximately 47% of high school students have had sexual intercourse. Of them 74% report having sex before the age of 13, and 14% have had less than 4 sexual partners. One potential, but, largely unexplored factor that may contribute to sexual activity among adolescent is exposure to sexual content in the mass media.

Kavitha Cardoza (2002), studied the extent of parental control over their child's television viewing. She states the ambivalence of parents towards television is somewhat obvious. Parents have apprehensions that television exposes their child to sexual content, violence, negative role model and bad habits. They feel that TV viewing should be regulated with regard to the channels and program the children watch. Most children watch TV everyday. But the 'bulk' of viewing was during weekends and holidays, with the number of hours decreasing during examination time. Majority of parents have rules for their child's TV viewing like locking up the TV set. A lot of parent's stress the need to advice and discuss programmes with the child as a long-term control strategy. All parents in the study stress on expanding role of TV to impart moral values and to teach children the 'difference between right and wrong'. Parents opine that western programmes have negative influence on Indian cultural values.

Tom Robinson & Caitlin Anderson (2006), says that Animated programs are created for a specific audience of children who, in many ways, learn acceptable behaviours and attitudes from these shows (Emmers-Sommer & Aen, 1999). When animated programs describe certain groups of people in a steady, unvarying manner or stereotype them, children begin to believe that the images they see are acceptable and normal.

Herng Su (1999) observed that Taiwanese children were found to have watched Japanese animation, read Japanese comic books, played video games and listened to anime music. Japanese cultural goods are quite popular and recognized among Taiwanese children. Children prefer-Japanese anime related goods because the quality and design are superior to that of indigenous products. We have to be aware of the possibility that TV programs especially Japanese animated programmes, have led to preferences for Japanese cultural goods among

viewers viewing Japanese animation and consuming Japanese cultural products are related. In a well-developed media, mass marketing and mass consumption are important elements of popular culture. The danger here is to treat consumer culture and media culture as separate domains, we can see that in a consumer society, patterns of consumption are closely related to the penetration of mass media. The interaction of TV programmes and other factors do have major impacts on people's daily lives.

Baharudin Luster (1998) conducted a study on factors related to the quality of the home environment and children's achievement. They said that the quality of the children's home environments was positively related to their achievement scores. Children who scored higher in all the tests tended to come from more supportive home environments. Results of the analyses show that the quality of the home environment provided by mothers was related to the children's achievement scores. Children who achieved higher scores in all the achievement measures tended to experience more supportive home environments. Children who do well have mothers who are high in intelligence and who provide more stimulating home environments.

Methodology

As the title itself explains, the study adopts survey method. Structured interview through questionnaire helped the researchers to collect information on the topic. 100 Students of class 5, 6 and 7, in Mysore City, from both Kannada and English medium, both boys and girls were randomly selected and administered the questionnaire.

All the children watched cartoon series. **Oggy and the Cockroaches** is a French animated series produced by Xilam and Gaumont Film Company. It is a comedy which is most liked by children in India. The questionnaire had photographs of snapshots taken from cartoon series, Oggy and Cockroaches. They were the captures of cartoon characters involved in adult activities and expressions. Questions were framed as to illicit responses about the understanding of the same among children.

Data analysis

The data has been done with the simple analysis on SPSS, which is presented below-

Different Channels Watched by the Respondents

No. of channels	Frequency	Valid Percent
Kids channels- CN, POGO, Disney KIDS, etc	85	48.3
Animal planet/ Discovery	41	23.3
Entertainment channel	48	27.3
Others	2	1.1
Total	176	100

Table – 1 : Out of hundred students 85 of them watch Kids channel. 41

percent of children watch Animal Planet/Discovery 23.3 percent of them watched only Animal Planet and Discovery. 48 students watched entertainment channel along with other while 27.3 percent watched only entertainment channel. Two students watched other channels who constitute 1.1 percent.

Different Cartoon Shows Watched by Respondents		
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Oggy and the cockroaches	77	20.1
Roll No. 21	44	11.5
Power Puff Girls	16	4.2
Ben 10	36	9.4
Doraemon	47	12.2
We Bare Bears	23	6
Chota Bheem	65	16.9
Mighty Raju	51	13.3
Kumbh Karan	13	3.4
V4 Viraat	12	3.1
Total	384	100

Table – 2: When asked about different cartoon shows watched by respondents, 77 of them said they watched Oggy and the cockroaches. Only 20.1 percent of the students watched only Oggy and the Cockroaches and no other show.

Favorite cartoon show watched by Respondents		
Favorite cartoon show	Frequency	Valid Percent
Oggy and the cockroaches	47	47
Roll No. 21	10	10
Power Puff Girls	4	4
Ben 10	7	7
Doraemon	16	16
Chota Bheem	8	8
Mighty Raju	5	5
Kumbh Karan	1	1
V4 Viraat	2	2
Total	100	100

Table – 3: 47 students out of 100 said that Oggy and the Cockroaches is their favourite cartoon show.

Whether imitate / mimic the scene in cartoon show and the reason for it (all 100 Children agreed that they mimic the characters.		
Responses	Frequency	Valid Percent
For pleasure	12	11.5
Because what is shown in cartoon is real	9	8.7
My friends feel happy	63	60.6
I will be accepted by my friends	20	19.2
Total	104	100

Table – 4: 60.6 percent of the students said that they mimic because their friends feel happy. 11.5 percent of children agreed that they mimic for pleasure. 8.7 percent said that they mimic because they find what is shown in the cartoon is real. 19.2 percent said that they mimic because they feel that their friends accept them if they do so.

Reasons for the question why Oggy wish to be with Olivia?		
Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
Because they are friends	24	24
Because Oggy loves Olivia and tries to impress her	76	76
Total	100	100

Table – 5: 76 percent of the children expressed that Oggy loves Olivia and hence wish to be with her and impress her.



Picture 1 : Speaking about body image and grooming.

How is Oggy looking in the above photograph? (picture 1)		
Responses	Frequency	Valid Percent
Handsome	43	43
Ugly	11	11
Smart	27	27
Can't say	19	19
Total	100	100

Table – 6: 43 students out of 100 expressed that Oggy looks handsome. 27 percent said that Oggy looks smart. 11 students said that he looks ugly. 19 of them said that they can't say.



Picture 2: Speaking about exposure of wardrobe.

Reasons of Lady girl cockroach wearing such a dress in Cartoon Show (picture 2)		
Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
It makes it look beautiful	27	27
To attract male cockroaches	57	57
Can't say	16	16
Total	100	100

Table – 7: When asked as to why Lady K is wearing such a dress, 57 percent of children said that lady K wears such a dress to attract male cockroaches. 27 percent said that the dress makes her look beautiful.

**Picture 3**

Response regarding the question about the photograph that asks what is Oggy doing? (picture 3)

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
Lifting/ carrying Olivia	83	70.3
Looking at Olivia	28	23.7
Standing beside Olivia	5	4.2
Can't say	2	1.7
Total	118	100

Table – 8: 70.3 percent of students could understand correctly that Oggy was lifting/carrying Olivia. 23.7 percent of students understood that Oggy was looking Olivia.

Response regarding understand by looking at Oggy picture (picture 3)

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
Oggy and Olivia are lovers	92	92
Oggy and Olivia are brother and sisters	4	4
Can't say	4	4
Total	100	100

Table – 9: Looking at the same photograph 92 percent of children understood correctly that Oggy and Olivia are lovers. Only 4 percent of the children said that Oggy and Olivia are brother and sister. The remaining four percent said can't say.



Picture 4

Responses regarding photograph what Oggy and Olivia about to do (picture 4)

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
Kissing	95	95
Sleeping/ dozing	1	1
Can't say	4	4
Total	100	100

Table - 10: 95 percent of children could understand that Oggy and Olivia are about to kiss. Only one child said that Oggy and Olivia are dozing. 04 percent said they can't say.

Identification of mood of Oggy and Olivia in the picture by Respondents (picture 4)

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
Sleepy	1	1
Romantic	94	94
Can't say	5	5
Total	100	100

Table – 11: When asked about the same picture what is the mood that Oggy and Olivia are, 94 percent of children said that they are in Romantic mood. Only 1 said that they are in sleepy mood. 05 percent said they can't say.



Picture 5

Response from the respondents regarding what speaks about background of the photograph. (picture 5)

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
Kissing	77	77
Talking	19	19
others	4	4
Total	100	100

Table – 12: When asked about the background in the above photograph, 77 percent of the children said that they are lips at the background and it symbolizes kissing, and it's erotic.

Conclusion

From the above data analysis we can conclude that children are being catered with adult content in cartoon series. They understand the content exactly as it is. Children do what they see. Children talk what they listen. It's an unfortunate thing that there is little moral education, value education, and guidance for good behavior. Violence, bad behavior and adult activities dominate the content. Parents turn the television off or change the channel if there is adult content running in the entertainment channels. But cartoon channels are not been considered as serious content is a matter of distress. It's time to switch off these channels too.

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