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Influence of Frequent Cartoon Consumption on Children's Interactive Communication Skills and Behavioural Outcomes

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of frequent cartoon consumption on children's interactive communication skills and behavioural outcomes. Anchored in Social Learning Theory and Media Effects Theory, the study adopts a mixed-method approach involving a sample of 480 parents and guardians of pupils aged 4-8 from varied backgrounds and 24 teachers for the interview section. The findings revealed that frequent cartoon consumption may have negative effects on the development of active listening skills on children ($\bar{x}$ = 2.24, SD = 0.65) and a moderate negative relationship (r = -0.43) between frequent cartoon consumption and the development of turn-taking skills in interactive communication. The study concludes that while cartoons can serve as entertainment, their overuse may impair the development of skills that children need to interact effectively in live interactions.

Keywords
Cartoon; Learning; Children Interaction; Communication Skills; Language Development; and Interactive communication

I. Introduction

Cartoons have been a part of children's development in today's society due to access to electronic media. These medium serves as children's early exposure to planned storytelling and have a great impact in the development of basic communication skills. Abraham, Basheer., Sudhakaran and Babu (2021) in their study stated that children in today's society are living in environments that are saturated with television and electronic media. Whereas children in time past enjoy outdoor activities more; socializing with their friends while enjoying different games. According to Mangesh and Prachi (2020) children usually spend most of their time in outdoor activities like playing various games with peers. In contrast, recently, children prefer watching their favorite cartoons for many hours, with neither any physical activity nor any peer socializing, which can help in the development of interactive communication skills (Msughter & Iman, 2020).

Core aspects of interactive communication which includes: active listening, turn-taking, and conversational adaptability, develop through two-way communication and dynamic exchanges. This is often absent when engaging in frequent cartoon consumption. Excessive reliance on such media may hinder the development of social and communication skills that are essential for interactions (Skariah & Dhanya, 2022). Unlike interactive communication that require immediate response, cartoons often involve scripted dialogue and exaggerated emotional displays, which, though engaging, may lead to inactive viewing rather than active participation (Akintaro et al., 2026).

Recent evidence suggests that prolonged exposure to screen, particularly with cartoons, can reduce opportunities for children to practice unplanned, unscripted interactions (Sigman, 2012). Studies indicate that frequent media consumption may lead to passive language acquisition, limiting children's ability to respond during interactions and adjust their

language to suit different social contexts (Msughter et al., 2023). A study by Linebarger and Walker (2005) revealed that media content, including animated content, might not offer the same developmental benefits as interactive or live conversation. Kayla Bois & Brad Bushman in their study at Michigan University revealed that children between ages 2 - 5 years old watch cartoon 32 hrs. weekly. While 6 - 11 years old children watch cartoon 28 hrs. weekly. Also 51% of homes have their television switched on most of the time. Imperatively, high exposure to cartoons tends to hinder childrens' communicative engagement capacities and live conversations. Invariably, high exposure limits essential developmental skills and communication proficiencies.

Furthermore, increased screen time often leads to reduced frequency of live interaction, which can result in the reduced rate of acquiring language skills. Madigan, S., Browne, D., Racine, N., Mori and Tough (2019) in their study found that longer screen time is correlated with reduced opportunities for live interaction and weaker language development outcomes. As a result, children with significant screen exposure may struggle to engage in social settings that require flexibility, responsiveness, and contextual understanding, particularly as they enter school environments where interactive communication is vital (Wellington et al., 2026).

This study moves beyond traditional media effects approaches by proposing that frequent cartoon consumption contributes to what may be conceptualised as "passive communicative conditioning" a process through which children become habituated to one-way symbolic interaction at the expense of real-time dialogic competence. By integrating Social Learning Theory with Media Effects perspectives, this study extends existing frameworks by foregrounding interactive communication deficits particularly in active listening and turn-taking—as critical but underexplored outcomes of media exposure in early childhood.

Hence this study aims to fill a gap in the research by investigating the influence of frequent cartoon consumption on children's interactive communication skills. Focusing on active listening, turn-taking, and conversational adaptability, this research seeks to understand how cartoon-based content might impact children's abilities to engage in meaningful interactions in both social and academic settings (Msughter & Yaú, 2018). The findings from this study will provide guidance for parents, educators, and policymakers on balancing media use with interactive, real-world communication opportunities essential for early childhood development.

1.1 Problem Statement

As viewing patterns in children increases, it has become imperative to evaluate critical skills required in the formation of relevant skills for adulthood especially in today's digital disruption. It is important to look at other aspects of interactive communication skills and the need to build repository of vocabulary as children grow at the critical phase of their formative age. As media consumption increases in modern homes, there seems to be growing concern about the new consumption patterns of cartoons on children whose formative age requires keen attention. Unfortunately, as parental roles increase daily, it becomes more imperative that cartoon exposure is becoming the last resort for parenting to enable parents manage their workload and balance their jobs with family fonts. Ironically, cartoon phenomenon has become a norm in recent times (Success et al., 2026). The new adoption and

cultural adoption of cartoon disruption seem to hinder or truncate the developmental processing and communication skills of pupils.

The study explores the impact of cartoons on skills such as active listening, turn-taking and adaptability in conversations which increases the effectiveness of analytical and critical thinking skills towards solutions. This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on the influence of long hours viewing of cartoon on children's interactive communications skills and ultimately improving parenting strategies (Akintayo et ql., 2026). Hence, this inquiry seeks to fill the literature gap by investigating the influence of frequent long-term cartoon consumption on Interactive communication skills and behavioural outcomes of selected school pupils in Lagos state, Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions raised in the study are as follows:

a. What are the effects of frequent cartoon consumption on the development of active listening stills in early childhood?
b. What is the relationship between frequent cartoon consumption and the development of turn-taking skill in interactive communication?
c. To what extent does frequent screen time influence children's adaptability in conversations?

II. Review of Literature

As entertainment programmes for children becomes increasingly available through multiple media platforms, researchers have raised questions about the effects of such media content on the development of communication skills in children (Aondover & Aondover, 2023). A study by Kaiser family foundation (2021) revealed that among children of 0-6 years, 74% were under 5years and 59% of them were watching television for an average of 2hours. Children within this age range ought to engage in interaction with parents, guardian or caregivers to enhance their development of communication skills such active listening and turn-talking. Skariah and Dhanya (2022) explained this in their study when they said that changes in the family structure like standard of living or working parents had brought changes to child care practices and oftentimes television does the work of babysitting (Success et al., 2026).

In the study conducted by Washington Times (2004), it was shown that 2600 children under the age of 3 were exposed to television; it means there is increased chance for the children to have less attention span in later years. Wellington et, al (2025) explained that television content can easily internalize children's behaviour from an early age and manifest same at a later age. In another observational study by Christakis, Zimmerman, DiGiuseppe & McCarty (2004), an increase in the number of hours of television viewing at 1 year of age was reported to be associated with a 28% increase in the probability of having inattention problems at age 7 years of age.

Moreover, the consumption of cartoon content can decrease children's ability to interpret nonverbal cues. The frequent use of exaggerated expressions and simplified gestures can distort children's understanding of the process of communication. Boseley, (2021) asserts that the human brain develop during the first 18 to 24 month of life, toddlers needs to interact with their parents, eye-to-eye not eye to screen. Eye to screen reduces opportunity for live interactions thereby impact greatly on children's ability to interpret nonverbal cues (Akintayo et al., 2026). This gap may become particularly problematic as children enter social

environments such as school, where they are expected to navigate complex social interaction that requires interpreting emotional and situational cues from their peers.

When children spend so much time on cartoons, they miss out on important opportunities to engage in basic communication skills in reality. Studies also suggest that children who frequently watch cartoons may find it difficult to adjust to the complexities of classroom dynamics, where the ability to communicate and adapt is important (Msughter, 2022). Abraham, Basheer., Sudhakaran & Babu, (2021) noted that the decrease in opportunities for face-to-face conversation due to increased screen time can affect children's social development. This lack of interaction can lead to difficulties in making friends, solve problems, and adapt to new social situations, which are important components of effective communication in both academic and personal contexts (Success et al., 2026).

This challenge has become worse in today's screen-saturated environment, where children have access to digital media, (Abraham, et al., 2021), often at the cost of live communication with friends and caregivers. Since both parents are working hard to make money and caregivers rather than engage children with interaction, allows unlimited access to cartoon, children have more unsupervised time. Also, nearly 60% of children have televisions in their bedrooms and the growth of digital TV has made it possible for children to view channels devoted to cartoons (Oyero & Oyesomi (2014) citing American Academy of Pediatrics). However, cartoons are very entertaining and children like the fantasies it creates, Parents therefore needs to devise a strategy that can enable children have a balanced development, one that leverages the educational resources of cartoons while also providing ample opportunities for active, face-to-face engagement necessary for developing more complex communication skills (Msughter, 2025). Wellington, et al., (2025) suggest that Parents can guide their children to achieve more from television by a balanced utilization of time spent watching TV and carrying out tasks that are more productive for their well-being. A child develops self-confidence, good sense of responsibility, and communication competence if the family he/ she grew up will encourages open communication and warm display of care and love Abanto (2014, as cited in Oyero & Oyesomi, 2014).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by Social Learning theory and Media effect theory.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (SLT), developed by Albert Bandura (1977), posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. This theory emphasizes that children learn not only through direct experience but also by observing the behaviors of others, including those depicted in media (Aondover & Obasi, 2025). Cartoons serve as a significant source of modeled behavior, providing children with examples of language use, social interactions, and emotional responses (Bandura, 1977; Anderson & Dill, 2000). In the context of this study, SLT suggests that while cartoons can facilitate language development and social understanding, they may also contribute to passive consumption patterns, where children observe scripted interactions without practicing active communication skills (Msughter, 2021). As children increasingly consume animated content, the risk arises that they may rely on these modeled interactions rather than engaging in live exchanges that foster dynamic communication skills (Bandura, 2001; Linebarger & Piotrowski, 2010; Success & Maiwada, 2026).

2.2 Media Effects Theory

Media Effects Theory explores the influence of media on audiences and their behaviors. Within this framework, the cultivation theory, articulated by George Gerbner, posits that long-term exposure to media content can shape perceptions of reality and influence social norms (Gerbner et al., 2002). When applied to children's interaction with cartoons, this

theory suggests that regular consumption of animated programs can cultivate expectations about social interactions and communication styles that may not align with real-life scenarios. For instance, children may come to perceive exaggerated or scripted dialogue as normative, potentially impairing their ability to adapt their communication strategies in varied social contexts (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that excessive exposure to passive media can lead to decreased engagement in interactive communication, reinforcing a preference for one-sided dialogue (Anderson & Pempek, 2005; Nielson et al., 2022). Understanding these theoretical perspectives allows researchers to assess how cartoon viewing shapes children's communication skills and social adaptability, revealing the nuanced implications of animated content in early childhood development (Msughter, 2023). By integrating these theories, researchers can better understand how children's cartoon consumption influences their interactive communication skills. These frameworks help explain not only the content of cartoons but also the motivations behind children's engagement with them, providing a comprehensive view of their developmental implications.

III. Research Methods

The study employed a mixed research design. The population comprised teachers of pupils aged 4 to 6years old in Ogun State. Multistage sampling procedure was used for the study. At the first stage, the three senatorial districts were used from where two local government areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each district. In the second stage, four primary schools were selected from each LGA using simple random sampling. Finally, 20 parents of pupils aged 4 to 8 years were randomly selected from the 24 schools, along with one teacher each, resulting in a sample size of 480 parents (survey) and 24 teachers (interview). The sample size for the study consist 480 parents and 24 teachers of the pupils using simple random sampling technique.

Two instruments were used: a questionnaire to measure communication skills and interviews with parents to gather insights into children's interactions with cartoons and their communication behaviours. Data were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS). Descriptive statistics summarized participant demographics and media consumption patterns, while inferential statistics, including correlation were employed to explore relationships between cartoon viewing frequency and children's communication skills. Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation

A total number of 480 parents were analysed in this study. The analysis here presented is based on the inferential statistics, including, correlation, mean and standard deviation, which was conducted to explore relationships between cartoon viewing frequency and children's communication skills

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Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of the Demographic Information of Respondents.

SN	Relationship with child	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	What is your relationship to the child?	Parent	415	86.5%
		Guardian	65	13.5%

		Teacher	--	--
		Total	**480**	**100.0%**
SN	**Age of child**		**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
	What is the age of the child?	2–5 years	208	43.3%
		6–8 years	272	56.7%
		9–11 years	--	--
		Total	**480**	**100.0%**
	Cartoon watching duration		**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
	What is the average number of hours your child watches cartoons per day?	Less than 1 hour	69	14.4%
		1–2 hours	216	45.0%
		3–4 hours	145	30.2%
		More than 4 hours	50	10.4%
		Total	**480**	**100.0%**

Results in Table 1 present the demographic information of respondents that participated in this study, focusing on their relationship to the child, the child's age, and the average daily duration of cartoon viewing. In terms of the respondents' relationship to the children, the majority were parents, accounting for 86.5% (415) of the total sample. A smaller portion, 13.5% (65), identified as guardians, and no teacher. This suggests that the data was primarily collected from those who have close, daily interactions and caregiving responsibilities for the children, thereby offering insights grounded in first hand observation. The predominance of parent respondents strengthens the reliability of the data, as parents are typically well-positioned to observe their children's media consumption and communication behaviour.

Regarding the age distribution of the children, 56.7% (272) were between the ages of 6–8 years, while 43.3% (208) were aged 2–5 years. No data was recorded for children aged 9–11 years, indicating the study focused exclusively on early to middle childhood. The age grouping is significant because it aligns with critical developmental stages, particularly for language acquisition and social communication skills like turn-taking. The focus on children aged 2–8 years is appropriate for exploring developmental skills such as turn-taking, which are typically acquired and refined during these formative years.

Result on the average number of hours children watch cartoons daily, 45% (216) reported 1–2 hours, making this the most common viewing duration. This was followed by 30.2% (145) indicating 3–4 hours, while 14.4% (69 respondents) reported less than 1 hour, and 10.4% (50) stated their child watched more than 4 hours per day. These figures suggest that a significant number of children engage in cartoon viewing regularly, with the majority watching between 1 to 4 hours daily. The high rate of cartoon viewing, particularly the 75.2% of children watching between 1 to 4 hours daily raises important developmental considerations. While moderate cartoon exposure may provide some educational and language benefits, excessive screen time could potentially interfere with social interaction opportunities that are critical for developing communication skills like turn-taking.

Research Question One: What are the effects of frequent cartoon consumption on the development of active listening stills in early childhood?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the effects of frequent cartoon consumption on the development of active listening stills in early childhood

	STATEMENT	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	My child often loses focus during live conversations after watching cartoons.	480	2.24	0.65	D
2.	Frequent cartoon viewing has improved my child's ability to follow conversations.	480	3.70	0.57	A
3.	My child finds it difficult to listen without interrupting.	480	2.13	0.57	D
4.	I have observed a decline in my child's attention span after prolonged cartoon viewing.	480	2.75	0.78	D
	Cluster Mean		**2.70**	**0.32**	**D**

The result of the study as presented in Table 2, used mean and standard deviation to evaluate parents' observations on specific aspects of their children's listening behaviour. The findings indicate that frequent cartoon consumption may have limited or even negative effects on the development of active listening skills in early childhood,

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between frequent cartoon consumption and the development of turn-taking skill in interactive communication?

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between frequent cartoon consumption and the development of turn-taking skill in interactive communication

SN	Variables	Mean	SD	N	r	R^2
1	Frequent cartoon consumption	3.41	0.36	480	-0.43	0.18
2	Development of turn-taking skills in Interactive communication	3.16	0.43			

Research Question Two examined the relationship between frequent cartoon consumption and the development of turn-taking skills in interactive communication. This finding suggests that frequent cartoon viewing may negatively impact the development of turn-taking skills in interactive communication to a moderate and practically meaningful extent.

Research Question Three: To what extent does frequent screen time influence children's adaptability in conversations?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation on the extent frequent screen time influence children's adaptability in conversations

	STATEMENT	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	My child can easily adjust their speech depending on the person they are talking to.	480	3.80	0.76	A
2.	My child struggles to respond appropriately in unfamiliar social settings.	480	3.66	0.90	A
3.	After watching cartoons, my child often mimics characters rather than expressing original thoughts.	480	3.82	0.90	A
4.	My child finds it easy to engage in spontaneous conversations with peers.	480	3.11	0.86	A
	Cluster Mean		**3.59**	**0.34**	**A**

Results in Table 4 present the mean and standard deviations on parents' perspectives on how their children navigate conversational situations after regular exposure to screen content. The result indicates that frequent screen time moderately to strongly influence children's adaptability in conversations.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The study aimed to explore the long-term effects of frequent cartoon consumption on children's interactive communication skills, including active listening, conversational turn-taking, adaptability, and their real-world social interactions. The findings from both the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews provide compelling evidence that while cartoons may offer entertainment and limited cognitive stimulation, frequent exposure is associated with measurable limitation in children's interactive communication competencies. The following discussion delves into each objective:

Research Question 1: What are the effects of frequent cartoon consumption on the development of active listening stills in early childhood?

The quantitative results indicate that frequent cartoon consumption have a negative relationship with active listening behaviours: parents disagreed that their children maintain focus during live conversations after watching cartoons ($\bar{x}$ = 2.24, SD = 0.65), and that their children can listen without interrupting ($\bar{x}$ = 2.13, SD = 0.57). Also, parents disagreed that the prolonged cartoon viewing enhances attention span, ($\bar{x}$ = 2.75, SD = 0.78). However, the only item with a positive remark was the claim that frequent cartoon viewing improved the child's ability to follow conversations, ($\bar{x}$ = 3.70, SD = 0.57). The findings indicate that frequent cartoon consumption may have limited or even negative effects on the development of active listening skills in early childhood, with most parents reporting observable declines in attention and conversational engagement after prolonged cartoon viewing. The study of Christakis, Zimmerman, DiGiuseppe & McCarty (2004) supports this finding when they reported that an increase in the number of hours of television viewing at 1 year of age was associated with a 28% increase in the probability of having inattention problems at age 7 years. From a theoretical standpoint, this supports the proposition of *passive communicative conditioning,* whereby repeated exposure to non-reciprocal communication environments conditions children toward observational rather than participatory engagement. While Social Learning Theory posits that children learn through observation, the present findings highlight a critical limitation: observation without interaction may not translate into communicative competence.

These findings suggest a significant relationship between higher cartoon consumption time and reduced skills in active listening. Specifically, children who spent more hours watching cartoons daily often show shorter attention spans**,** frequent inattentiveness during conversations**,** and difficulty sustaining focus during classroom activities. The responses from the interview data reinforced these quantitative findings. For example some teachers expressed that it is difficult for most of their pupils to sustain attention during learning activities:

"During class activities, several pupils lose focus unless the content is dramatized. Their listening is selective and momentary."

Another teacher shared her experience:

"Several of my pupils find it difficult to stay focused during story time or class discussions. They often lose concentration so I often had to do a lot of demonstration in class to sustain attention —it's as if they need the fast pace of cartoons to pay attention."

Similarly, many others observed that pupils can only recall lesson when teacher repeat themselves multiple times in the classrooms.

One teacher noted:

"During classroom discussions, I often have to repeat myself several times. Some children seem to hear me but aren't processing what I'm saying—they don't respond unless called upon, and even then, their answer is often off-topic."

They stated that the scripted nature of cartoons limit children's exposure to the unscripted interactions necessary for developing communication skills. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the passive nature of screen-based media, such as cartoons, which can suppress active engagement (Anderson & Pempek, 2005).

As children watch cartoons, they are presented with scripted dialogue and outcomes, limiting their opportunities to practice active listening. Linebarger and Piotrowski (2010) found that children exposed to excessive television tend to exhibit poorer communication skills, specifically in areas such as listening. This outcome implies that while cartoons may provide an entertainment or passive learning experience, they might not directly contribute to significant improvements in a child's ability to express themselves verbally. Communication skills are multifaceted, and factors like interactive play, parent-child conversations, and school interactions could be more influential. It suggests that parents and educators should not rely solely on cartoons to enhance communication skills, but instead engage children in more interactive, real-world communication activities. The Uses and Gratifications Theory provides a framework for understanding this behaviour. Children may choose media content that satisfies their need for passive entertainment or comfort, with cartoons meeting this needs.

Objective 2: What is the relationship between frequent cartoon consumption and the development of turn-taking skill in interactive communication?

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (r = -0.43) between frequent cartoon consumption and the development of turn-taking skills in interactive communication. This indicates a moderate negative relationship, meaning that as the frequency of cartoon consumption increases, the development of turn-taking skills in interactive communication tends to decrease. With a mean score of ($\bar{x}$ = 3.41, SD = 0.36) for frequent cartoon consumption and ($\bar{x}$ = 3.16, SD = 0.43) for turn-taking skills, the data suggests that higher engagement with cartoons is moderately associated with poorer development of this important communicative skill. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.18) further shows that approximately 18% of the variance in turn-taking skills can be explained by the frequency of cartoon consumption. The decline in this skill among children suggests that higher exposure to cartoons characterised by uninterrupted, linear dialogue may displace opportunities for practicing conversational reciprocity. This aligns with Media Effects Theory, particularly cultivation perspectives, which posit that repeated exposure to mediated patterns of interaction can shape expectations of communication. In this case, children may internalise communication as a one-directional process, thereby undermining their ability to engage in dynamic exchanges.

There is no statistically significant association between the type of cartoons watched and the development of social interaction. In other words, the type of cartoon—whether educational, action-based, or otherwise—does not appear to influence the likelihood of children developing social interactions from them into their behaviour. This outcome implies that other factors, such as the context of viewing, parental guidance, or individual differences in children's receptivity, may play a more critical role in learning.

The findings also suggests that children with higher cartoon consumption scores tended to struggle in social situations, with many of them exhibiting difficulty in adjusting to new

social environments or engaging effectively with peers. In the qualitative interviews, teachers observed that children who watched a significant amount of cartoons had a harder time adjusting to social situations. They noted that some pupils would often shy away from group activities or would mimic the behaviour of cartoon characters, which led to social missteps with peers. Similarly, many teachers reported that some pupils were hesitant to share or negotiate with other children during playtime, a skill essential for effective social interactions. These findings are supported by studies showing that excessive exposure to screen-based content limits children's ability to develop the social skills required for real-world interactions (Skariah & Dhanya, s2022). Children who spend significant time in front of screens have fewer opportunities to engage in face-to-face interactions, resulting in difficulty adjusting to social environments. Sigman (2012) also reported that prolonged exposure to screen, particularly with cartoons, can reduce opportunities for children to practice unplanned, unscripted interactions

However, other teachers observed that children struggled with interpreting non-verbal cues: "Cartoon characters have exaggerated expressions. Some of my pupils find it hard to understand real-life emotions because they're not as obvious as in cartoons." The findings suggest that while cartoons can introduce social norms and phrases, they may distort children's understanding of non-verbal cues, a critical component of social interactions. Boseley (2021) asserts that the human brain develops during the first 18 to 24 months of life, and toddlers need to interact with their caregivers, eye-to-eye, not eye-to-screen. Eye-to-screen reduces opportunities for live interactions, thereby greatly impacting on children's ability to interpret nonverbal cues.

From the perspective of Agenda Setting Theory, this behaviour can be understood through the way cartoons frame interactions and behaviours. Cartoons often present exaggerated forms of social exchanges that do not translate well into real-world contexts. As children prioritize these mediated interactions, they may not learn the more flexible communication required for social interaction in real-world situations. For example, cartoon characters may display behaviours such as dramatic conflict resolution or extreme emotional responses, which do not mirror the subtlety needed in actual peer interactions.

Objective 3: To what extent does frequent screen time influence children's adaptability in conversations?

Result of the mean and standard deviations on parents' perspectives on how their children navigate conversational situations after regular exposure to screen content. Result shows that a significant number of parents agreed that their children can adjust their speech based on who they are speaking to, ($\bar{x}$ = 3.80, SD = 0.76), they also agreed that children struggle in unfamiliar social settings ($\bar{x}$ = 3.66, SD = 0.90) indicating that while children may adapt in familiar contexts, they may face challenges in new or unpredictable ones. Parents also agreed that their children mimic cartoon characters rather than express original thoughts after watching cartoons ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82, SD = 0.90), which suggests that screen content may influence how children express themselves, possibly limiting authentic or spontaneous expression. It was also found that children can engage in spontaneous conversations with peers ($\bar{x}$ = 3.11, SD = 0.86), indicating moderate adaptability in peer interactions. The results revealed a cluster mean of ($\bar{x}$ = 3.59, SD = 0.34), this suggests that parents generally believe that frequent screen time has a noticeable influence on their children's conversational adaptability. While some adaptability skills, such as adjusting speech to different audiences, are observed, there is also evidence of overreliance on mimicked behaviour from cartoons and some struggle in unfamiliar settings.

Qualitative data reinforced these findings. Teachers who actively discussed cartoon content (educational cartoons) with their pupils reported better social adaptability outcomes.

One teacher shared, “When we watch cartoons together, I ask my pupils questions about what the characters are doing and how they would respond in similar situations. This has helped them in critical thinking.” In contrast, teachers who allowed unrestricted viewing noted difficulties in their pupil's ability to navigate social situations, with one teacher stating, “Some pupils often get frustrated when things don’t go the way they do in cartoons.”

However, the study of Valkenburg & Peter (2013) explain that while media content can influence social behaviors, the nature of these effects is often moderated by other factors such as individual traits, social context, and media type. Therefore, this finding may imply that cartoon watching, as a specific type of media consumption, does not significantly alter social adaptability in a direct way.

Children who were exposed to more than 3 hours of cartoons daily were significantly less able to adapt to varying social scenarios, such as group discussions, cooperative games, or negotiating with peers. The quantitative data also revealed that the younger the child and the longer their exposure to cartoons, the greater the observed impairment in their social adaptability. Teachers indicated that children with higher cartoon exposure were less willing to participate in flexible social activities. More than 50% of teachers shared that their pupils struggle to understand how to cooperate with other children during group activities, often attempting to control the conversation or making comments that were not relevant to the on-going discussion.

These results echo previous studies that have pointed to the negative effects of screen-based learning on children’s social adaptability. Children who frequently watch cartoons may find it difficult to adjust to the complexities of classroom dynamics, where the ability to communicate and adapt is important. Abraham, Basheer., Sudhakaran & Babu (2021) noted that the decrease in opportunities for face-to-face conversation due to increased screen time can affect children's social development. This lack of interaction can lead to difficulties in making friends, solve problems, and adapting to new social situations, which are important components of effective communication in both academic and personal contexts.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, the children’s preference for cartoons suggests that they are fulfilling their need for entertainment or ease through passive media consumption. However, this fulfilment does not support the development of more complex social skills such as empathy, negotiation, and conflict resolution, which are learned through active engagement in social contexts.

V. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the long-term effects of cartoon consumption on children's interactive communication skills, focusing on active listening, conversational turn-taking, and adaptability in social and academic settings. The findings indicate that frequent exposure to cartoons can have a significant negative impact on children's development of these essential communication skills. Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal that children, who watched more cartoons exhibited lower levels of active listening, struggled with conversational turn-taking and faced difficulties in adapting to social situations. By integrating Social Learning Theory and Media Effects Theory, this study explains how repeated exposure to non-interactive media environments may shape children’s communicative development. Hence, while cartoons can serve as valuable sources of entertainment and occasional learning, their overuse may displace critical opportunities for real-time interaction necessary for developing effective communication skills. Hence, while cartoons can serve as valuable educational tools, their overuse may impair the development of skills that children need to interact effectively in dynamic, real-world contexts. Parental

mediation emerges as a critical factor in enhancing the positive outcomes of cartoon exposure.

Recommendations

1. Regulation of Screen Time: Parents and educators should encourage balanced screen time, ensuring children engage in both active media consumption and real-world social interactions to develop well-rounded communication skills.
2. Interactive Media: There is a need for more interactive, educational cartoons that encourage children to respond, ask questions, or engage in discussions, fostering better communication and active listening skills.
3. Parental and Educational Engagement: Parents should actively engage with children during media consumption, encouraging them to talk about what they watch, ask questions, and reflect on the characters' actions, thereby enhancing both listening and conversational skills.
4. Social Interaction Opportunities: Children should be given ample opportunities for face-to-face interactions with peers, caregivers, and family members. Engaging in cooperative games, group activities, and playtime can help children practice conversational skills in real-world contexts, facilitating the development of social adaptability.

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