

Effects of Cartoons on the Behavior of Children

Richmond Acheampong

PhD, Dept. of Languages and Communication Studies

University Of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana

Abstract: The study looked at how cartoons affect children's behaviour. It further determined how frequently the children watch cartoons, whether their parents keep an eye on the types of cartoons they watch, and whether cartoons have both good and bad effects on them. To collect data for the study, 300 children from the Sunyani Municipality in Ghana's Bono Region between the ages of 6 and 11 were chosen by purposive sampling and a questionnaire. It was discovered, among other things, that most respondents (i.e., 88%) reported that viewing cartoons negatively affects their academic performance, while just 12% of them said that it does not. As a result, it was advised against allowing children to watch cartoons at the detriment of their academics. In addition, it was advised that parents make sure their children watch age-appropriate cartoons. Moreover, it was suggested that the National Communications Authority (NCA) should penalize media outlets that air objectionable cartoons for children.

Key Words: Cartoons, Behaviour, Children; Parents, Effects, Television

I Introduction

Children and cartoons always generate fervent discussion. Cartoons, according to some people, have a negative impact on children's behavior, and they lament how frequently kids watch cartoons. Indeed, they contend that cartoons cause strange behaviour in children. Others counter that children do not behave strangely because they watch cartoons. In addition, they contend that watching cartoons helps children become more linguistically fluent, hence children should be encouraged to do so. Even though the reasons for these schools of thought may sound compelling, it would be completely incorrect or unscholarly to accept them wholeheartedly in the absence of strong factual support. But what are cartoons, and who are children? What about behaviour, then? A child is defined as a person who is less than 18 years old in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In addition, a child is defined as a person who is under the age of 18 in the Ghana Children's Act of 1998.

Thompson (2010) stated that since the invention of motion pictures in the late 1800s, cartoons have been a part of cinema history. He described a cartoon as a movie done with animation rather than live performers, especially a child-friendly comedy. Once more, Chiangtong (1975) asserted that the term "cartoon" originates from the Latin word "charta", which refers to paper. At the time, "cartoon" was used to describe painting on large textile curtains, sketching patterns, or images on mirrors, and creating mosaics. In addition, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2022) described behaviour as one's capacity for self-control or action.

The world of animation is vast. Its market size is estimated to be \$372.44 billion globally in 2021 and to reach more than \$587.1 at the beginning of 2030 (precedenceresearch.com). For more than 80 years, youngsters have found the most entertainment in TV cartoons and animated films. While Disney Brothers Cartoon Studios debuted the first cartoon character in the world, Felix, in the 1920s, they debuted Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Pluto ten years later (boxofficemojo.com).

According to twoleftsticks.com, the most well-known cartoon characters in 2022 were still PJ. Masks, Spiderman, Avengers, Harry Potter, Disney Classics, L.O. L Surprise, Frozen, the Mandalorian, Paw Patrol, and Peppa Pig. Hassan and Daniyal (2013) stated that approximately 80 million people in the US and 145 other countries have watched Ben Ten and Doraemon since August 2002, making them the most popular cartoons among schoolchildren.

Children continue to watch cartoons on TV the most (Kosher, 2005). Young people watch 1.5 to 2.5 hours of TV per day on average in the US, Eastern Asia, and Europe (Larson, 2001).

Acheampong (2016) stated that watching cartoons has negative effects on children's behaviour. He claimed that among these detrimental impacts are children imitating cartoon characters, practicing the violence depicted in them, and devoting a lot of time to viewing cartoons at the expense of their academic pursuits.

TV's most popular material is children's cartoons and shows, according to RTUK (2006). Cartoons are said to include a variety of ideas and patterns, according to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2005. They include humour, horror, heroes, violence, friendship, fantasy, the truth, and moral concepts like right and wrong, honesty and dishonesty, and good and evil. They argued that it is improper to include in the definition of entertainment culture things like children's periodicals, comic books, fairy tales, plays, computer games, and TV shows. They noted that among these technologies, the most violent content is found in computer games, comic books and television. Cartoons help young people develop their vocabulary and help them discover the world by teaching them social norms including respect for authority figures, teamwork, and others (enlightngo.org).

However, research has shown that watching cartoons has negative effects on children's behaviour, sexuality and health. 653 children in Japan were hospitalized in 1997 because of epileptic seizures. Further investigation revealed that the incident was caused by the Pokeman cartoon's 38th episode fire. The episode had been seen by every seizure victim. The episode was subsequently banned by the Government of Japan, and it was not reshot (enlightngo.org). Cartoons, according to Yagli (2013), contribute to children's learning as well as their social and emotional growth. According to the study, by helping children pass the time, cartoons improve children's ability to solve problems and appreciate beauty. In addition, they enable young people to learn about emotions and how to express them. Besides, they improve their verbal and cognitive abilities, encourage them to think critically and draw parallels, and as a result, they help children learn to imitate virtues like kindness, honesty, courage and generosity.

Children who watch too many cartoons may become isolated from their friends and lose the ability to think critically (Ningsih and Sari, 2012). Children who watch violent cartoons grow up to be aggressive, unruly, boorish, and furious, according to American Pediatric Academy experts. They claim that cartoons help children to develop their imagination. They countered that this might have the unfavourable effects of allowing children to remain in the realm of fantasy for an extended amount of time (enlightngo.org).

II Problem of the Statement

The Sunday Times (2015) stated that 65.2% of children watch cartoons every day for 1-3 hours during their free time. Wijethilaka (2020) also noted the enormous influence cartoons have on children. Most parents are unaware of the negative impacts of cartoons. The study also claimed that children frequently do not understand that while anything is possible in cartoons, it is not always possible in real life. As a result, they frequently engage in dysfunctional behaviour.

Cartoons facilitate learning new information. Children typically do not enjoy reading books. They do not think books contain anything amusing or fascinating. Cartoons, however, make it simple for children to understand the message. That is the reason modern schools favour using video or animation to teach children. Children learn best when entertainment and education are combined. Moreover, teachers teach

children using a variety of video games and play stations (simavfx.com). Cartoon violence is imitated, children copy cartoon characters, and children spend a lot of time watching cartoons at the expense of their studies, all of which have negative effects on children's behaviour (Acheampong, 2016).

Children are exposed to people and places outside of their daily life through cartoons. Children can travel through time and space with the help of TV, learning about people, places, and things that are otherwise beyond limits to them in their daily lives. For instance, this might help children comprehend the creatures of Brazil's Amazon Forest or how people live in France or China.

Cartoons also encourage children to follow healthy role models. Children who see cartoon characters can relate to dealing with difficulties and problems. They may become more confident as a result. Positive cartoon role models can teach young people virtues like fortitude and generosity (themediaonline.co.za).

Children, however, frequently relate to cartoon characters. Because they are too hostile or possess magical abilities like the capacity to fly or leap off a tall building, these characters are difficult to identify with. Such violent personalities may easily end up serving as role models for kids. Children may substitute cartoons for real life if parents fail to guide them and explain the difference between reality and fiction. Children's psychological growth may be at risk as a result (novakdjokovicfoundation.org).

Children's health is impacted by cartoons. 653 people with epileptic seizures were hospitalized in Japan in 1997. After thorough investigation, it was discovered that the victims' viewing of Pokémon episode 38, which featured flashing red and blue lights, was the cause of their seizures. The episode was prohibited by the Japanese government (5sazvezdicom.medijskestudije.org).

We can better understand the effects of cartoons on the behaviour of children in the Sunyani Municipality in the Bono Region of Ghana by analyzing the effects of cartoons on children's behaviour using a qualitative study design and using children as participants.

III Methodology

The study looked into how cartoons affected children's behaviour. Children from the Sunyani Municipality in Ghana's Bono Region made up the study population. 300 children between the ages of 6 and 11 were chosen by purposive sampling after parents were informed of the study's goals and gave their permission.

Questionnaires were designed for the children. Each of them received a questionnaire with 12 questions and instructions. Excel was used to examine the data. Each child's response was recorded and given a research identity, and the information was shown using tables and graphs. If they watch cartoons, was the first question posed to them. The frequency of their cartoon viewing was also questioned. In addition, questions about the types of cartoons they watch, and their preferred cartoon characters were asked.

Furthermore, they were questioned about whether and how their parents monitor the types of cartoons their children watch. Moreover, they were questioned about if they had ever viewed cartoons that might have negative effects on their behaviour and about some of those effects. They were once more questioned if watching cartoons have negative effects on their academic achievement. Next, they were questioned if they had ever watched cartoons that could have positive effects on their behaviour and on some of those effects.

IV Findings/Results

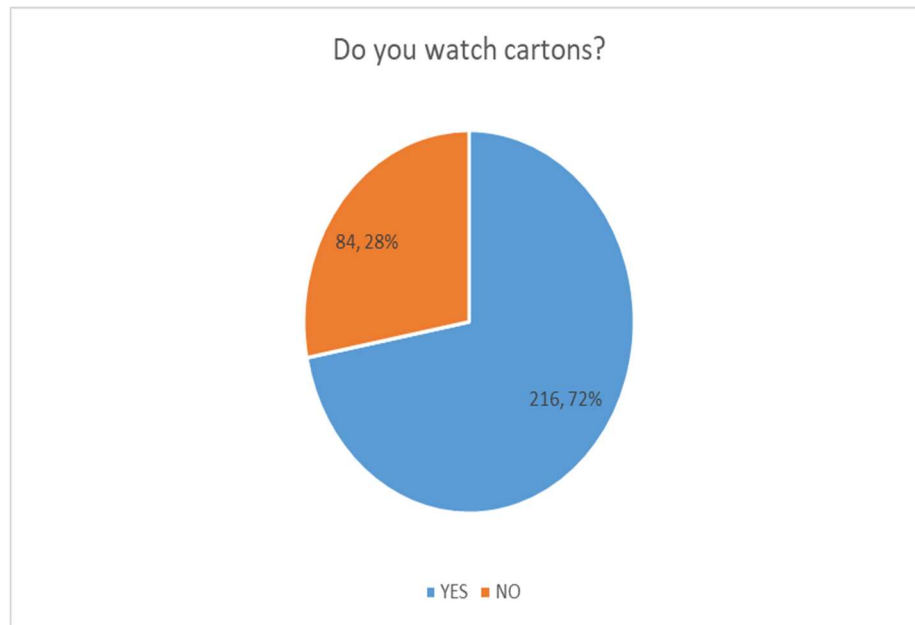


Fig. 1. Children viewing cartoons

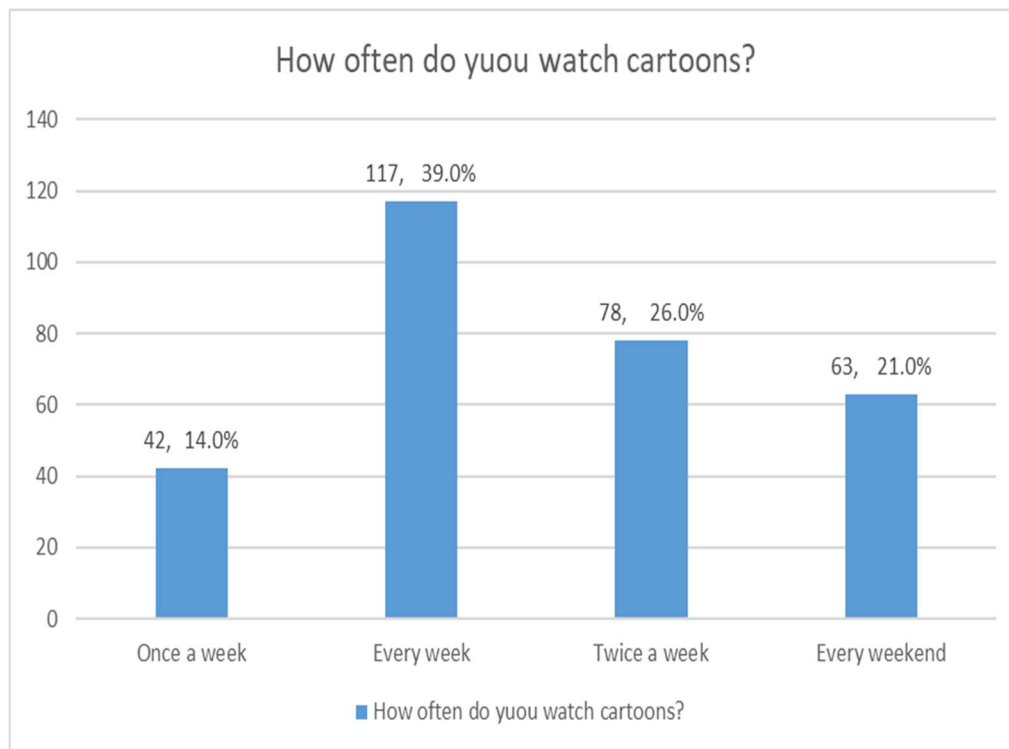


Fig. 2. Frequency of children's viewing cartoons

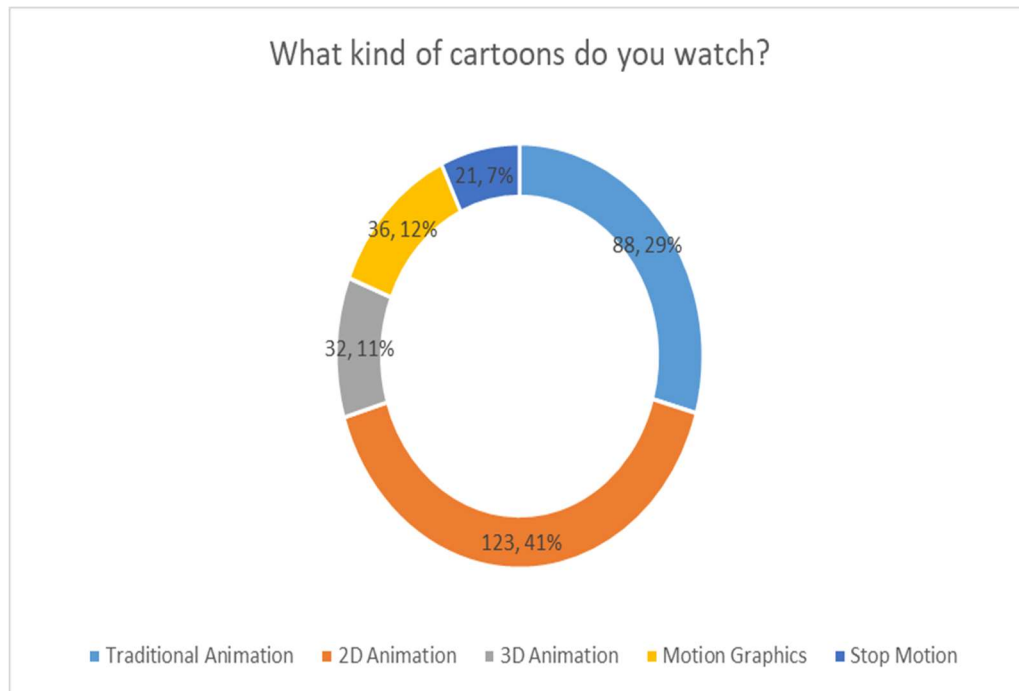


Fig. 3. Kinds of cartoons children watch.

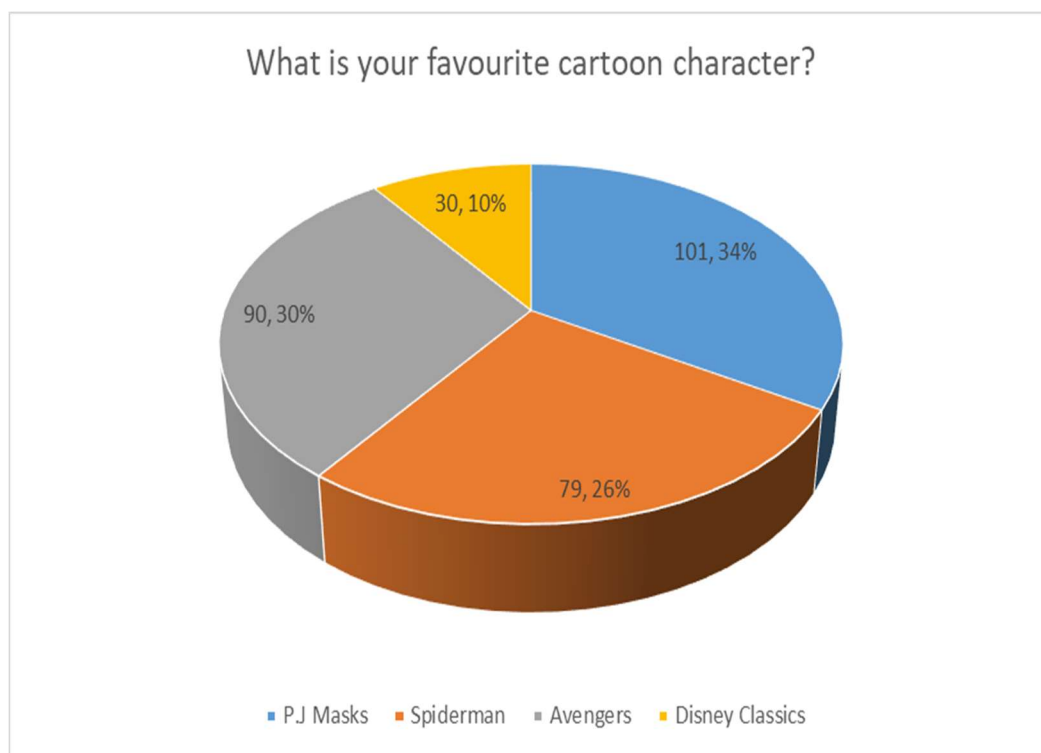


Fig. 4. Favourite cartoons of children

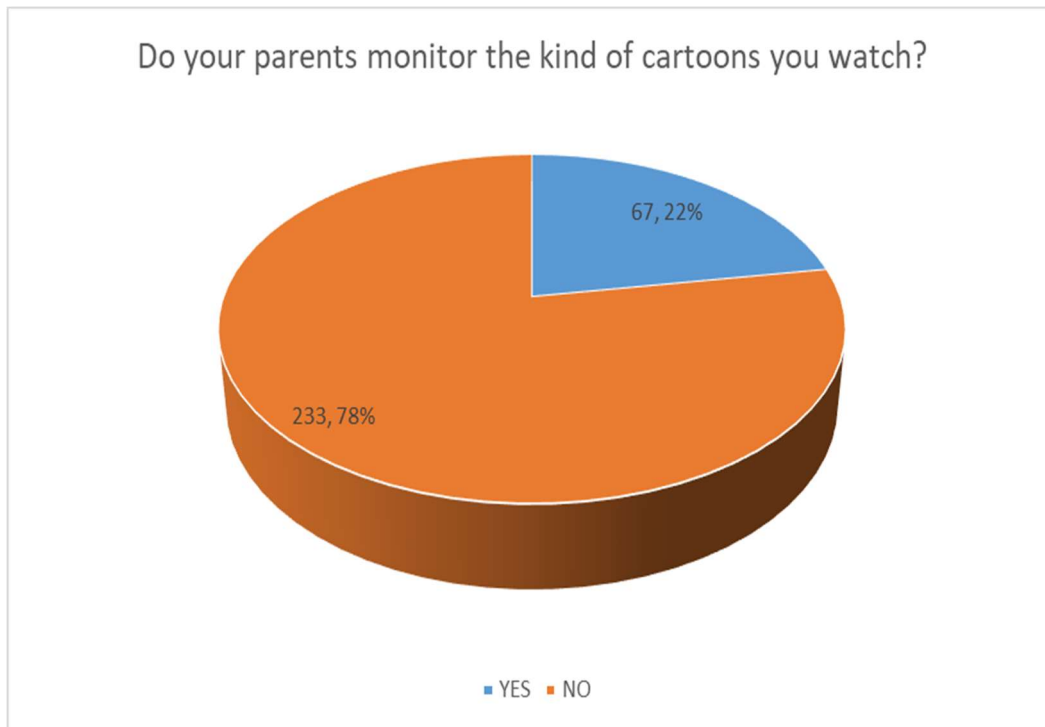


Fig. 5. Parents' monitoring of cartoons children watch.

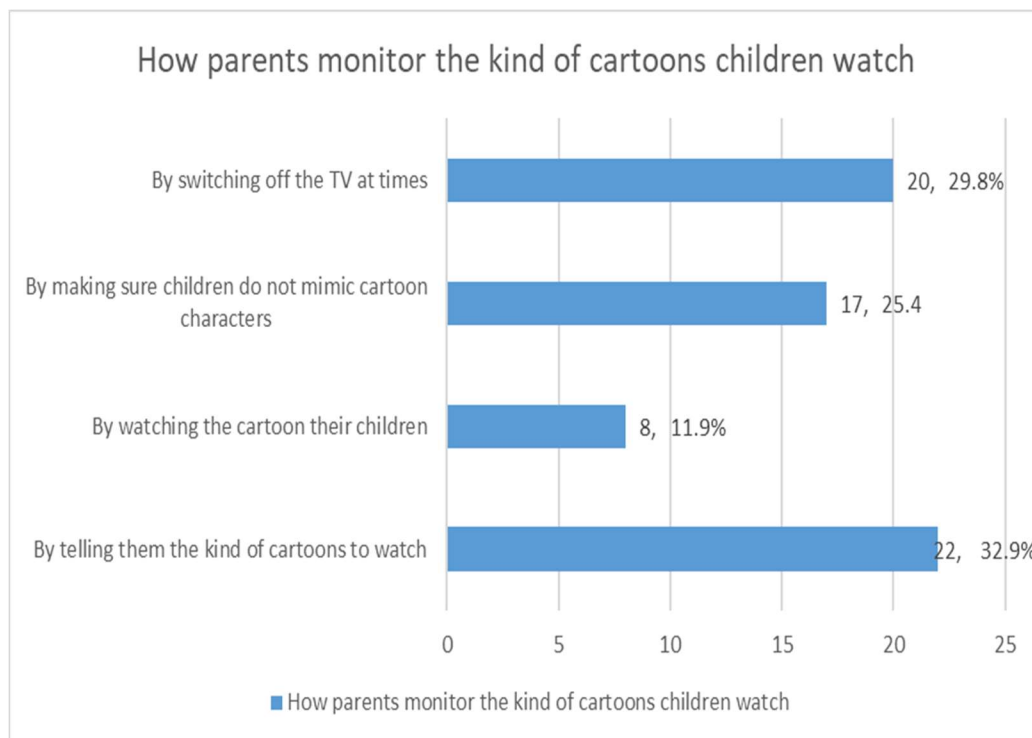
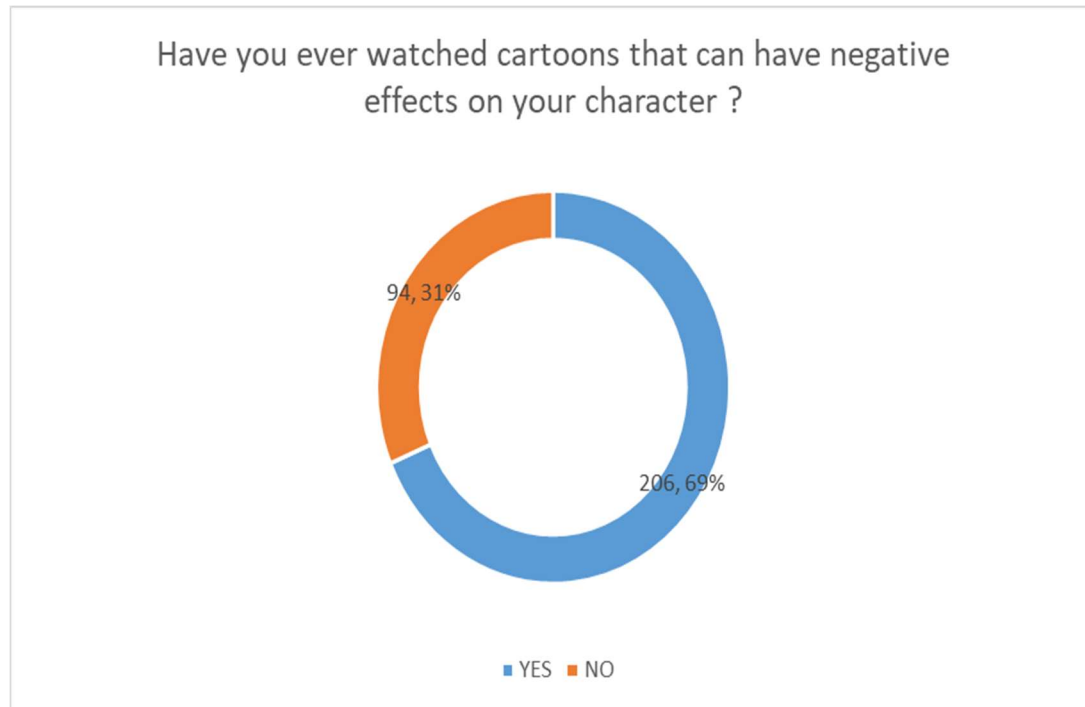
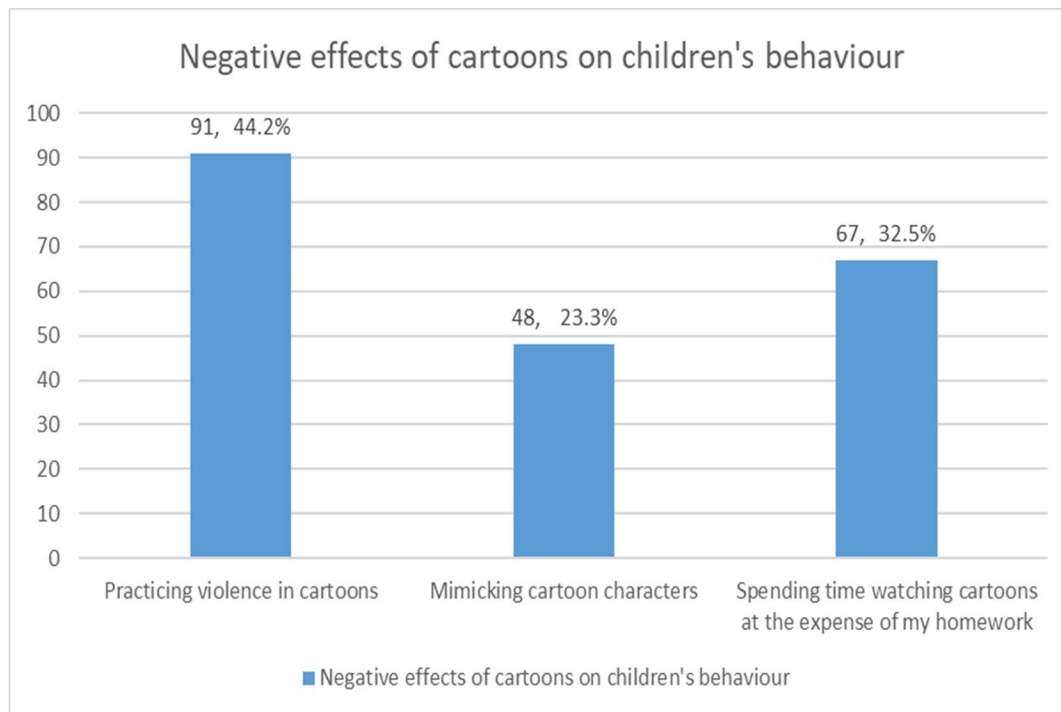


Fig. 6. Mode of parents' monitoring of cartoons children watch.

**Fig. 7. Cartoons with negative effects on children****Fig. 8. Negative effects of cartoons on children's behaviour**

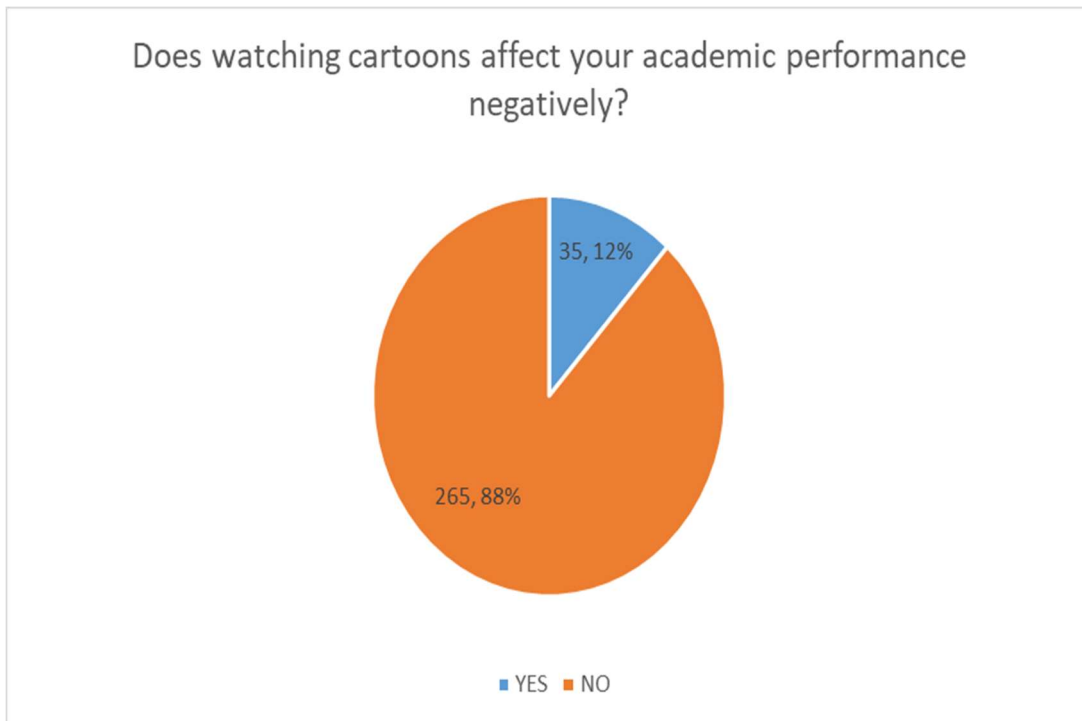


Fig. 9. Effects of cartoon on children's academic performance

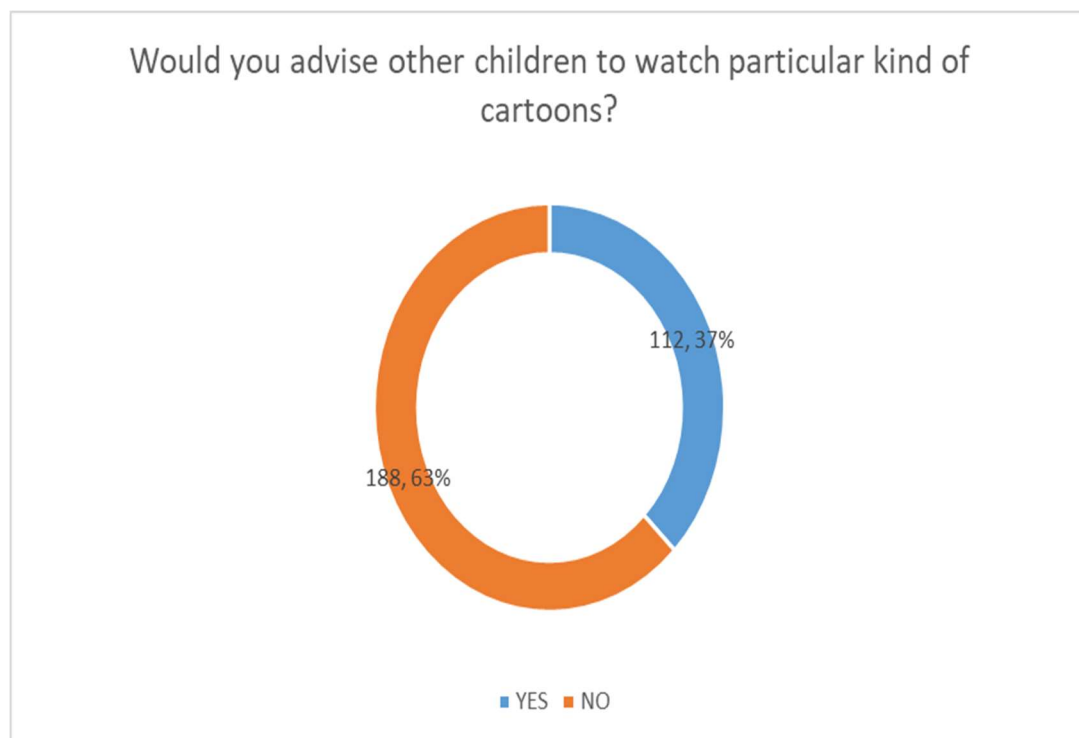


Fig. 10. Children's advice to other children to watch particular cartoons

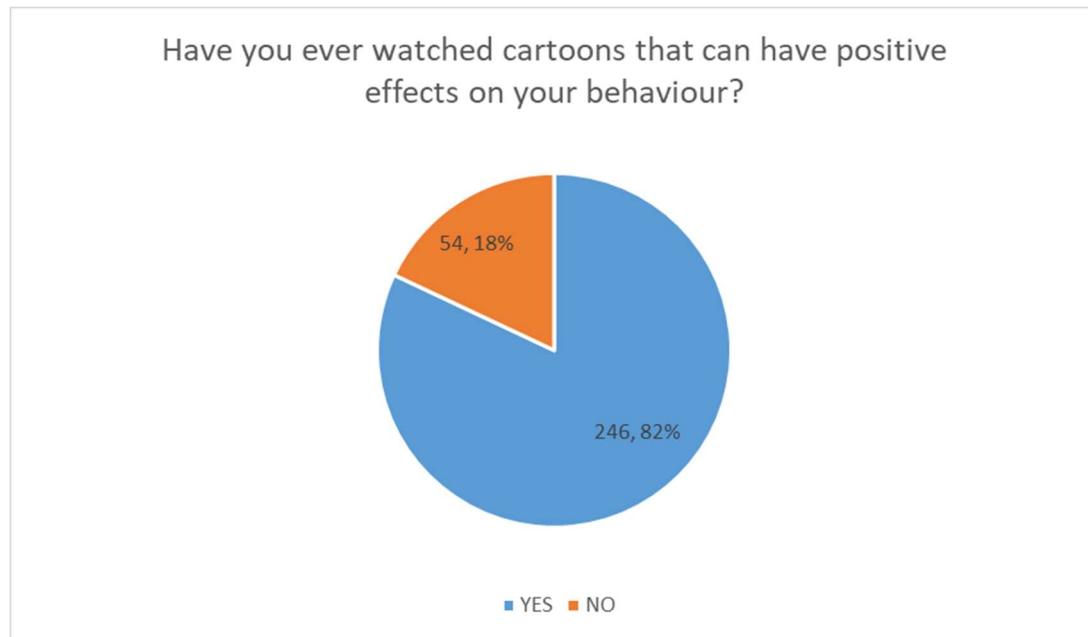


Fig. 11. Cartoons with positive effects on children

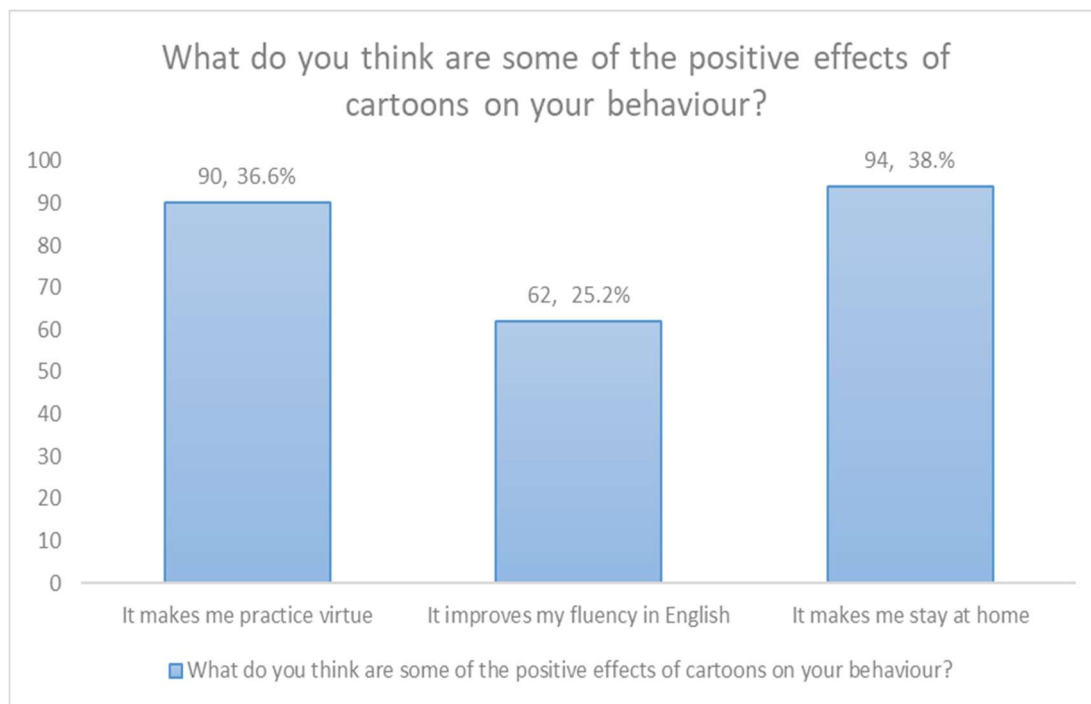


Fig. 12. Some of positive effects on cartoons on children

First, it was revealed that 84 of the children, representing 28% of the respondents, stated they do not watch cartoons, while 216 of them, representing 72% of the respondents, said they do.

Second, it was found that those 117 children, representing 39% of the respondents, said they watch cartoons every week, 78 children, representing 26% of the respondents, said they watch cartoons twice a week, 63 children, representing 21% of the respondents, said they watch cartoons every weekend, and 42 children, representing 14% of the respondents, said they watch cartoons once a week.

Thirdly, it was shown that 123 children, representing 41% of the respondents, claimed to watch 2D animation; 88 children, representing 29% of the respondents, said they watch traditional animation; 32 children, representing 11% of the respondents, admitted to watching 3D animation; 36 children, representing 12% of the respondents, claimed to watch motion graphics; and 21 children, representing 7% of the respondents, hinted at watching stop motion.

It was also discovered that 101 children, representing 34% of the respondents, named PJ Masks as their favourite cartoon; 90 children, representing 30% of the respondents, named Avengers as their favourite cartoon; 79 children, representing 26% of the respondents, named Spiderman as their favourite cartoon; and 30 children, representing 10% of the respondents, named Disney Classics as their favourite cartoon.

In addition, it was found that 78 children, representing 78% of the respondents, revealed that their parents do not oversee the type of cartoons they watch, while 67 of them, representing 22% of the respondents, said that their parents do.

The study also revealed that 22 children, representing 32.9% of the respondents, claimed that their parents control the types of cartoons they watch by advising them on what to watch; 20 of them, representing 29.8% of the respondents, stated that their parents control the types of cartoons they watch by occasionally turning off the TV; 17 of them, representing 25.4% of the respondents, said that their parents control the types of cartoons they watch by ensuring that they do not imitate cartoon characters; and 8 of them, representing 8.5% of the respondents, stated that their parents do not control the types of cartoons they watch.

In addition, it was noted that 94 of the children, who made up 31% of the respondents, claimed they had never watched cartoons that could negatively affect their behaviour, while 206 children, who represented 69% of the respondents, said they had.

Once more, it was discovered that 91 children, representing 44.2% of the respondents, admitted that cartoon violence have negative effects on their behaviour; 67 of them, representing 32.5% of the respondents, confirmed that watching cartoons have negative effects on their behaviour because they neglected their homework in favour of watching cartoons; and 48 of them, representing 23.3% of the respondents, hinted that cartoon violence have negative effects on

Next, the study found that 265 kids, representing 88% of the respondents, admitted that watching cartoons negatively affects their academic performance, while 35 children, representing 12% of the respondents, said that it does not.

It was also noted that 188 of the children, representing 63% of the respondents, stated that they would not suggest to other children to watch a particular kind of cartoons, while 112 of the children, representing 37% of the respondents, stated that they would not do so.

In addition, it was noted that 54 of the children, who made up 18% of the respondents, admitted that they had never watched before cartoons that have negative effects on their behaviour, while 246 of the children, representing 82% of the respondents, said they had previously watched cartoons that could have positive effects on their behaviour.

Finally, it was discovered that 94 children, representing 38% of the respondents, claimed that one benefit of cartoons on children's behaviour is that it encourages them to stay at home; 90 of them, representing 36.6% of the respondents, said that another benefit of cartoons on children's behaviour is that it encourages them to practice virtue; and 62 of them, representing 25.2% of the respondents, hinted that another benefit of cartoons on children's behaviour is that it encourages children to practice virtue.

V Discussion

First and foremost, the finding that 72% of respondents said they watch cartoons confirms Kosher's (2005) assertion that cartoons continue to be the most popular children's TV shows. This should serve as a warning to parents to be cautious about the cartoons their children watch. It is debatable if all cartoons are suitable for children, and since children might not be able to tell excellent cartoons from bad ones, parents can protect their children from the negative effects of cartoons if they keep an eye on the types of cartoons their children watch.

They can also watch cartoons with their children as an alternative. One could counter that not all children are impacted by poor cartoons. Even when their parents are not around to inform them that something is wrong or inappropriate, children's people are intelligent enough to avoid the unacceptable things they observe in these cartoons.

Concern should be expressed about the fact that 39% of respondents claimed they watch cartoons every week. Future leaders will be children. As a result, since such a large percentage of them watch cartoons every week, there should be a call to action for parents, the media, civil society organizations, and other pertinent institutions to educate children about the negative effects of watching more cartoons than they should at the expense of their academics. Without a question, cartoons provide children with fantastic enjoyment. But children should not watch them when they are supposed to be learning.

Furthermore, it may be inferred that this specific cartoon is well-liked among children based on the 41% of respondents who indicated that they watch 2D animation.

Moreover, the assertion that PJ. Masks, Spiderman, Avengers, Harry Potter, Disney Classics, L. O. L Surprise, Frozen, the Mandalorian, Paw Patrol and P.J. Masks are the top cartoon characters and is strongly supported by the responses from 34% of respondents who said that PJ. Masks is their favourite cartoon character, 30% of respondents who said that Avengers is their favourite cartoon character, 26% of respondents who said that Spiderman is their favourite cartoon, and 10% of respondents who said Disney Classics as their favourite cartoon character (twoleftsticks.com).

Furthermore, it is a troubling trend that a whopping 78% of respondents stated that their parents do not control the types of cartoons they watch. This is since if such a sizable proportion of children, who can hardly tell the difference between good and bad cartoons, watch cartoons without their parents' supervision, then it is only reasonable to argue that there is a high likelihood that more children will copy mindlessly the negative things they see in cartoons. If for some reason parents are unable to always be

present to supervise the kind of cartoons their children see, they should always keep them from having access to a TV while they are away.

Again, it should not be taken for granted that 69% of respondents claimed they have previously viewed cartoons that could have detrimental effects on their character. Children copy what they observe without considering the effects of their choices. Therefore, a large portion of the aggressive behaviours that most children display today can be directly attributed to violent cartoons. But not everything is lost. If children are made to understand that certain behaviors are inappropriate or objectionable, they can be persuaded to quit engaging in them. Alternately, if the National Communications Authority (NCA) can persuade the government to adopt rules prohibiting media from airing cartoons that are damaging to children, then children can be spared the negative effects of cartoons.

Mussen et al.'s (1962) claim that children who watch cartoons with high levels of aggression and violence are largely inclined to brutality and violence seems to have some merit, as does the 44.2% of respondents who acknowledged that the negative effects of cartoons on their behaviour is that they practice violence in cartoons as well. Children who watch violent cartoons may show symptoms of aggression earlier than those who do not watch violent cartoons. Besides, it supports the claim made by Zahir et al. (2015) that cartoons have significant effects on children's physical and psychological health.

In addition, the fact that 88% of respondents acknowledged that viewing cartoons negatively affects their academic performance drives home the point that Ghanaian children's future is in danger. Undoubtedly, industrialized countries like the US, Canada and Australia prioritize their children's education. Therefore, to save the future of many Ghanaian youngsters who have been victimized by the danger of cartoons, stakeholders in Ghana's education as well as all Ghanaians as a whole must work together. This is due to the possibility that the goals of the free senior high school policy may not be met if nothing is done to stop the tide.

Next, the 37% of respondents who indicated that they would suggest to other children to watch a specific type of cartoon demonstrates that at least some children are aware that not all cartoons are suitable for children.

A further indication that some cartoons are effective and have favourable effects on children's behaviour is the fact that 82% of respondents claimed they have previously watched cartoons that could have these effects.

Finally, the conclusion of Ningsih and Sari (2012) that excessive cartoon watching by children might stifle their relationship with the social circle and make them lose their critical thinking skills is rendered untenable by the fact that 38% of respondents said that one of the positive effects of cartoons on their behaviour is that it makes them stay at home. It also renders irrational the claim that children's linguistic development may be negatively impacted by the usage of slang and foreign words (Ningsih and Sari, 2012).

VI Conclusion

The study looked at how cartoons affect children's behaviour. 72% of the respondents, who made up the majority, claimed to watch cartoons, whereas 28% of them, who made up the minority, answered the opposite. Second, it was discovered that most respondents (i.e., 39%) claimed to watch cartoons weekly, with 14% of them admitting to doing so once a week.

In addition, it was found that most respondents (i.e., 41%) claimed to watch 2D animation, whereas just 7% of them claimed to watch stop motion. Moreover, it was revealed that Disney Classics was chosen as the preferred cartoon character by 10% of respondents, who made up the minority. The majority of respondents (34%) named PJ Masks as their favourite cartoon character.

Furthermore, it was noted that most respondents (i.e., 78%) indicated their parents do not supervise the type of cartoons they watch, while 22% of them, as the minority, affirmed that their parents do.

It was also discovered that 32.9% of respondents—the majority—said their parents control the type of cartoons they watch by advising them on what to watch, while 11.9% of respondents—the minority—said their parents control the type of cartoons by watching them with them.

Once more, it became clear that most respondents (i.e., 69%) said they had previously watched cartoons that could have negative effects on their character, while only 31% of them claimed they had never watched cartoons that could have negative effects on their behaviour.

According to the study, most respondents—44.2%—said that watching violent cartoons have negative effects on their behaviour, while the minority—23.3%—said that watching cartoons have negative effects on their behaviour because they imitated cartoon characters.

Most respondents (i.e., 88%) confessed that watching cartoons has detrimental effects on their academic performance, whereas 12% of them, who comprised the minority, said that watching cartoons has no negative effects on their academic performance.

Another finding was that 63% of respondents, who made up the majority, stated they would not recommend that other children watch a particular type of animation, while 37% of respondents, who were in the minority, indicated they would.

Next, it was found that most respondents (i.e., 82%) said they had previously watched cartoons that could have positive effects on their behaviour, and 18% of them, who made up the minority, admitted they had never watched cartoons that could have positive effects on their behaviour.

Finally, it was discovered that 25.2% of the respondents, who made up the minority, said that some of the positive effects of cartoons on their behaviour include improving their English fluency, while 38% of the respondents, who made up the majority, said that some of the positive effects of cartoons on their behaviour include making them stay at home.

Recommendations

- i. Children's study time should not be sacrificed so they can watch cartoons.
- ii. It is the duty of parents to make sure that their children watch cartoons that are age appropriate.
- iii. The National Communications Authority (NCA) should penalize media outlets that air objectionable cartoons for young viewers.

References

1. Unicef.org/crc
2. merriam-webster.com
3. precedenceresearch.com

4. boxofficemojo .com
5. twoleftsticks .com
6. simavfx .com
7. themediaonline .co.za
8. novakdjokovicfoundation .org
9. 5sazvezdicom .medijskestudije.org
10. Sundaytimes .com
11. lightngo.org
12. Ghana Children's Act of 1998. Act of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana
13. Kosher, N. Examination of Effects of Cartoons (Animation) on TV for Education of Primary Students. (Unpublished Graduate Thesis). p .42-46 (2005).
14. Larson, R.W. How US Children and Adolescents Spend Time: What it Does (and Doesn't) Tell Us About their Development. *Curr Dir Psychol Sci*: 10 (5), 160-4 (2001).
15. Acheampong, R. Effects of Cartoons on the Behaviour of Children. *Journal of Management and Scientific Research*. 1 (2), 81-85 (2016)
16. RTUK. Televizyon izleme Egilimleri Arastirmasi (Research Report) (2006 a).
17. American Psychiatric Association (APA). *Psychiatric Effects of Media Violence* (2005).
18. Ningsih, Z.W and Sari, M.P. Teaching Writing Paragraph through Strategy at Junior High School. *e-J.Mahasiswa Prodi Pend Bahasa Inggris* 1 (4) (2012).
19. Wijethilaka, R.G.T. S. *Effects of Cartoons on Children*. (2020).
20. Caret, N. Understanding Children's Response to TV. *Young Consumers*. 5 (2) (2004)
21. Mussen, P and Rutherford, E. Effects of Aggressive Cartoons on Children's Aggressive Play. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 62 (2), 461 (1961).
22. Atabey, D. Cartoons: A Profound Outlook within the Scope of Children and Media. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 7(1), 93-111 (2021).
23. Ghilzai, S. A., Alam, R., Ahmad, Z., Shaukat, A and Noor, S. S. Impact of Cartoon Programmes on Children's Language and Behaviour. *Insight in Language Society and Culture*, 2, 104-126 (2017)
24. Christakis, D. A and Zimmerman, F. J. Violent Television Viewing during Preschool is Associated with Antisocial Behaviour during School Age. *Pediatrics*, 120 (5), 993-999 (2007).
25. Robertson, L. A., McAnally, H.M and Hancox, R. J. Childhood and Adolescent Television Viewing and Antisocial Behaviour in Early Adulthood. *Pediatric*, 131 (3), 439-446 (2013).
26. Hossler, S. *Mental and Psychological Effects of Children's Cartoons*. (2004).
27. Aluja-Fabregat, A and Torrubia-Beltri, R. Viewing of Mass Media Violence, Perception of Violence, Personality, and Academic Achievement. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 25, 973-989 (1998).