

**THE EFFECTS OF CARTOONS ON LEBANESE CHILDREN AGED BETWEEN 3
AND 10**

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Media Studies / Advertising

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand how cartoons affect children and to what extent is this effect detectable. The study explored mainly violent and aggressive behavior related to cartoons, the messages transmitted as well as the extent to which children imitate what they see.

The data gathering process was possible through a survey that was filled by 222 mothers from all over Lebanon, having children aged between 3 and 10. Also, three focus groups, each consisting of 8 mothers, were conducted in order to get more accurate data and further insight.

The results validated the hypothesis as they showed a strong connection between aggressive behavior and violence in cartoons. They also revealed the presence of inappropriate messages in these cartoons. The data also showed that children like to imitate what they see and this is greatly a negative effect due to all the violence and inappropriate scenes they might come across.

Keywords: Aggressive behavior, cognitive abilities, irrational fears, cartoons, inappropriate content

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents and family and sincerely thank them for their patience and understanding even at the most stressful moments.

I dedicate this thesis to my younger self. The ambitions embedded in the younger version of me were the biggest motivator to move forward and accomplish more. This thesis is an affirmation that I am able to achieve anything I set my mind to.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends for their constant support.

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THE EFFECTS OF CARTOONS ON LEBANESE CHILDREN AGED BETWEEN 3
AND 10

The Effects of Cartoons on
Lebanese Children Aged between 3 and 10

I. Introduction

After the creation of motion pictures and animations, many big industries started to rise and control the film market. Cartoons such as Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Snow White and Tom and Jerry, were a big hit back then in the 1980s all the way to the beginning of the twenty first century, and some of them are still watched till now. The main characters featured in these movies were idolized by a large number of audiences around the world. Many psychologists and experts were interested in studying how the child's brain works, and how the excessive exposure to animation movies stimulates and shapes its development. This topic holds a huge significance. Neurologists and psychologists have always been interested in learning more about the outside influences that shape the child's development, behavioral and responses. Cartoons are important and popular external factors that affect greatly the child's development. Many argue that cartoons have a negative effect especially due to the ideologies and messages embedded in them and the effect they have on the viewer's perception of the world. Violence, aggressive behavior, inappropriate content and non-heroic heroes that are idolized by children are commonly present and undeniably affect the child's behavior. Lebanese children, similarly to all kids, have a great interest in cartoons and spend their leisure time in front of screens for hours of non-stop animation. This research was conducted to know to what extent the Lebanese children are being exposed to animation and how the messages that they get change their behaviors and attitudes. Using the cultivation and imitation theories, this paper targets the behavioral changes in

Lebanese children aged between 3 and 10 due to watching of cartoons and looks to validate three main hypotheses related to these theories. This research will explore the messages portrayed in cartoons, the relationship between cartoons and children's aggressive behavior as well as the extent to which children imitate cartoons and feel disconnected from the real world. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were adopted in order to target the research questions and gather the needed data to validate the hypotheses.

II. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Child Psychology

Childhood is a continuous and unstable phase whereby children start to cultivate their cognitive and emotional developments (National Academies Press (US),2015). In other words, children start to learn and interact with individuals to create and develop behaviors, characters and personalities. According to Dr Deep Shikha Pandey Assistant Professor Department Of Home Science, child psychology is a wide realm dealing with how children change from their birth to their adolescence by studying and interpreting the major factors that affect the development of kids (Pandey, 2018). Child psychology was the area of interest of many psychologists. That's why it is built on many different perspectives and theories that have a prominent role in shaping our understanding of child development over time. Some psychologists believe that the development of children is biological, while others believe that external factors (like environmental factors) play a major role in enhancing and supporting child's development (McLeod, 2009).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2007), "a child is a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". Biologically, a child is a human between birth and puberty. Attitude is defined as a way of thinking and a feeling toward a particular situation; however, behavior is defined as the way individuals act.

2.2. Different Points of View Regarding Child Psychology

Jean Piaget's

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is a Swiss Biologist and researcher known as one of the most influential child psychologists in the world. He was the first scientist to make a systematic study on cognitive development. His main purpose was to study the genetic epistemology, in other words, the origins of thinking. Piaget was interested in testing the intelligence of kids. His research results showed that kids of the same age do the same errors, which made him realize that children see the world differently than mature people do. According to Piaget, "children are born with a very basic mental structure (genetically inherited and evolved) on which all subsequent learning and knowledge is based" (McLeod, 2009). He believed that the development of children is biological, primarily internal, while ignoring the influence of the external factors in shaping the development of children (McLeod, 2009).

The point of view of Piaget was heavily criticized and many researchers described his findings extremist and unpractical.

Leg Vygotsky's

Leg Vygotsky (1896-1934) is a researcher who was also interested in studying child psychology. His theory was completely different than that of Piaget. He affirmed that the development of children is determined by environmental factors, unlike Piaget who believed that the development of children is based on biological factors. Vygotsky gave an importance to the interaction between children and humans in shaping child's development. He focused on how social and cultural environments stimulate the growth of a child. He noted that the development

starts first when children interact with people, and it continues when children start to develop their own learning (McLeod, 2009).

2.3. How Do Children's Brains Work and Develop?

A recent research study released by UNICEF (2015) shows that there are three prominent elements in child's brain improvement. The first element is that there are solid relations among the genes and the brain progress; but the nearby experiences play a crucial role in shaping the brain's development. The second factor is that "imagination" has a big effect on the brain's functions. The third result shows that early brain situation is the secret because the actions of children have become predictable. Researchers give an importance to early experiences because they have a big impact on child's brain circuits; the circuits become associated to one another, which indicates that a child's brain is still progressing (Soliman & Al-Madani, 2017).

The recent study released by UNICEF shows the myths versus the realities concerning the development of the child's brain:

Table 1 : The following table shows the Myths VS the truth concerning child's brain development

Myths	Truth
The brain is fully evolved at birth.	Numerous cells are made before birth, but the connections formed between cells are done in early stages.
The brain's improvement depends on the genes that children have inherited.	Early environmental communications and connections stimulate the brain's development.
The brain of an adult is more active than the brain of a child.	The brain of a child aged 3 years old is more powerful than an adult's brain.

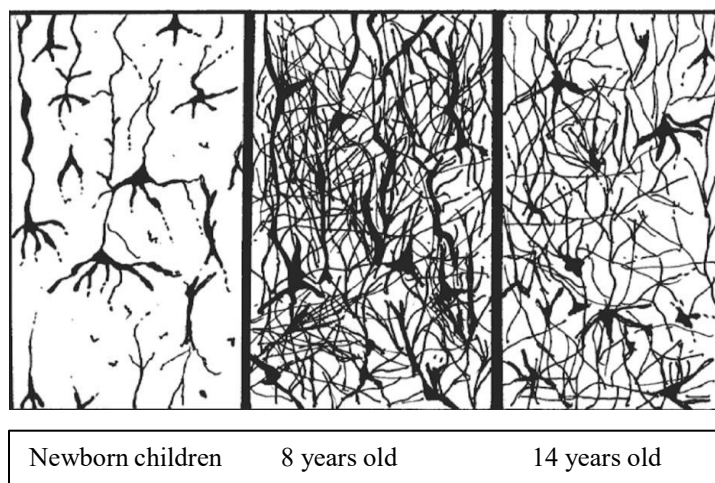


Figure 1 Concentration of neurons in the brain at dissimilar ages.

Figure 1 shows how much children's brain has the capacity of absorbing data especially during childhood.

2.4. The Importance of the External Factors in Shaping the Child's Development

In line with Vygotsky's environmental theory, many researchers and psychologists shed light on the importance of external factors in developing the child's brain. Kids grow in geographical, physical, economic, cultural, and political situations that affect their childhood in a way or another. According to the World Health Organization (2010), the mind of kids is oversensitive to external factors and especially the presence of the family. Family plays a crucial role in maintaining a healthy mind and in stimulating the development of children. It helps children to talk, walk, think and eat. If the family doesn't provide children with a nurturing, healthy environment, they can become mentally deficient. Moreover, when children reach 3 years old they start to interact with friends. Friendship has a huge role in developing child's behaviors and character. It affects child's choices, judgments, morals and values (Montgomery, 2008).

Not only do family and friends influence children's development, but so does nutrition. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, nutrition plays an essential role in influencing child's development. Kids should be exposed to healthy food rich in fruits, vegetables, proteins, glucoses, lipids and minerals. Parents should encourage eating these nutrients in a balanced way, and of course family should limit the amount of consumption of sugars and fast food. Eating healthy affects the mind positively and enhances the development of children on the mental and physical level (Montgomery, 2008).

2.5. Studies

International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health

A recent study was conducted by the *International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health* in India in 2016, to find if there is a relation between watching cartoons programs and

behavioral change in children (Rai, 2016). Using simple random sampling, an observational cross-sectional study was done on 200 children of 5 to 15 years of age that watch animated movies. Pre-designed, pre tested, semi structured questionnaire was used for data collection over a 4 months period. Data was analyzed using MS excel & SPSS version 20.

The results indicated that 33% of children showed a prominent increase in violent behavior. 39% of children like to be watching violent and nonviolent types of animations. 64% of children ignore what the parents tell them while they are watching animated cartoons, 45% of children start to throw items and start to act in a violent way when their parents either turn off the television or request the child to do other things and 61% of children try to imitate aerobatics after watching animations. 81% of children have shown a prominent interest to creative subjects and 73% of children became emotional and sensitive towards other people. The behavioral changes that were discovered were considered as negative and positive and the majority had behaved and imitated the people performing activities in animated cartoons. (Rai, 2016)

Another study was conducted by *the ISC department in Paris (2017)*, in order to establish the impact of cartoons on children's language and behavior. The non-qualitative method was adapted. Interviews with open ended questions related to the behavioral aspect and the attitudes of children were distributed to the parents and siblings of school-going children of the age group of 5-12 in the city of Islamabad.

The results indicated that children love to watch cartoons in their free time instead of practicing any other activity. The excessive watching of cartoons affects the cognitive development and the behavior of children. Furthermore, cartoons contain violence and fantasy that affect negatively young minds, especially heavy viewers. It has also been found that some animations have a bad

impact on children's language acquisition. Children imitate the same sentences mentioned in the animated cartoon and imitate their idols. The results showed that children love to imitate the fights of "Tom and Jerry" and they sometimes act violently with their siblings. Additionally, the results showed that the most watched cartoons are the following cartoons: Tom and Jerry, Doraemon, Oggy & Cockroaches and Ben Ten. Children love to spend their time watching these animations because they offer entertainment (41%), action (23.5%), learning (17.6 %) and other fields of entertainment (17.6%).

2.6. Animated Movies and Child's Development

Cartoon movies play a significant role in affecting the mental development of kids in early childhood. According to renowned child psychologist Bertney, early child brain is sensitive to animated movies because children start to develop their behaviors, characters and fantasies based on the heroes and princesses they watch. A study conducted by Kaiser Family Foundation (2003), showed that kids who are less than 4 years old watch cartoon movies for 2 hours per day. Another study conducted by the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine in 2015 declared that children who are aged between 4 and 8 watch animated cartoons every day for 4 hours per day even when 35 minutes of exposure to animations is usually recommended (Woolley & Van Reet, 2006).

Research conducted in Michigan University in 2008 showed that children are interested more in cartoons than in any academic material because animated movies provide fascinating colored pictures, special effects, beautiful stories and technological advances that grab the attention of children (Montgomery 2008). These elements do not exist in the process of educating and delivering materials to children in schools. That's when some educators rely on body language, acting and voice altering when a child doesn't comprehend the lesson. Children love to watch

cartoons because the information is captivating. Cartoons deliver beautiful scenes but most of all, animated movies transfer messages. What are these messages that are being transferred to children? Cartoons satisfy children in a number of ways in being sources of entertainment, information, fantasy among others.

2.6.1. Source of Entertainment

According to the child psychologist Hannuch (2016), animated films have many positive effects on children. Children love to watch animated movies because, at a young age, their mind is full of curiosity. Appropriate cartoons include unusual and funny scenes that grab the attention of children and entertain them. They feature marvelous colors, joyful songs, fascinating stories, continuous movements and enchanting characters that have been idolized by children throughout the history, such as Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty to name a few. (Williams, 2009)

2.6.2. Source of Education

Animations do not only provide entertainment, but they are a source of education as well. Child literacy is known to be a prominent factor in humans' lives. Languages are known to be a significant tool to communicate. According to the child psychologist Hannuch (2016), the appropriate animated movies help kids memorize different objects, absorb a rich vocabulary by learning new terms and acquire a new language especially if they are exposed to foreign channels. Moreover, a study conducted by Michael and Wyk in 2011 cartoons are methods that can be used to support teaching in class or outside of class. They stated that cartoons might support teaching in constructive learning, contextual learning, social skills, collaborative learning, critical thinking and small-group learning (Michael & Wyk, 2011). The research shows that cartoons facilitate the learning of music and gymnastic moves and contribute to teaching of concept and the development of other cognitive skills.

2.7. Cartoons and Morals

According to Hannuch (2016), cartoons are a source of fun and laughter, but appropriate cartoons also teach good morals and promote various values. They deliver messages about life itself. Some of them express the importance of friendship and loyalty. These types of animated movies let a child build a world of friendship in his mind. Children can grow with a self-understanding that having a friend in their lives is something crucial and mandatory. They grow with a spirit of a loyal team worker.

For example, *Winnie the Pooh*, an animated cartoon movie produced by Walt Disney Channel promotes good morals such as the importance of friendship: “*A day without a friend is like a pot without a single drop or honey left inside*” (Williams, 2009).

Appropriate cartoons also transfer virtuous morals related to the importance of family. For example, the saying is also taken from the animated movie *Winnie the Pooh*. It shows that the character worships the family: “Family is not an important thing, it is everything”. Such values, shape and stimulate the child’s brain in a way whereby children can see the world as a beautiful place with beautiful values, and most of all, they motivate them to be good and to do good to others (Williams, 2009).

So, according to the recent research studies, cartoons have a positive impact on children’s lives. Animations play an important part in the child’s life as they are watched for long durations and have many effects. We have discussed some of the advantages of cartoons on children aged between 3 and 10. In the following section, some disadvantages will be highlighted.

2.8. Cartoons and Sexual Content

According to psychologist Claire Woolley, the human brain is divided into two sections: The first one is named “Human brain”; responsible for everything that is related to logic, analysis and calculation. This part of the brain only exists in humans. The other part is named “Animal Brain”, which is not conscious and exists in animals as well. The “Animal Brain” is in charge of different functions including the memory and the habits that ensure the permanence of species, known as “Sex and Food”. “Sex and Food” create chemicals in human brains that are responsible for the sense of pleasure. One of these reactions is the release of the “Dopamine”, the hormone that is also named “The Molecule of Addiction”. That is when the brain analyzes the received information from the different senses including everything that can be seen and heard. This information is transported through electric pulses from the eyes and ears between multiple neurons, and when the information that is transported contains sexuality, the animal brain would be stimulated and ends up producing these hormones that lead to ecstasy and pleasure in the human body. (Woolley, 2006)

How does is this explanation reflected in the topic of animated movies and their effects on children?

According to Hannuch, some American cartoon channels contain a lot of sexual content such as Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon; and promote sexual content under the line of comedy and action. These types of cartoons provoke the psychological process known as “Novelty”: The release of the dopamine provokes a brain dysfunction and increases the need to watch sexual content.

2.9. Cartoons and Fantasy

Children need to run into the imaginary in order to feed their inner selves. Ways that lead to growing and maturing include gathering information from the outside world. When a child is,

originally, having trouble connecting to the real world (we can spot this in the early years – up to the 2nd year of life) a lot of television and cartoon movie watching could lead to diving out of reality and into the imaginary world. In this case, watching television especially cartoons is going to worsen the case and can lead to the” *Fantasy prone personality*”. It is a personality in which a child or an adult becomes unable to differentiate between reality and fantasy to a point that she/he might pass time hallucinating and daydreaming. In other words, it is an advanced disposition and a personality where children build their own world. (Thomas, 2002)

2.10. Cartoon movies include violent content:

Violence has been known as the act of harming someone physically or verbally to cause physical or psychological damage. Animated movies do promote violence under the title of comedy and action. American cartoon channels deliver violent messages and the mind of the children absorbs everything they are exposed to (Moqadam, 1997). Moqadem (1997) discussed that violence has many effects on children. Violence provokes a case known as desensitization. Cartoons that promote violent scenes make children become less sensitive and make them lose the logical thinking that predicts the outcome and repercussions of their actions. Kids start to imitate characters and scenes that contain violence, by imitating the movie character and harming others, because the brain incorrectly starts to convince the child that this is fun and right. Progressively and with extreme violent animations, the children’s behavior becomes planned to react nervously and aggressively to their environment, and their minds become unstable. Violent scenes don’t only provoke desensitization, but they create “Fear and Wavering”. This makes the child hesitate before taking any specific action in life or taking initiatives. His brain starts to lack the ability to know the right outcome of a specific act. Studies have reported children who watch violent cartoons have fears and trust issues. (Moqadem, 1997)

In this chapter, the reader should have acquired a detailed knowledge from the studies that were conducted, mentioned and explained above, concerning the importance of external and factors in shaping children's behaviors and attitudes, in addition to the fact that animated cartoons can affect the children positively and negatively.

III. Theoretical Framework

3.1. The Cultivation Theory

The cultivation theory was developed by Georges Gerbner, a Hungarian Dean and professor at the Annenberg School of communication. “Gerbner saw the television as the dominant in shaping modern society” (Matheson, 2002). According to him, the audience of the television is being exposed to violent scenes. People who complain about the use of violence in TV programs and cartoons are very concerned that the young generation will be affected by it and imitate it. Based on this, Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura’s research proposes that this concern is true to a certain extent, at least for a minor group of audience. However, he insisted that the violent scenes portrayed on television persuade viewers that there is a “Jungle out there”. Georges Gerbner’s point of view is that there is a huge relation between television and violence, and that the television is responsible for our perception.

Gerbner set out to study television content and the incidence of violence. He gave a clear definition of dramatic violence: it was “the overt expression or threat of physical force as part of the plot” (Matheson, 2002). According to Gerbner, acts of violence are not made by mistake; the scriptwriter included such scenes for specific violent effects. According to him TV dramas insert aggressive scenes strategically, an average of five traumatic occurrences per viewing hour. Georges Gerbner affirmed that when children who watch television become 18 years old, they have been exposed to 13000 violent acts. He insisted that old people and kids are affected more than young and middle- aged grown-ups. (Mathenson, 2002).

3.2. Creating the Profile of a TV Watcher

Georges Gerbner divided the audience into two categories: heavy viewers and light viewers. According to him, people who watch television up to 2 hours per day are light viewers, on the contrary, heavy users that are those who watch at least four hours per day. His main cause for dividing the audiences into two categories is to test if the heavy users perceive the world threatening more than light viewers do. Cultivation theory expects that heavy users see the outside world as dangerous (Mathenson, 2002).

3.3. Television and Fearful Thoughts

After being sure that violence is a major part of the content of TV and specifically cartoons, Gerbner's survey looked into four attitudes:

- **Chances of involvement with violence:** The results of the survey indicated that heavy viewers are highly engaged in violence and justify any harmful act. People, who watch television more than 4 hours, have agreed that there is no problem to hit people if you have a certain misunderstanding with them (Mathenson, 2002).
- **Fear of walking alone at night:** The findings of the survey have shown that heavy viewers are afraid to walk alone at night because they are convinced that the criminal activity is high (Mathenson, 2002).
- **Perceived activity of police:** People who spend a lot of time watching television believe that 5% of the civilization is associated to law enforcement and that people cannot be trusted. However, those who spend a fewer time watching television form a more realistic approach (Mathenson, 2002).

- **General mistrust of people:** Heavy viewers are always suspicious of other individuals' intentions. Gerbner named this attitude "the mean world syndrome". Gerbner found two different mechanisms that are related to heavy users: The first one is mainstreaming and the other one is resonance. Mainstreaming is the process that forms people who are educated, and resonance is the mechanism that has an impact on the people who spend a lot of time on television and who are from the start victims of violent acts. Such viewers have surely been exposed to violent acts such as robbery. Georges Gerbner assumed that violent acts that are portrayed on television drive the viewers to rethink of the bad things that happened to them in life. According to Gerbner, the resonance hypothesis has shown why a huge number of people who are heavy viewers are becoming insecure and fearful because they see the world as a threatening place. (Mathenson, 2002)

This theory is related to my research topic since it investigates the effects one person can get from being exposed to violent scenes. It also showed that there is violence in TV drama and discussed how the mind of heavy users that went through the process of resonance, replays their bad experiences unintentionally. This theory will help me build my hypothesis and my research questions, and most of all it will be the backbone of my research.

3.4. Social Learning Theory

The Social learning theory was developed by Albert Bandura, a Canadian- American social cognitive psychologist and a Professor at Stanford University. Bandura's theory suggests that individuals learn from one another through observation, imitation and modeling. This theory has often been a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theorists, since it covers attention, memory and retention. According to Bandura, "Most human behavior is learned

observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action” (Bandura, 1971). Bandura’s theory examines human behavior based on the continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental influences.

3.5. Prominent Conditions for Effective Modeling

Attention: Several factors affect the amount of attention paid. It embraces distinctiveness, affective valence, prevalence, complexity and functional value. Individual characteristics play a major role in affecting “Attention”.

Retention: This condition consists of remembering what the individual gave attention to. It comprises symbolic coding, mental images, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal and motor rehearsal.

Reproduction: It is the reproduction of images. It includes physical capabilities and self-observation of reproduction.

Motivation: This condition consists of developing a valid reason to imitate. The process embraces motives such as past “traditional behaviorism, promised (imagined incentives) and vicarious (seeing and recalling the reinforced model) (Bandura, 1971).

3.6. Reciprocal Determinism

According to the psychologist, reciprocal determinism is a model constituted of three factors that affect behavior: the environment, the individual and the behavior itself. He declared that a person’s behavior influences and is influenced by both the social world and personal characteristics.

Behavior Component

Reciprocal determinism posits that an individual's behavior is manipulated or determined by the individual himself by cognitive processes from one hand, and by the environment and external social stimuli events on the other hand.

For example, a kid who hates school may act out in class. This will provoke a negative attention from the other students and instructors. The instructors are then obliged to modify the school environment for this child (and theoretically others like him).

Environmental Component

According to Bandura, the environmental component is constituted of the physical surroundings around the person that holds potentially reinforcing stimuli, including individuals who are present or not. The environment affects the intensity and frequency of the behavior and the behavior may affect the environment.

For instance, if the instructor yells at a student during the classroom for random purposes, the student and the classroom ambience will be affected at the same time.

Individual Component

The individual component covers all the features that were rewarded once in the past. Personality and cognitive factors have a prominent role in reflecting how an individual acts and what he does. This includes the one's expectations; beliefs and unique personality characteristics.

If the student is aware of the idea that the instructor will give him what he really wants in case he waited till the last day of school to act out, obviously he will alter his behavior.

The various factors that exist in the “troubled student example” explained above, impact one another: The kid hates school, he acts out. His instructors and classmates make a reaction to his behavior strengthening this way his hate of school and producing a hostile environment. The behavior itself may not be supported sometimes.

Albert Bandura studied adolescent aggression, and declared behavior causes environment after he then considered the personality as an interaction between the three components: The environment, the behavior and the individual’s psychological processes (The individual’s capacity to entertain images in minds and language).

IV. Practical Framework

4.1. Hypotheses and Research Questions

Studies have shown that there are many effects of cartoons on children. The theory that was discussed by Georges Gerbner has indicated that there is a relationship between violence and TV, and that many negative effects are discovered from spending a lot of time watching television. This is why, this study will be trying to discover and test the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: Do children generally feel safe?

H1: Violence in cartoons is highly related to aggressiveness in children

RQ2: Are messages in cartoons always appropriate?

H2: Sexual and violent content are transmitted through cartoons

RQ3: To what extent do Lebanese children imitate their cartoons idols?

H3: Children mimic what they perceive on TV

4.2. Methodology

The sample consists of Lebanese parents having children aged between 3 and 10. For testing H1, H2 and H3, the voluntary and purposive sampling (non-probability sampling technique) have been chosen. Furthermore, in order to get more detailed understanding, observation and qualitative methods have been used for testing H1, H2 and H3. Purposive and snowball sampling are used in order to make sure that the sample can offer credible insight through several focus groups.

Demographics of the used sample:

- 100% of the participants in the survey are women(222 mothers)
- 100% of the participants in the focus groups are women (24 mothers)
- Nationality: Lebanese
- Educational background of parents: University, secondary and primary education
- Educational background of kids: school students
- Social class: A, B, C

The sample has been chosen through social media and varied acquaintances. The researcher administered a designed survey that tackled the three hypotheses previously mentioned (Appendix 1). The survey has been sent through social media and with the help of several mom-influencers that have helped in gathering the participants. Also, mothers who have not taken part in the survey and that have been gathered through acquaintances being friends, family or school teachers, assisted and took part of virtual focus groups in which multiple questions have been discussed (Appendix 2). All kids whose parents have participated, attend schools, therefore it is possible to ask about the school's and tutors' feedback when it comes to the child's behavior.

All the data gathered to explore the three hypotheses were provided through first hand observation given by the parents. More detailed understanding and critical examination was possible through the focus groups. Even though the parents are still the primary source of information, the discussions and debates between mothers as well as the explanation of different behaviors in different situations helped examine closely the three hypotheses.

4.3. Data Analysis

The obtained data from the surveys was examined through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was screened for outliers, all cases were kept. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe the participants responses in percentages on each question asked. To answer hypotheses one through three, Pearson's correlation test was conducted to identify whether a correlation exists between the study variables.

According to the literature review, the expected results state that children who are heavy watchers are expected to show signs of violence, unrealistic fears, loneliness and lack of attention or memory deficit. This chapter details and reports the research based on the approach mentioned above and answers the three hypotheses of the study.

V. Results and Discussions

5.1. Results of the Survey

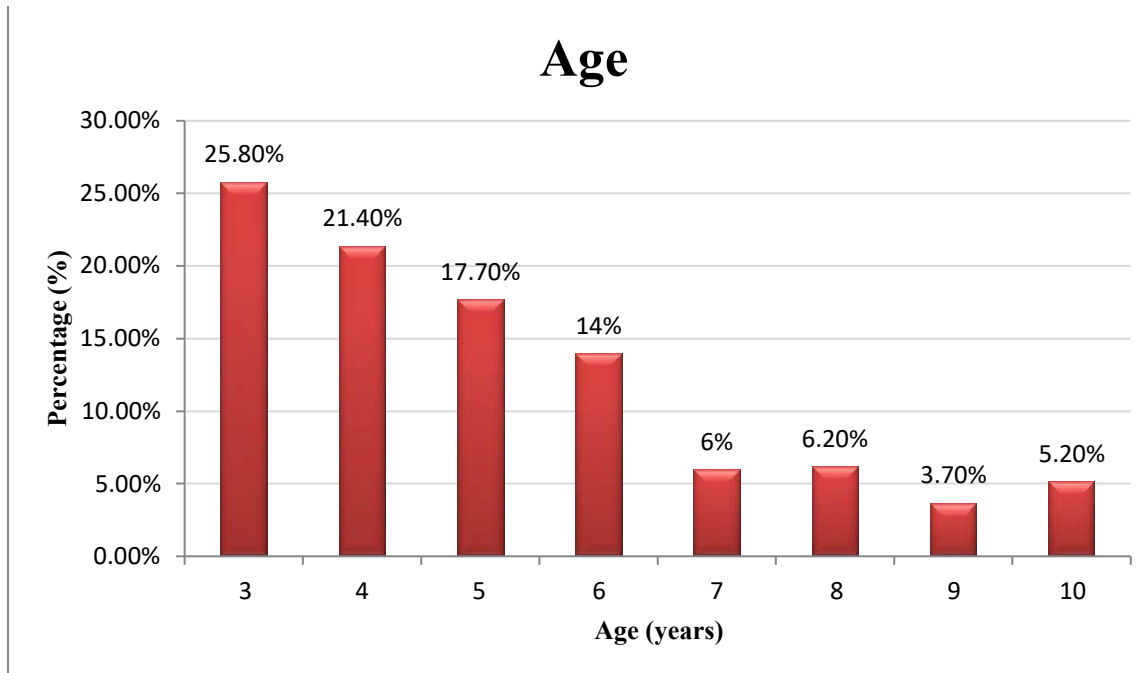


Figure 2 Age of the kids whose parents participated in the survey

Seeing that the study is focused on children aged between 3 and 10 years old, the participants have kids belonging to that age group. Yet, the largest number of kids belongs to the age group between 3 and 6 years.

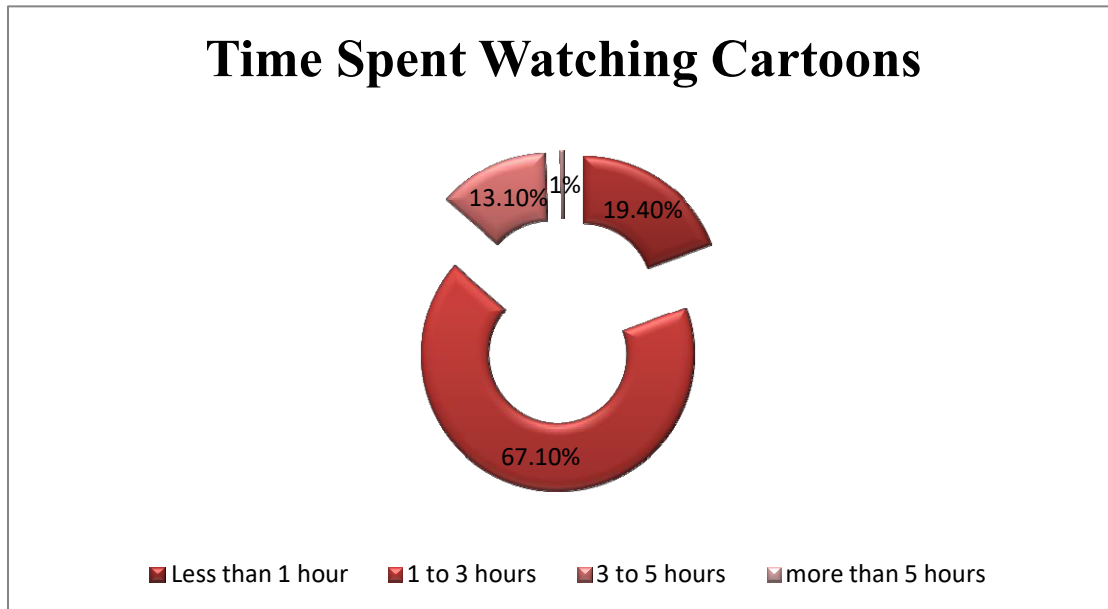


Figure 3 Average time that the kids spend watching cartoons

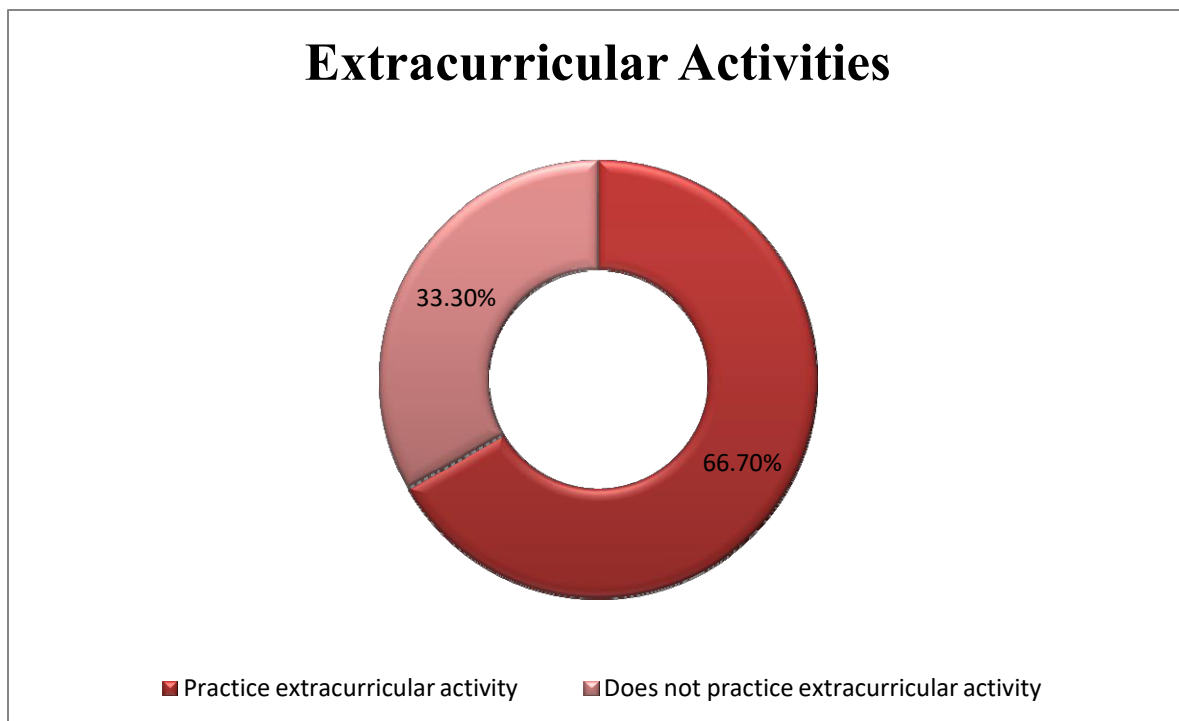


Figure 4 Participation of kids in extracurricular activities

Assessing the time spent watching cartoons is important in order to be able to classify children as heavy or light viewers according to Georges Gerbner. 67.1% of the participants have kids that watch between 1 to 3 hours of cartoons per day, showing that their kids belong more or less to the 'light viewers' category. Nonetheless, 14.1% seem to be 'heavy viewers' as they watch between 3 and 5 hours daily or even more than 5 hours. The percentage seemingly small seems to give insight into unhealthy habits. Moreover, having 33.3% of children who do not practice activities, being physical or other leisure activities seem to use televisions as their only source of entertainment leading to an increased screen time. The reduced participation in activities is not only due to the COVID-19 pandemic but also to the absence of financial capabilities of parents as clarified later in the interviews.

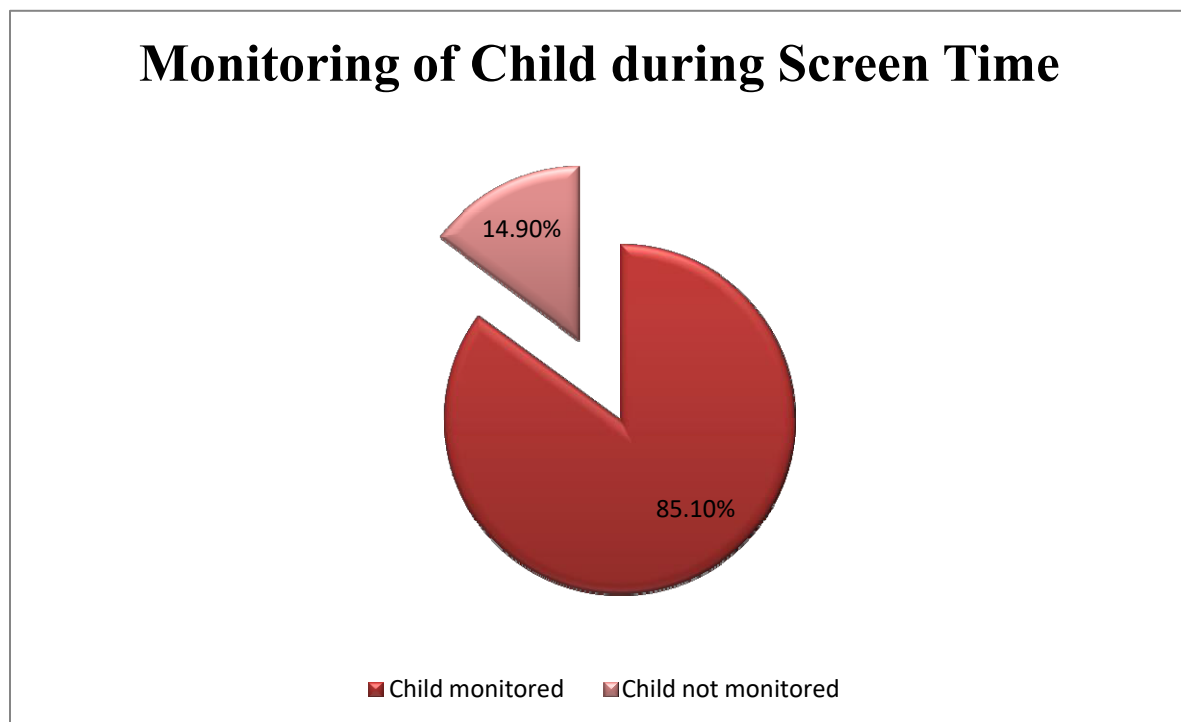


Figure 5 Monitoring children while watching cartoons

With the busy lifestyle that parents lead in today's world, it is seemingly hard to keep an eye on children and monitor their every activity. Surprisingly, 85.1% of the parents that participated in the survey are able to monitor their children during their screen time. Nevertheless, the statement can be subject to bias as it can be difficult to fully monitor kids. Yet, 14.9% of the kids are still not monitored, leaving parents oblivious to the content viewed by the child.

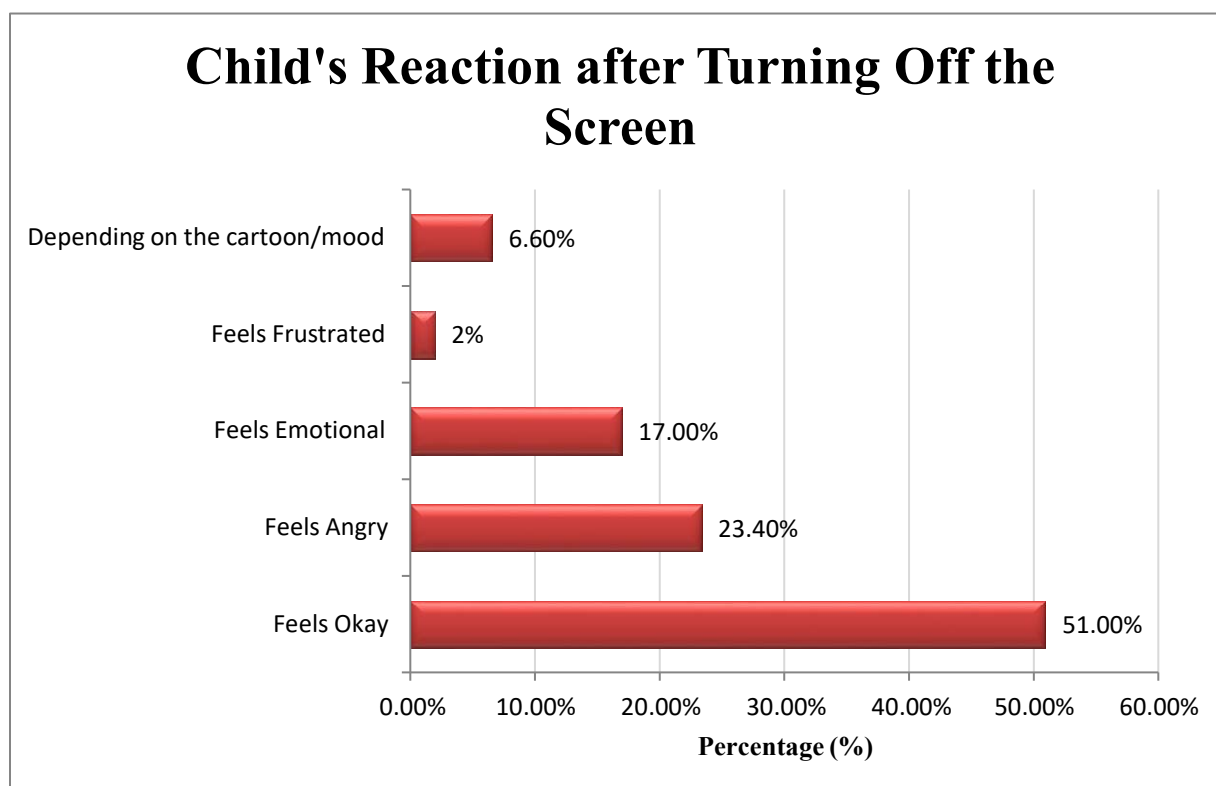


Figure 6 Children's reactions when screen-time is over

Ending screen time can make the child have negative reactions. When parents were asked about their children's reaction to turning off the TV 51% stated that their child is fine especially when many negotiations have taken place prior to watching the cartoon. Yet, some parents answered that, even when the child has previously agreed to a certain amount of time, the reaction is not always positive when screen time ends. In fact, 23.4% of children are sad, 17% become

emotional as they cry and throw tantrums and 2% feel frustrated. Also, as 6.6% of parents confirmed, the child's reaction is also linked to how much he likes the cartoon he was watching as it depends on his mood.

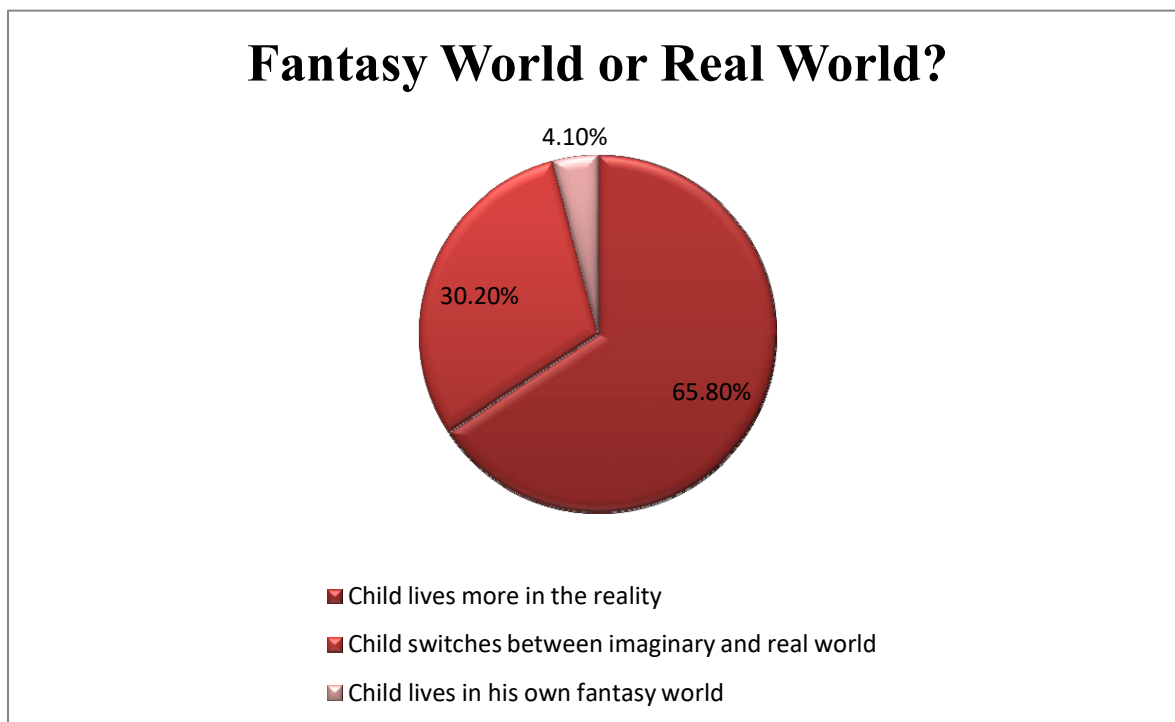


Figure 7 Can the child differentiate between reality and fantasy?

Children tend to learn through observation and imitation as Albert Bandura states. Observing cartoons that mostly take place in imaginary realms in which characters as well are imaginary, tends to affect children. The data gathered from the survey reveal that 65.8% of children are able to draw distinction between the imaginary world they see in cartoons and the reality.

Nevertheless, 30.2% of parents have observed that their child switches between reality and fantasy; these children seem to have created their own realm away from reality, a place to which they escape. Furthermore, strikingly enough, 4.1% of children are oblivious to the real world and

its rules. Parents have observed in this case that their kids are unable to adapt to reality and its rules as they are living in a foreign place, in their own fantasy away from reality. What these 4.1% of children display is not seething new and unexplored, in fact it goes back to validate the symptoms Thomas mentioned to what is called 'fantasy prone personality' (Thomas, 2020).

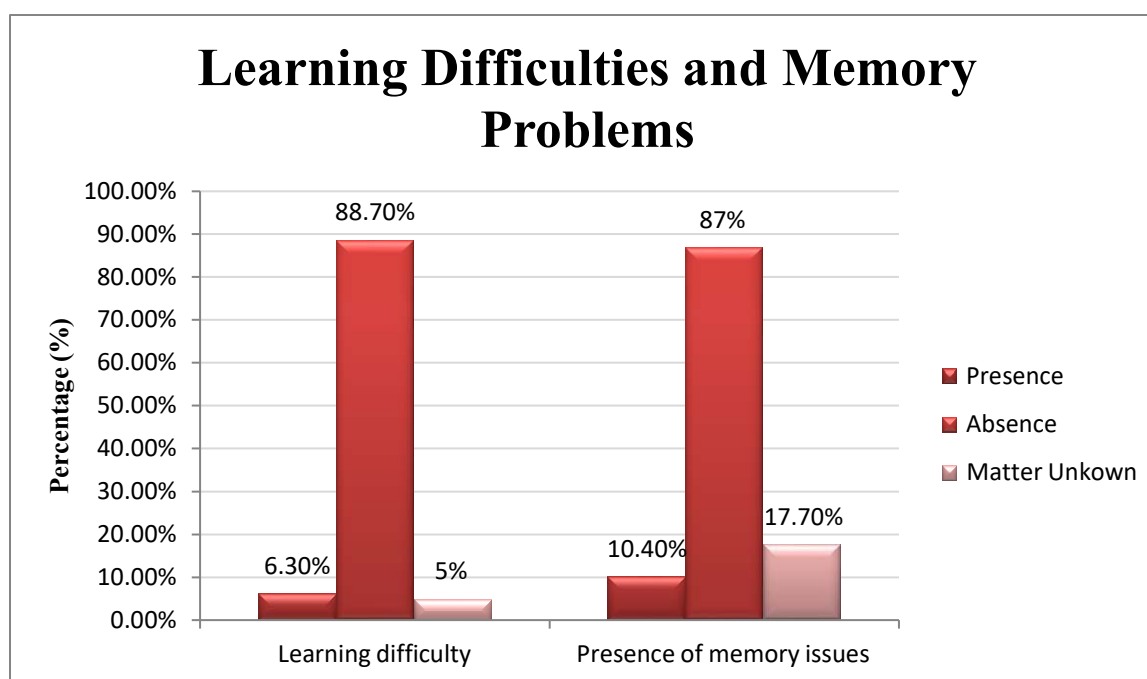


Figure 8 Observation of learning difficulties and memory issues

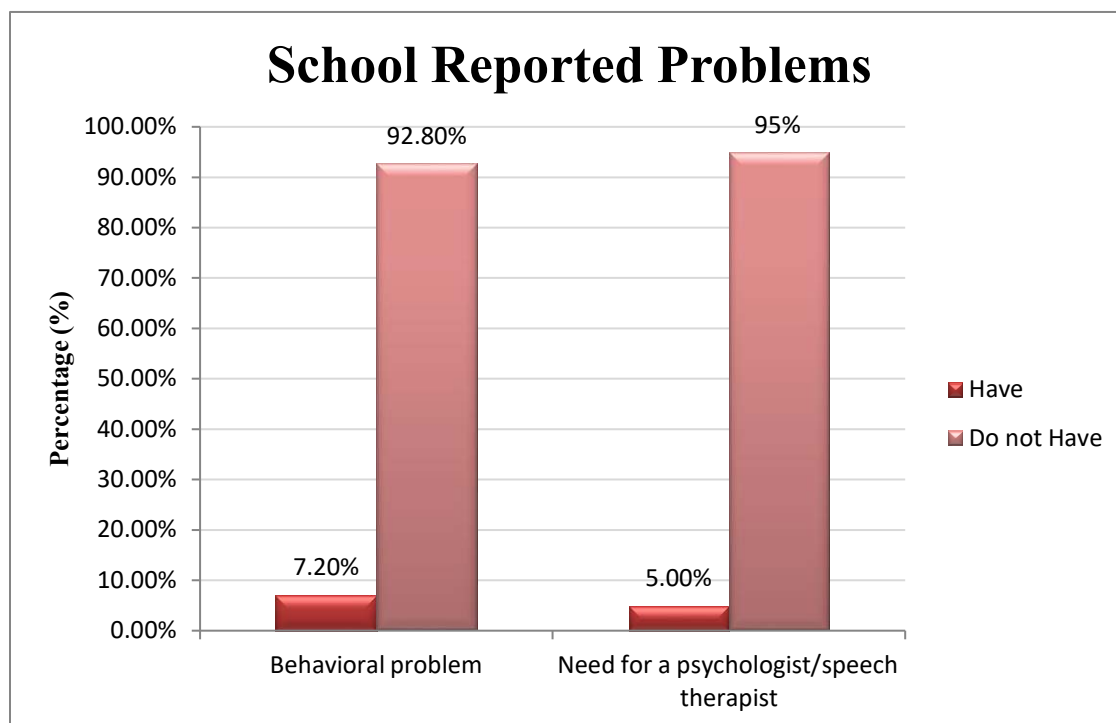


Figure 9 School's reporting of behavioral or psychological problems

A study conducted by the ISC Department in Paris (2017) showed that excessive watching of cartoons affects the child's cognitive development and has repercussions over the child's language acquisition as previously mentioned. Thus, parents were asked whether or not their children showed signs of learning difficulties or problems in memorizing and remembering information. Even though the largest number of participants did not observe any of these issues, 6.3% reported their children suffering from a learning difficulty being dyslexia, delayed speech or concentration problems as 10.4% reported their kids' difficulties is memorizing and remembering information. 5% of parents did not know whether or not their children had learning difficulties and 17.7% were oblivious to whether or not their kids had memory issues. Similarly, these results were validated in the following question since 5% of the parents said that their kid's school suggested a psychologist and speech therapist in addition to 5% saying that the school

complained from behavioral problems. In the focus groups, it was possible to relate these percentages to increased screen time, yet not in all cases.

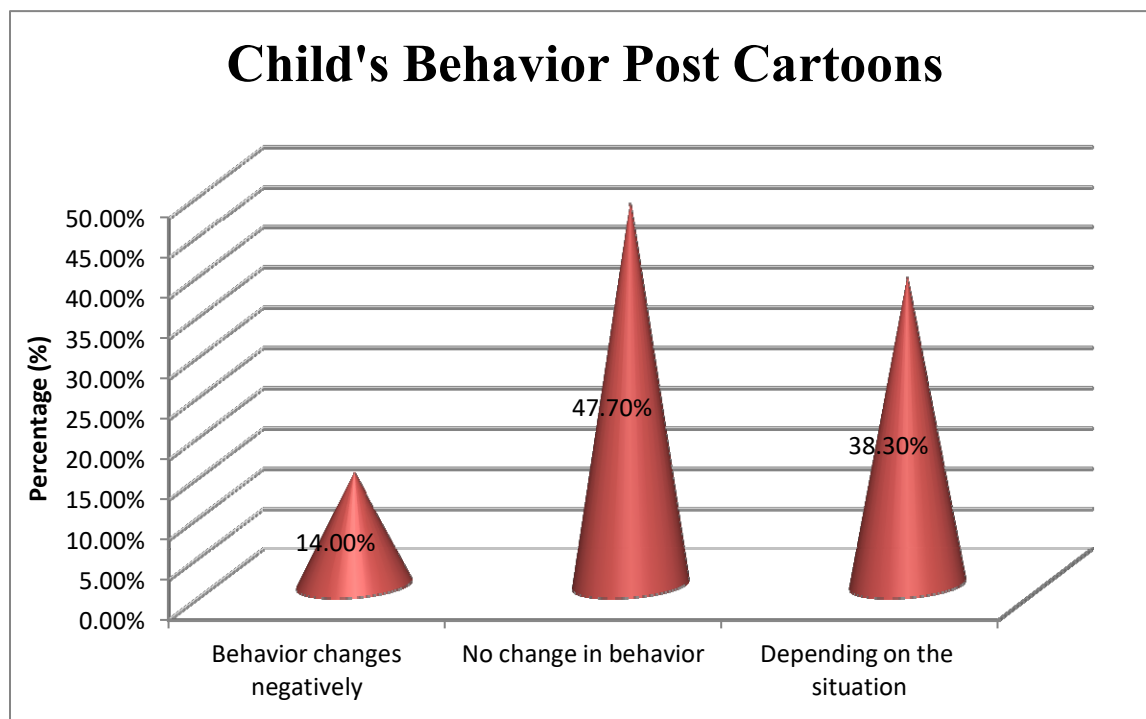


Figure 10 Child's behavior after watching cartoons

Looking back at the cultivation theory, Gerbner mentions that mainly the violence present in cartoons affects children and has repercussions on their behavior as they are likely to imitate violent scenes. The results obtained after asking the parents whether or not they seem to detect negative change of behavior after their kids watch cartoons validate Gerbner's theory. For instance, 14% of parents see negative change in behavior and they especially mention moodiness, violence and aggressive behavior. 38.3% of parents detect this behavior depending on the cartoon watched by the child or even his mood. Therefore, the negative impact of cartoons is not strictly observed in the 14% minority, it is observed in the 38.3% even if not regularly.

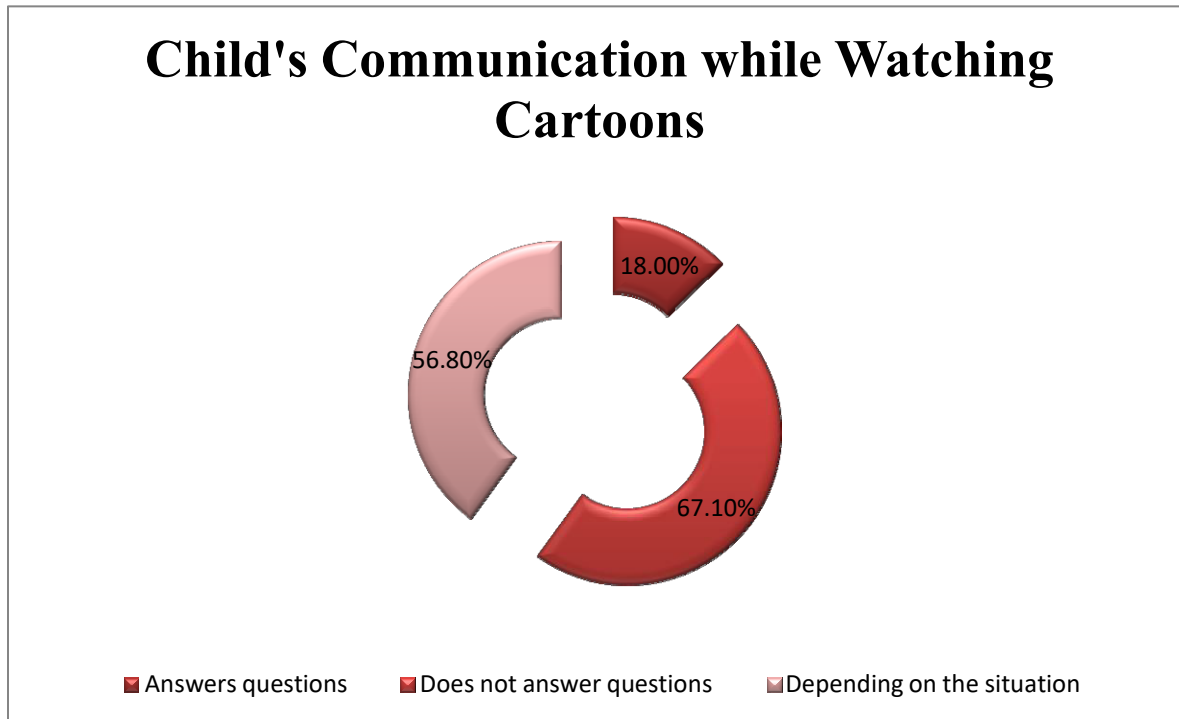


Figure 11 Child's communication while watching cartoons

Bandura's social learning theory and especially the section concerning attention is directly related to the data gathered from asking parents whether or not their children answer their questions while watching a cartoon. The question itself aimed to identify if the child is solely focused on the content of the cartoon and whether or not his attention is affected by exterior factors such as a question asked by a parent. 18% reported that their children usually do not answer a question asked during screen time whereas 56.8%, which is a relatively large number, observed that in certain situations their children do not pay attention to the asked question. So, the theory that attention is affected relatively by the environmental influences is validated here.

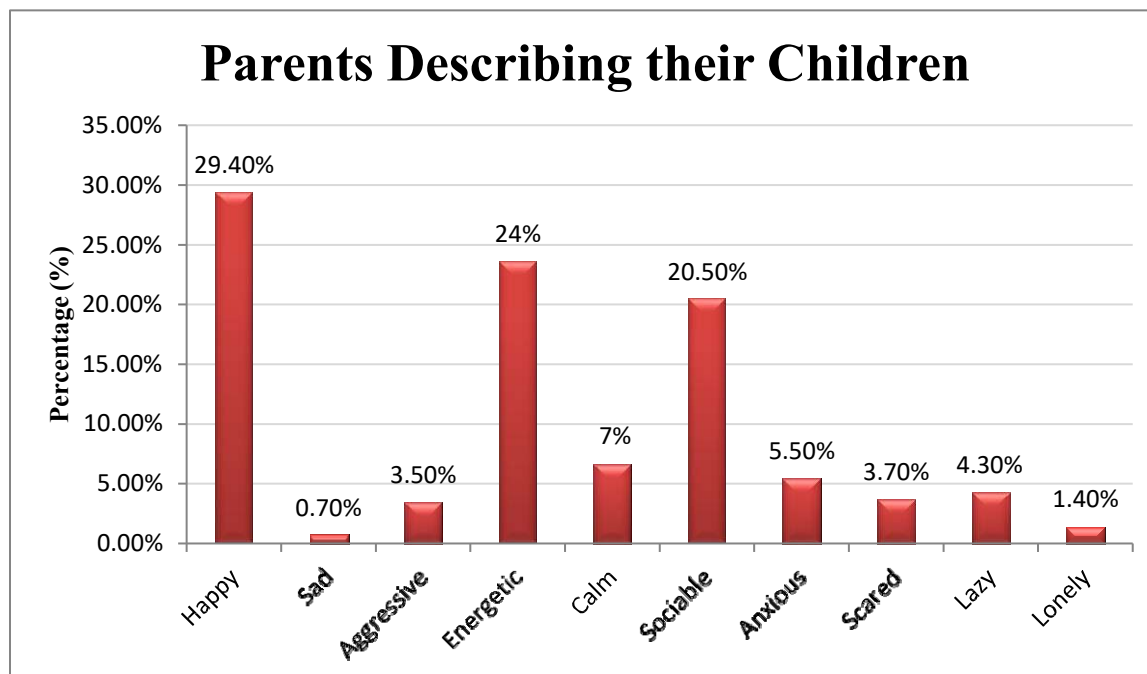


Figure 12 How can you describe your child?

Parents that participated in the study were asked to choose attributes to their children and describe them. Even though a large number of people described their children as happy, intriguing combination of adjectives emerged such as *Anxious/Lazy/Aggressive/Scared* or even *sad/lonely/aggressive/anxious*. Some if not many children showed signs of negative attitudes. This, in fact, goes back to Leo Vygotsky's explanation of how external factors affect the child's development. Indeed, cartoons can be a source that molds a child's personality and attitude turning him into the happy, sad, anxious or even aggressive child. Through the data collected, validating exactly the source of these negative traits is not possible, yet later on, when discussing the focus groups, the matter would be made clearer.

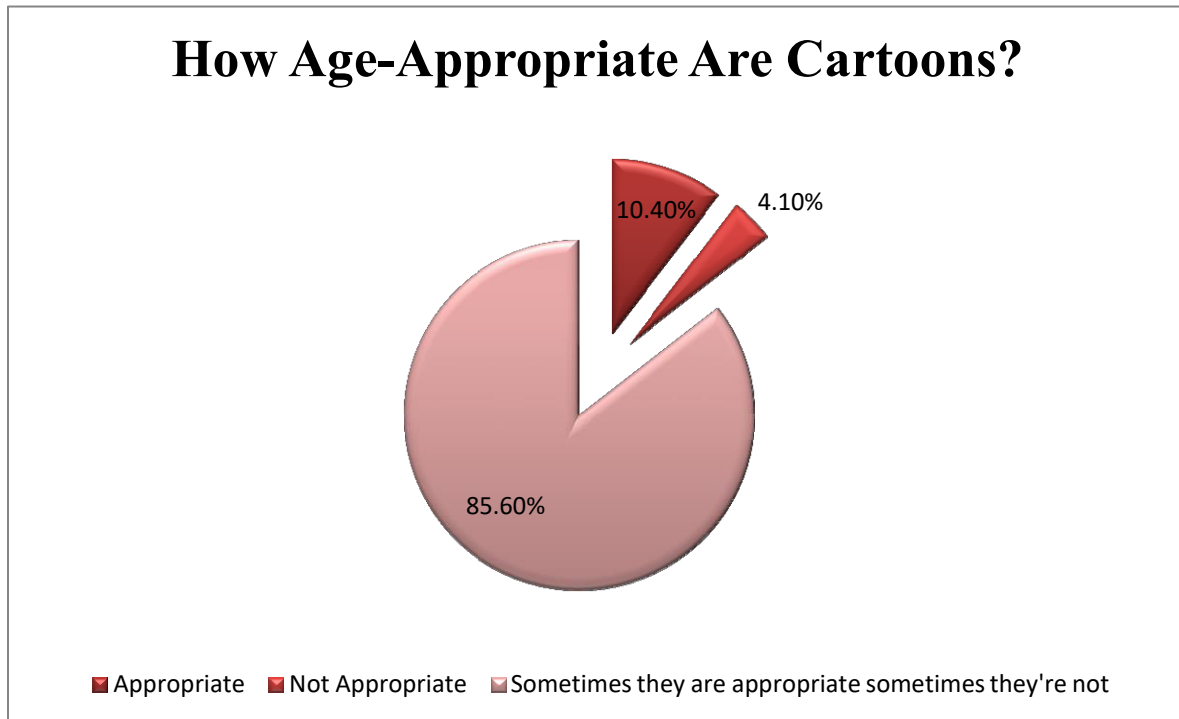


Figure 13 Are all cartoons age-appropriate?

Cartoons are known to be carriers of morals as well as sexual or violent content as discussed previously. Therefore, parents were asked if they find the content of cartoons appropriate for children. Parents who monitor their kids during screen time were able to answer this question and 4% found that messages in cartoons are mostly inappropriate. Nevertheless, some parents argued that some cartoons hold inappropriate messages while others have educational and appealing moral content. This is in concordance with the section regarding the function and roles of cartoons.

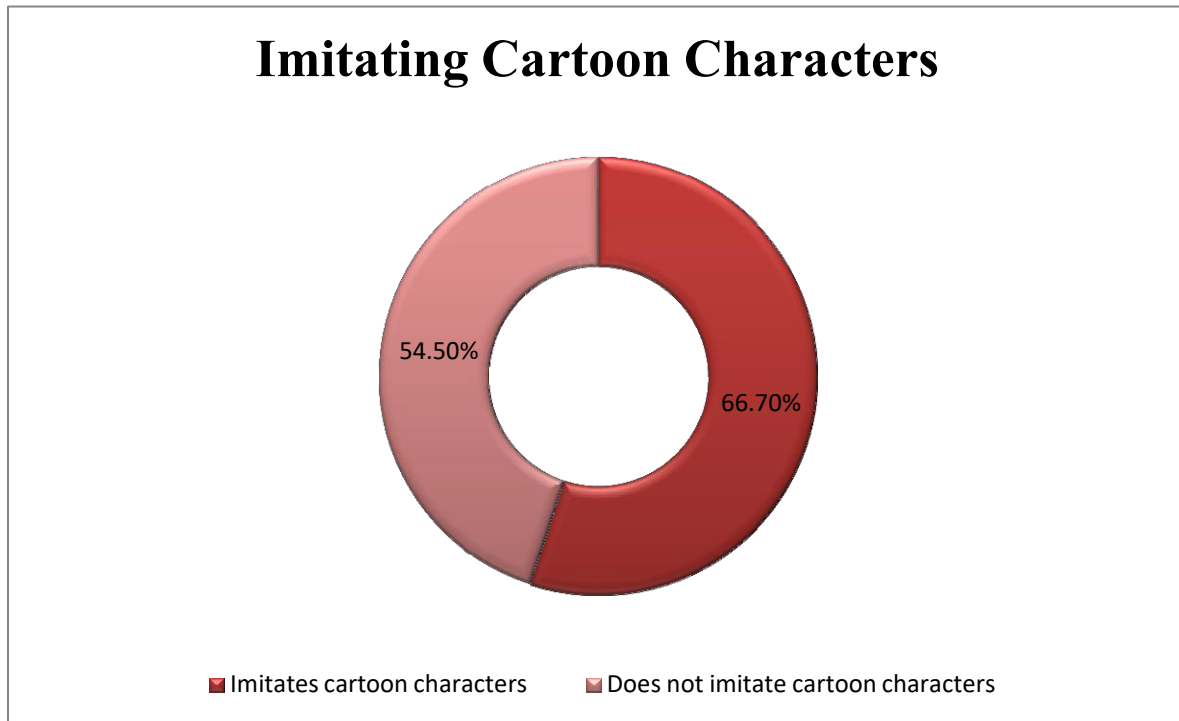


Figure 14 Do children imitate cartoon characters?

Effective modeling, as discussed previously, studies the phases of internalizing information that leads to imitation eventually. According to Bandura's social learning theory, children learn by observation then move to imitation. 66.7% of the participants give an answer that connects directly to Bandura's theory. The 66.7%, which is more than half the sample gathered, confirms that their children imitate cartoon characters. The imitation cannot be judged as always negative, it can have a positive outcome depending on the cartoon, but it is still present and draws on the child's learning process that is based on observation and imitation.

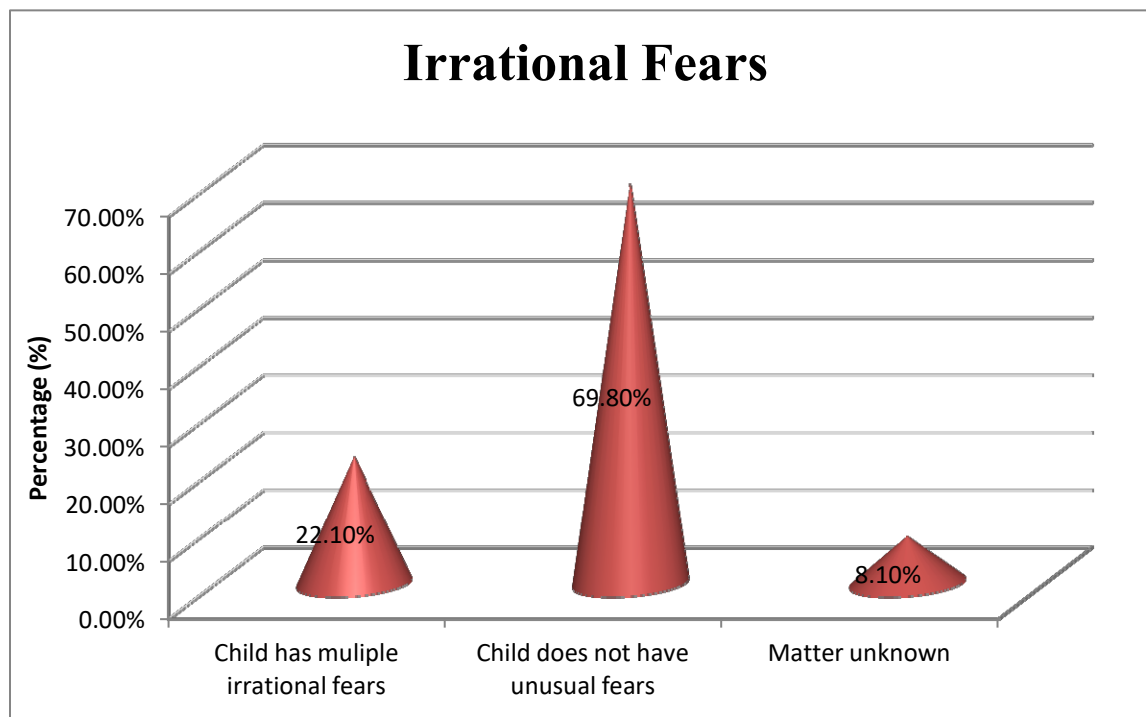


Figure 15 Do children have irrational fears?

The television being linked to fearful thoughts is not a new discussion as Mathenson finds in his 2002 study. In fact, the association of television with plural fears is also validated by the data gathered in the conducted research. 22% observe irrational fears among their children. It is also worth mentioning that 8% do not know about their children's fears which can also reveal an attitude of mistrust among children as they do not trust their parent to tell them their thoughts and what they're scared of. This also shows how attitudes of mistrust are developed as a side effect of excessive cartoon watching.

5.2. Conclusion

Looking at the obtained results, it is possible to draw generalized conclusions on the effect of cartoons over Lebanese children aged between 3 and 10. It is obvious that a large number of children are heavy viewers as they spend long hours in front of screens especially when extracurricular activities are not practiced. It is also worth mentioning that many parents do not monitor their children during screen time making them oblivious to the general messages conveyed from certain cartoons. In addition, what seems to be interesting is the observation of change of behavior that comes after watching cartoons. This finding confirms greatly that cartoons have effect on children and their development as they play major roles in building a child's personality, impulses and attitudes. Moreover, learning difficulties are not absent among heavy viewers validating this way plural theories previously discussed. The data collected shows that parents who are being approached by the school or teachers is not something uncommon as children seem to show signs of violence, aggressiveness, loneliness, lack of focus and attention and various forms of learning difficulties. Though these observations may not be directly linked to watching cartoons, the results obtained later on from the focus groups seem to be an extension of the survey results and give an even more proper insight to the effects of cartoons over children.

5.3. Results of the Focus Groups

In order to get more accurate answers and more detailed understanding concerning how cartoons affect children's development, it was essential to interact with parents. Therefore, three focus groups have been conducted via Zoom to insure interactions among participants and to gather relevant and more in-depth data. Eight Lebanese moms living in Lebanon and having at least one child aged between 3 and 10, participated in each focus group and answered a series of

questions. The sample was fortunately a diverse one with moms from all over Lebanon that have been gathered through acquaintances and via posts displayed on social media platforms.

Many questions were asked and all the moms who participated answered all questions and further details were gathered from the debates and conversations that the moms had during the focus group.

The popularity of certain cartoons is evident among the answers of the parents, yet we see that they changed according to the child's preferred language and they switch between French and English. Yet, certain shows are still favored like Masha and the Bear, Paw Patrol, Peppa pig and a few others. Also, what seems to differ from one kid to another is the medium used to watch these cartoons. Some prefer YouTube, others use Netflix Kids and some watch TV channels ranging from Disney Junior to Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon. Furthermore, while 6 mothers reported that their kids watch cartoons on TVs, 18 mothers said their kids use iPads and cell phones. This information seems to be of interest as the screen being close causes further problems other than the ones we suspect are caused by cartoons.

Answering the second question, 16 mothers said that their kids spend an average of three hours watching cartoons. 5 mentioned one hour per day and 3 moms acknowledged that their kids spend more than three even more than four hours sometimes. Nevertheless, through the conversation, participants mostly revealed that due to the pandemic and home-confinement that Lebanon went through, screen time has increased drastically leading kids sometimes to spend the majority of the day watching cartoons. This fact has been 'inevitable' quoting a mom, since cartoons seemed to be the only resort to entertain kids during the pandemic especially that 21 of the mothers participants are working moms who were trying to adapt to the new trend of home

office. Of course that this increase in the hours spent in front of screens was not common among all participants as some stay-at-home moms had more time than others to prepare activities and entertain their kids in a different way. Yet, cartoon time was common among all as no one reported that their kid does not like or watch cartoons regularly.

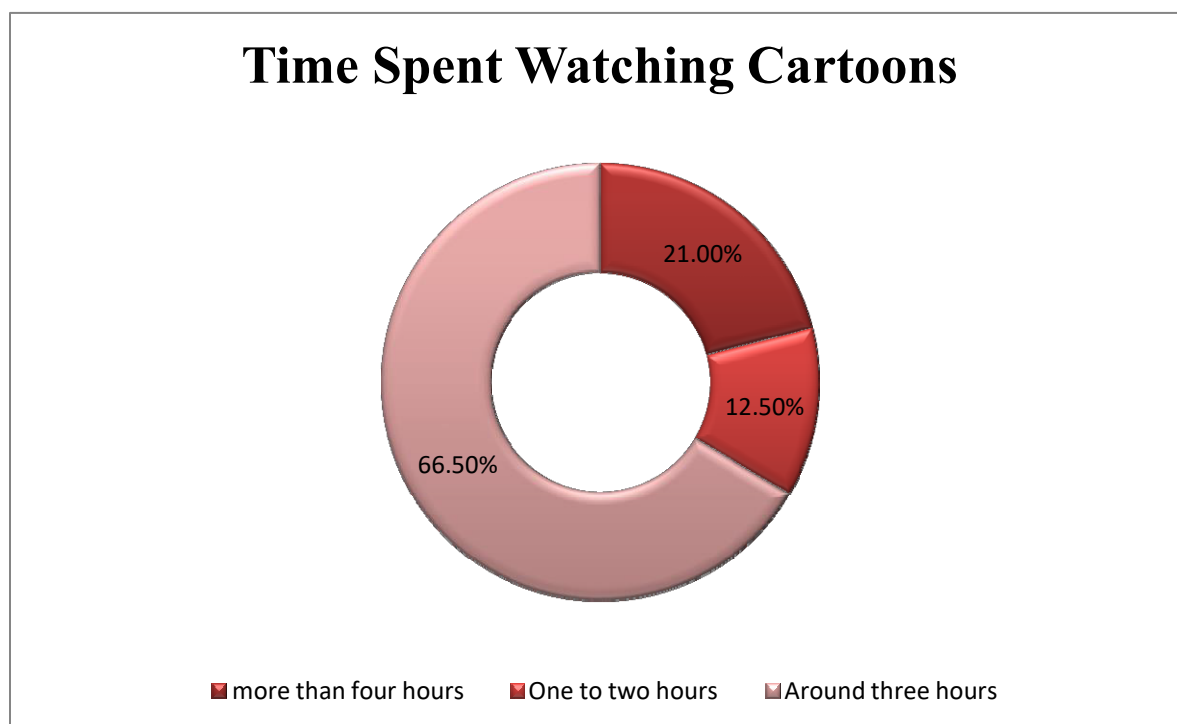


Figure 16 Time spent watching cartoons

When it comes to monitoring the kids during the screen time, a unanimous ‘no’ was the answer. None of the moms reported sticking to their kids’ side when they are watching cartoons. Quoting one of the participants, ‘I take advantage of the time they are calm and watching cartoons in order to finish some delayed chores’. Then also, throughout the conversation that took place, 13 moms mentioned that they look from time to time to check what their kids are watching or complete their chores somewhere near their kids. Hence, they know what their kids watch but are not fully invested all the time. Moreover, 8 moms reported that for their younger children, they

download specific YouTube videos and turn off the internet in order for their kids to just watch the chosen cartoons. Thus, even when they claimed not to monitor their kids, parents still keep an eye one way or another even if not continuously.

Behavioral problems are not uncommon. When one mentions behavioral problem, aggressiveness directly comes to mind while it is not the only problem. Being lonely, not getting along with others, being bossy and a bully and aggressive as well are all forms of behavioral problems. While some mothers did not want to give an answer at first, the discussion made it possible to understand that some children suffer from behavioral problems even if not the majority. 3 mothers reported their kids visiting regularly child therapists and counselors as per the school's advice. The reason behind these visits and the behavioral problem was not revealed by the moms yet four of them, two from the same group and one in each of the other groups specified aggressive behavior as a core behavioral issue.

When asked about the child's reaction when the TV is turned off, the moms' first answer was 'it depends'. For instance, many factors play a role in affecting the child's reaction; the cartoon he's watching, the way the TV or screen was turned off, whether or not the time period of watching was previously set. 51% of the parents said that the kids would try to negotiate for more time. 16.7% reported an excess of sensitivity no matter how and when the TV is turned off, this shows when the kid starts crying and becomes extremely sad. Some kids, also 25% of moms reported aggressive behavior in the previous question, said that their kids show signs of anger and sometimes throw objects around in order to continue watching TV. Reactions differ greatly between a child and another as 7% remain calm especially when they have agreed on a limited time for watching prior to them turning the TV on. Yet, it has been observed that the more the kid is a heavy watcher, the stronger his reaction when stopped from watching cartoons.

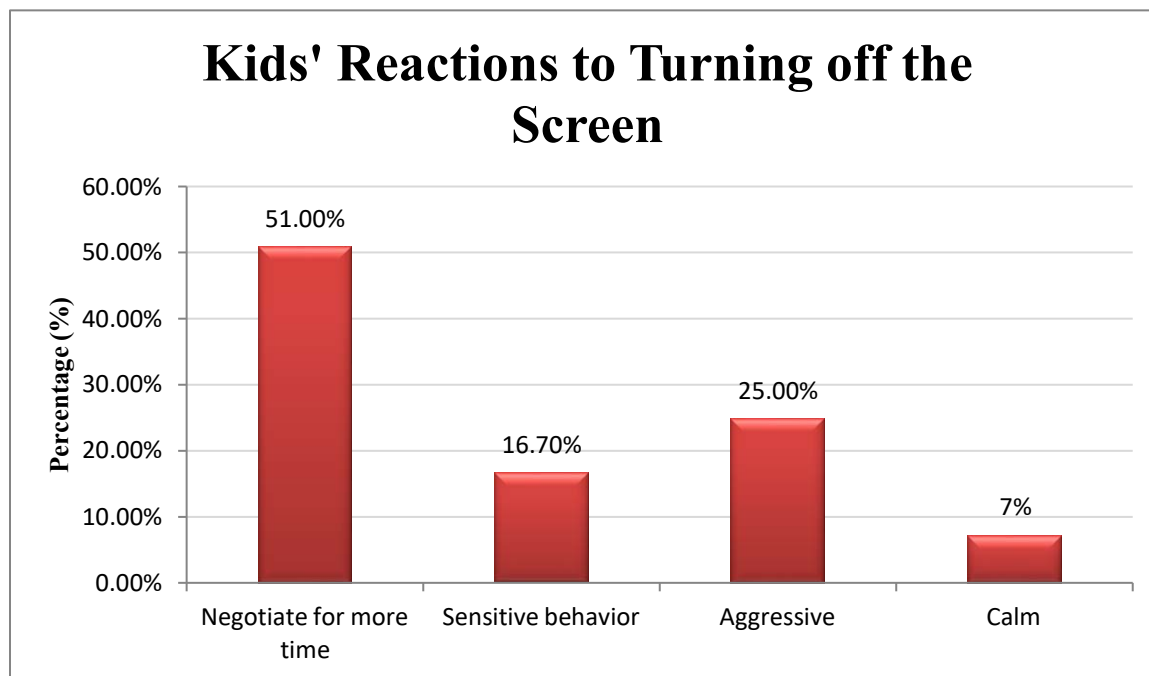


Figure 17 Children's reactions to turning off the screen

Cartoons have the tendency to be distracting. In order to see to which extent the child is focused solely on what he's watching, mothers were asked if their kids answer their questions or have conversations with them while watching. Answers differed. 11 believed that it depends on the show the kid is watching and how much he likes it, if it's one of his favorites he rarely answers. Also, 8 moms said that their kids like to have conversations about the cartoon they're watching but do not answer other questions like 'are you hungry?', 'did you finish your schoolwork?'... 5 also said that their kids are sometimes irritated if they are interrupted while watching and rarely answer questions that are not yes-or-no or have a meaningful conversation. Therefore, it seems that the complete focus is on cartoons even when it slightly shifts to what the parents are asking, meaningful interaction is usually absent or centered around the cartoon.

Imitating cartoon characters was very common among the kids whose moms participated in the study. Yet, no one reported their kids doing extreme stunts or disconnecting from reality while

imitating certain characters. One mom specifically said ‘it’s normal, my son likes to dress up like his favorite superheroes and characters from time to time, I think it’s healthy and at least it gives him some time off-screen’. The positive effect of cartoons mentioned by this mother relates directly to Hannuch’s statement earlier discussed. His study reveals that cartoons are able to positively affect children. Indeed, he states that cartoons and animations trigger the child’s curiosity and develops further his imagination (Hannuch, 2016).

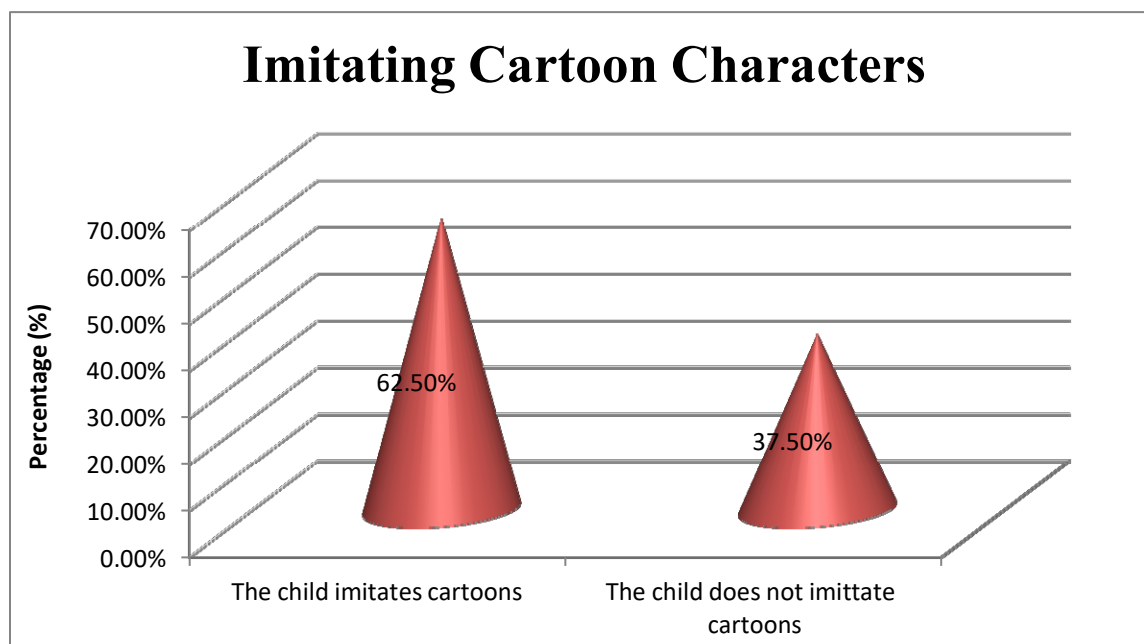


Figure 18 Imitating cartoon characters

Being sensitive and emotional is a trait that has been observed by mothers of only 3 kids. Many times as mother suggested, the content of the cartoon watched affects greatly the kid’s mood. If it’s a sad episode, kids tend to become emotional, seek affection or find the smallest thing to throw a tantrum and cry. Other times, happy episodes make them energetic. Thus, whether the kid is being emotional or not is, according to the interviewed moms, related to the content of the cartoon and rarely the same emotional mood occurs continuously after watching any cartoon.

The question related to irrational fears was here anticipated by the mothers as they introduced the emotion of fear as an aftermath of certain cartoons. 10 explained that fear is also associated with the content of certain cartoons. Yet, 2 moms reported that when their kids are fearful after watching cartoons, that fear stays with their children for a few days and they seem startled by small meaningless things; shadows, loud sounds and sometimes their stuffed animals seem to scare them at night when it's dark. 'I think his imagination plays tricks when he's afraid of his toys and stuffed animals' a mom suggested, alluding to the fact that cartoons may have influenced how the child's imagination acts and how he perceives things.

Many parents in general and mothers in particular still associate stigma with learning difficulties. When the subject was approached during the focus groups, many moms showed discomfort and unease. Nevertheless, when some mothers spoke with confidence about the matter and confirmed learning difficulties among their children, others seemed relaxed and spoke in turn. While 7 mothers confirmed certain cases of learning difficulties; 1 mom had a dyslexic child and 2 other had sons suffering from ADHD, 4 moms reported that the school where they had enrolled their kids advised seeking guidance with a therapist as the child was suspected to be suffering from a learning difficulty but has not been diagnosed yet. Similarly, 7 moms stated that the teachers sometimes referred to their child as having difficulties concentrating or being involved or having difficulties understanding topics and subjects that are easy to kids his age and level or even being unable to remember certain information that have been just explained. While this does not blindly confirm the presence of a learning difficulty, it is something that makes the learning process more challenging for the child. One mom reported her daughter seeing a speech therapist for a stuttering problem while another said her son has speech delay and has been seeing a speech therapist ever since he was 3 (he is currently 6).

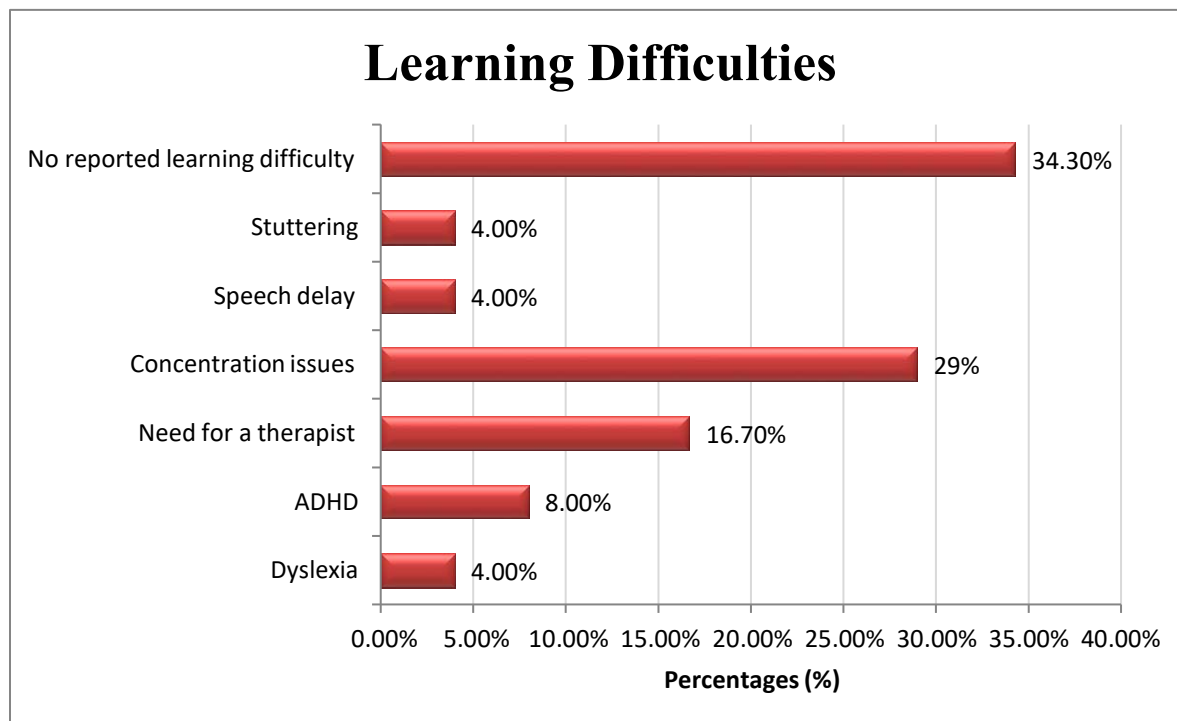


Figure 19 Presence of learning difficulties

The last question asked related to the content of the cartoons. 17 parents found them to have inappropriate messages that include violence and racist behavior. Nonetheless, moms agreed that this is not characteristic of all cartoons as some educational channels bring cartoons that aid the learning process and explore moral lessons from which the child can benefit.

5.4. Conclusion

The data gathered from the three focus groups conducted gives more insight to the results of the survey previously discussed. The questions being somewhat similar have been more analyzed and delved into throughout the discussions that happened during the meetings. Reporting being heavy watchers and having some kind of violent or aggressive behavior being at school or home, moms confirmed the Cultivation Theory that draws a link between television or cartoons and violent behavior (Matheson, 2002). Moreover, the traumatic scenes that are inserted in TV

shows and cartoons according to Georges Gerbner, affect children's behavior and perception validating this way what mothers reported about moodiness post-cartoons, certain forms of violence and also fears. Moqadam as well as Gerbner discussed violence and cartoons. As previously mentioned, Moqadam believed that children start imitating scenes that are violent and do violent acts thinking that it is fun to do so since these actions are commonly displayed in the cartoons they watch (Moqaddem,1997). The results obtained in the current study are also in accordance with a study conducted by the International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health. The study that was previously explained explores the relationship between behavioral changes among children and continuous cartoon watching. The results reveal that 39% of children like to watch violent and nonviolent animations; 64% of children ignore what the parents tell them while they are watching animated cartoons, 45% of children start to throw items and start to act in a violent way when their parents either turn off the television or request the child to do other things and 61% of children try to imitate the characters' movements and acts after watching animations. Hence, the results of this study are not contradictory to the ones obtained in this research rather they are complementary. In addition, the Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura has also been validated by the answers provided by the participants. Indeed, when asking the moms if their kids had any leaning difficulty, many referred to a short attention span as well as weakened memory and the inability to retain information as reported by their school teachers. This goes back directly to Bandura's Social Learning Theory that mentions attention and retention. Another study conducted by the ISC department in Paris proves that cartoons affect the cognitive development of children. Learning difficulties ranging from ADHD, to memory issues and concentration problems are all suggested by the ISC study (ISC, 2017). he results of the current study reflect directly on the study conducted by the ISC as the All these

effects have been observed among kids who are more or less heavy watchers, hence the relationship between cartoons and violence and cognitive ability equally cannot be denied. This has also been discussed throughout the studies mentioned earlier. Watching cartoons, that is considered to be an environmental component, affects the child's retention to images and their interpretation, causing this way the fantasy world or cartoon realm to become a part of the child's reality through the fears the child shows, the behavior and the reactions. Hence, it is undeniable that this study shows the importance of external factors, mainly cartoons, in shaping the child's development aligning this way with Vygotsky's theory. Multiple references mentioned above, mainly Montgomery's have described how cartoons shape the moral beliefs of the child showing his way that the current study displays results that show how cartoons contain morals that sometimes contradict what the child needs to learn; as Montgomery explains (Montgomery, 2008).

5.5. Results' Discussion

The data that was gathered for this research was mainly the result of a survey as well as three focus groups. Due to the pandemic and the restrictions that came along, it was not possible to conduct first hand observations upon kids. The only source of credible information was parents. Nevertheless, as parents observe their children continuously especially through the lockdown period, it was possible to gather information and get insight on different levels. The results were complementary and helped validate the three hypotheses previously set. For instance, hypothesis 1; "Violence in cartoons leads to aggressiveness in children" has been explored in different and multiple ways. In the survey, mothers were asked different questions in order to determine the child's behavior. Observation on behalf of the parent as well as complaints coming from the school and teachers validated the presence of aggressive and violent behavior. Moreover, the

focus groups conducted made it possible to validate the relation between cartoon violence and aggressiveness as mother reported violent behavior as well as cartoon imitation that displayed aggressive behavior. For instance, watching Superman, Spiderman and Batman as well as fights between Tom and Jerry resulted in aggressive behavior, whereas watching more 'princess-related' cartoons seemed to have a calming effect. In addition, the reactions displayed by children after the TV or screen was turned off also were violent and anger was in many situations a primary reaction. The results are not unique to this study only. In fact, they conform to the previously discussed research conducted by Gerbner and with a recent study conducted in 2006 by Kirsh. The research method consisted on exposing young children to violent cartoons for 20 minutes, 3 times per week for 4 weeks than observing their behavior. Kirsh confirmed that young people watching the violent cartoons were more disobedient and less tolerant. Furthermore, young people who encountered elevated rates of aggression before the experiment became more aggressive when they watched brutal cartoons than the non-violent cartoons they watched (Kirsh, 2006).

Moving to the second hypothesis that stated the presence of sexual and violent content in cartoons, violence was an easy one to validate, whereas sexual messages were more critical to discuss and detect. Indeed, most mothers who participated in the survey monitor what their children are watching; hence they know the content of most cartoons. The mothers who took part in the focus groups reported that they complete pending tasks while their children are watching TV so they are not completely focusing on the messages. Yet, the majority of participants in both survey and focus groups were able to detect inappropriate messages. In the survey, the kind of messages that are inappropriate was still unknown, nevertheless the focus groups helped greatly in validating the second hypothesis. In addition to violent scenes, mothers were able to specify the presence of age inappropriate content. For instance, in *Tom and Jerry* and *Peppa Pig* mainly sexual messages were being passed. For example, there is a specific scene in which Tom was

looking at a cat he fancies and after showing the character completely infatuated, Tom shoots a sort of cream from a canon he holds (Figure 20). The identification of these messages was not difficult for mothers yet their branding as being sexual did not happen instantly. Participants were not really sure these messages were sexual as they were in kids' cartoons, yet they still knew that they were not appropriate for children. Sexual and violent messages in cartoons have been studied greatly. Hannuch and Woolley who were previously mentioned discuss sexual and violent content and its effect on the child's brain (woolley, 2006), (Hannuch, 2006).

Furthermore, in report published by the Parents Television Council in 2011, it was clear that the quality of cartoons has changed overtime and what used to be considered as safe and the best option became full of cultural as well as sexual messages (Parents Television Council, 2011).

The report also mentioned that parents who monitor their children can clearly detect content that is inappropriate for children (Parents Television council, 2011). The presence of these messages and the possibility for parents to detect them conform greatly to the results of the current research and help confirm further the second hypothesis.



Figure 20 Sexual message in Tom and Jerry

Regarding the third hypothesis concerning imitating cartoon characters, the hypothesis has been validated on its own as well as through the investigation of the first two hypotheses. In fact,

while asking about aggressive behavior, parents pointed out that children copy the violent behavior they see on screen. Moreover, in the focus groups conducted, many mothers, 15 to be exact, were able to confirm that their children like to imitate what they see and dress up like the characters and superheroes they watch. Hence, the third hypothesis has been strongly confirmed. Not many studies have discussed the topic of imitations of cartoon characters by children; they rather discuss how children become involved in the fantasy world (Thomas, 2002). Nevertheless, a study conducted on 18 Turkish kids in 2011 showed that 9% always imitate cartoon characters whereas 37.3% sometimes imitate cartoon characters (Ergün, 2011). The results of Ergün's study are conforming to the results of the current research and validate the third hypothesis.

Limitations

Being unable to observe children while watching cartoons and after, made it difficult to get an objective perspective. One of the biggest limitations in this research was the inescapable bias, as mothers would rarely speak to their own child's poor behavior. Gathering the data from mothers could not be completely objective as mothers tend to sugarcoat facts related to their children. Moreover, parents being the prime source of data made it difficult to explore gender related effect. Indeed, the effect of cartoons that is reflected in behavior mainly might be different between boys and girls. The gender aspect was one difficult to explore in the circumstances of the study. Furthermore, conducting the focus groups remotely via Zoom restricted the face to face discussions and interactions. This is considered as a limitation because focus groups conducted in a non-virtual environment give space to more discussions and debates, thus more insight and data.

Conclusion

Cartoons undeniably affect children. The child's development is connected to environmental factors that shape his reactions, fears, personality and cognitive abilities. In a world where technology is dominant and screens are a man's best friend, the environment to which children are exposed is mostly one related to screens whether games or cartoons. Through the course of this research, whether the literature related to the topic or the theoretical work, it was possible to understand the extent to which children are affected by cartoons. Many researchers and professional whether psychologists. Doctors or social scientists have opposing views as they find negative as well as positive effects of cartoons. Nevertheless, in this research, we chose to explore some of the negative effects of cartoons. The questions that we aimed to explore were whether or not violent behavior in children is the outcome of aggressive scenes in cartoons, whether or not cartoons contains inappropriate content and to which extent children imitate the cartoon characters they watch. The three hypotheses that were the pillars of the work were validated through the data gathered and they conformed to other researches. Therefore, it was possible to confirm Gerbner's view that children display aggressive behavior due to the violence they watch. Moreover, parents' observation of their children and the content they were watching revealed the explicit violence and the implicit sexual messages transmitted in cartoons. Last, imitating cartoon characters scenes was not unfamiliar among children, which validates the third hypothesis. The study also gave insight of the effect of cartoons on children beyond the three hypotheses. Indeed, it drew a connection between cartoons and cognitive abilities as well as psychological well-being. The data shows an increase in the number of children in need of psychological therapy as well as speech therapy and a great number of children suffering from attention and memory deficit. This can be the ground for further research regarding the topic.

Appendix 1

Survey

1. How old is your child / children? (If you have more than one child please specify the age of each)
2. Does your child watch cartoons?
 - Yes
 - No
3. How many hours per day on average does your child spend watching cartoons?
 - Less than 1 hour
 - 1 to 3 hours
 - 3 to 5 hours
 - More than 5 hours
4. Is your child monitored during his screen time?
 - Yes
 - No
5. How does your child feel when you turn off the TV?
 - Feels angry
 - Feels sad
 - Feels okay
6. Do you feel that your child has created a fantasy world and does not live in the real world?
 - Yes, he does not know the difference between the real and the fictional world
 - No, he lives in the real world and knows its rules
 - Sometimes it feels that he's in the fantasy world sometimes not.
7. Does your child suffer from any learning difficulty? (Speech difficulty, dyslexia..)
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
8. Do you feel that your child has difficulties remembering and memorizing information?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

9. Has the school or any teacher reported a behavioral problem? (Aggressive, always alone, does not get along with friends, has concentration issues...)

- Yes
- No

10. Has the school or teacher specified the need for the child to see a speech therapist/psychologist?

- Yes
- No

11. Have you noticed if your child's behavior changes after watching cartoons? (Becomes aggressive, emotional, distant...)

- Yes
- No
- It depends

12. Does your child answer the questions you ask while he watches cartoons?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

13. How would you categorize your child?

- Sad
- Happy
- Lazy
- Active
- Aggressive
- Calm
- Sociable
- Energetic
- Lonely
- Anxious
- Scared
- Other: -----

14. Do you feel that the messages conveyed in the cartoons are appropriate for children?
- Yes
 - No
 - Sometimes they are, sometimes they're not
15. Does your child practice any activity? (Football, dance, painting...)
- Yes
 - No
16. Does your child continuously imitate cartoon characters they like?
- Yes
 - No
17. Do you feel that your child is afraid of many things and many times unusual things?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know

Appendix 2

Questions of the focus groups

- 1- Which cartoons do your kids usually watch?
- 2- How many hours on average do your kids spend watching cartoons?
- 3- Are they monitored during their screen time?
- 4- Have your kids' teachers/school ever complained about your kid having a behavioral issue?
- 5- How does your child react when you turn off the TV?
- 6- If you ask your kids questions or trigger a conversation while watching TV, do they answer properly or ignore you?
- 7- Does your kid imitate any cartoon characters they watch?
- 8- Do you feel that your kid is extra sensitive and emotional after watching cartoons?
- 9- Did your child develop any learning difficulty or do you feel the need to consult a speech therapist?
- 10- Does your child have any irrational fears?
- 11- What do you think of the messages that cartoons convey? Do you feel they are appropriate for children?

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