

Chapter 22

The Cognitive Emotional Behavioral and Physical Effects of Cartoons on Children

Muzaffer Şahin
Istanbul Arel University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Pepe, which is a cartoon watched in Turkey between the ages of 2 and 7, is analyzed in this study. The 26 observers have observed how this cartoon influences the children who watch it regularly. Moreover, a researcher has evaluated the messages given by the cartoon, watching 40 episodes. The influence of the messages of the cartoon Pepe on the children between the ages of 2 and 7 are evaluated in the light of the data attained from the theories in the field of learning and development: Albert Bandura's theory, Piaget's theory, Skinner's theory. In accordance with those evaluations, it is determined that the cartoon Pepe contains cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally positive and negative messages for the age group of 2-7. It is seen that this cartoon involves positive messages in many episodes not only for children but also for the adults who are in charge of rearing children. It is considered appropriate that parents watch the 30-minute episodes that bear positive messages, together with their children twice a day, and they give explanations when children need them.

INTRODUCTION

By means of technology, satellite broadcasting and Internet, today people are able to access easily to the resources, films and cartoons produced in foreign countries for their studies, researches or entertainment. It is seen that the demand for cartoons has been increasing dramatically. Parents and experts from all over the world have been evaluating and discussing the benefits and harms of cartoons. It is suggested that when they are made use of at the appropriate amount, cartoons and games produced for the sector of entertainment may present ideal models and help children observe, hear and learn a set of knowledge, thoughts, problems and the strategies used in solving the problems. They help children be exposed to different stimulants and affect the mental development positively.

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Children take the characters in cartoons (C) as models. It is considered that cartoons influence the children positively if they are appropriate for their cognitive, emotional and physical development and there are positive models in them whereas they have negative influences on children when they are not appropriate for the period of their development and they present negative models.

Furthermore, it is observed that some children spend too much time in front of the screens of televisions, computers, tablets and mobile phones. An increase in spending time in front of a screen may cause screen addiction. Screen addiction leads children to be alienated from natural environments and social surroundings. This situation reduces their communication with geographic environment, social surroundings (friends and peers) and family members. The children who spend too much time in front of screen have difficulties in differentiating between the virtual environment and the real world.

For this purpose, do cartoons have beneficial and harmful effects while presenting children with positive and negative behaviors, thoughts and emotions? Parents sometimes may go to extremes in their permissions and restrictions. What kind of cartoons should children be allowed to watch or not allowed to watch? How long should children watch cartoons?

For the sake of the aims indicated above, in this chapter Pepe, which is a cartoon liked and watched with great interest by the children in Turkey between the ages of 2 and 7, is analyzed. The 26 psychologists and the 4th grade psychology students have observed the children who watch Pepe and a researcher has watched 40 episodes broadcast at different times. The features of the characters in Pepe and the cartoon's positive and negative messages are examined.

How Pepe's messages influence the children in the age group of 2-7 are to be evaluated in the light of the data attained from the theories in the field of learning and development -Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory.

BACKGROUND

Reviews on the Three Theories

Giving information about one of the learning theories, Social Cognitive Learning Theory, and of the conditioning theories, Operant Conditioning and Mental Development Theories, the cognitive, emotional and behavioral effects of Pepe on the viewers are to be examined.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Observational Learning From a Model

According to Bandura, learning occurs in two ways. It is either by enactive learning in which we learn directly from our doings and performances or, by vicarious learning in which we learn indirectly by observing the actions of others. Bandura claims that a major part of learning takes place indirectly. Indirect learning occurs when the actions of other people and symbolic or non-human (video, film, cartoon characters) electronic models are observed, heard and watched.

Learners, first, watch the symbolic model, examine the model's behavior, emotions and attitudes, and afterwards they try to simulate them. The consequences of an action performed by the one who is

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