

# Perceived Influence of Television Cartoons on Nigerian Children's Social Behaviour<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The forces that shape children's impressionable minds are found mostly in the environment where they grow up. Such things include the things they are exposed to on a daily basis. It has been said that cartoons have influence on children's behaviour but the nature of the influence and whether the parents, as well as children, are aware of this development have not been determined in Nigerian context. Thus, this study sought to examine the influence of cartoons on Nigerian children's social behaviour from the perspective of the parents and the children. Survey design was adopted. Data were collected from 100 pupils and 50 parents through questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion. Percentages and chi Square were used for data analysis. The findings show that both children and parents share similar understanding on the influence of cartoons on children as being positive. While cartoons are said to help children's spoken English, learning inventions and good morals, as well as keep children busy among other benefits, some parents expressed that some influence of cartoons could be negative and therefore some regulations required in mitigating those negative aspects of cartoons. It is recommended that parents should make a conscious effort to monitor the cartoons that their children watching to ensure that it is appropriate to their age.

**Key words:** Children, Perceived influence, Social behaviour, Television cartoon

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## Introduction

CARTOONS HAVE BEEN A PART of cinema history from the time the first motion pictures were made in the late 1800s. A cartoon is a movie made by using animation instead of live actors, especially a humorous film intended for children (Thompson, 2010)). Cartoons can also be described as the making of movies by filming a sequence of slightly varying drawings or models so that they appear to move and change when the sequence is shown. These are the elements that keep viewers, (mostly children) glued to their seats. Cartoons were initially so short because people would be watching these shorts in the movie theaters before their feature film. When cartoonists could put their shows on TV, they began to get longer, creating the half hour block shows that are on Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, and the Disney Channel today. Also, the cartoons had to become more “family friendly” so that more people would watch their show (Kapelian, 2009).

Many Nigerian children have become very interested in cartoons and it (cartoon) has become a primary source of entertainment to them. A poll in America revealed that children watch up to six hours of television a day, much of it unsupervised and intended for adult viewers. Nearly 60% of children have televisions in their bedrooms and the growth of satellite and digital TV has brought new channels devoted to cartoons (Muss, citing American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999).

A child watches approximately 18,000 hours of television from kindergarten to high school graduation, according to research by psychologist Steve Hossler of Bowling Green State University (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999). This reveals to us that cartoons are very popular among children of all ages. The forces that shape children’s impressionable minds are found mostly in the environment where they grow up as well as the things that they are exposed to on a daily basis.

The understanding that children have on what they watch on television may affect how they are influenced by cartoon violence. Children are more likely to focus on observable actions rather than internal causes. The situation of parents may not be too different. Are parents and guardians aware of the content of TV cartoons that their children watch and do they found the cartoons acceptable

to watch? or do TV cartoons serve other purposes for children irrespective of the content? It is because of these issues that this study set out to find out what children and parents think on the influence that cartoons have on children's social behaviour. The finding will be an input to the understanding of the perceived influence that television cartoons have on children's social behaviour.

## Literature Review

Television has a variety of applications in society, business, and science. The most common use of television is as a source of information and entertainment for viewers in their homes. People in the United States have the most television sets per person, with 835 sets per 1,000 people as of 2000. Canadians possessed 710 sets per 1,000 people during the same year. Japan, Germany, Denmark, and Finland follow North America in the number of sets per person (Atonoff, 2007). Viewing among kids is at an eight-year high. On average, children ages 2-5 spend 32 hours a week in front of a TV—watching television. Kids ages 6-11 spend about 28 hours a week in front of the TV (McDonough, 2009). The vast majority of this viewing (97%) is of live TV, 71% of 8 to 18-year-olds have a TV in their bedroom (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010, p.16).

Rideout, Foehr and Roberts (2010, p.2) note that young people have increased the amount of time they spend consuming media by an hour and seventeen minutes daily, from 6:21 to 7:38, almost the amount of time most adults spend at work each day, except that young people use media seven days a week instead of five. This makes it plain that the potential of media to impact virtually every aspect of young people's lives cannot be ignored".

Cartoon characters came to life as animation progressed and became a standard in the filmmaking world. Signature characters such as Mickey Mouse and Bugs Bunny gained stardom through cartoon shorts starring other famous characters such as Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Daffy Duck, Goofy, Porky Pig and Pluto. On the big screen, Snow White was one of the first cartoon characters, along with her seven famous dwarfs (Donahue, n.d). In addition, Walt Disney, William Hanna, Joseph Barbera, and other animators and their studios created

such memorable characters as Mickey Mouse, Tom and Jerry, Tweety and Sylvester, and Bugs Bunny (Furniss, 2007).

Since the early 1960s, when cartoons became an established television feature, they have been the source of two major controversies: commercialization/merchandising and violence. These two issues have taken on special significance with the cartoon since so many of its viewers are impressionable children. The complicated issue of violence on television and its potential impact on behavior has yet to be resolved; but in response to critics of cartoon violence, broadcasters have censored violent scenes from many theatrical films shown on television. Oddly enough, scenes that were considered appropriate for a general audience in a theater in the 1940s are now thought to be too brutal for today's Nintendo-educated children (Butler, n. d).

The manner by which cartoons were made has changed as well. To save the cost of drawing and coloring every panel of animation by hand, Disney has started using computers to do the work for them. And starting with *Toy Story*, Disney has worked with Pixar to make 3D films using entirely computer animation. Since 1995 when *Toy Story*, the first entirely 3D movie, 15 more movies using 3D animation have been made. Including *Finding Nemo*, *Wall-E*, and the *Incredibles*, these movies have become extremely popular amongst kids, some of them even winning Oscars. Because of the popularity of these films, less hand drawn or 2D animated films are coming out. The evolutionary concept of reproductive success is clear in this case, because if 3D movies continue to make Disney more money, this new type of cartoon movie might be the only type of movie Disney will come out with (Atonoff, 2007).

Another change in cartoons and movies because of technology is how fast new episodes or new movies can be made. By using computers instead of hand drawings or colorings, cartoons can be made faster than ever. A new episode can be produced quickly enough so that a new season of a show can have a new episode every week for several months. Shows with cleaner art from computer programs, and have their episodes come out faster are cheaper to make and are preferred by the creators to be shown since in the long run, they will be more likely to make a bigger profit.

## Television and Social Behaviour

Social behavior is a term used to describe the general conduct exhibited by individuals within a society. It is essentially in response to what is deemed acceptable by a person's peer group or involves avoiding behavior that is characterized as unacceptable. This type of human behavior primarily determines how individuals interact with one another within a group or society. Social behaviour is a totality of all the interactions that a child engages in ranging from his/her conduct to diction, dress sense and even preferences. It also means the way in which a person reacts to a set of conditions. A more technical definition of social behaviour is that given by Hartup (1965, p.122), Social behavior consists of activity elicited by stimuli emanating from people or activity which, in itself, possesses stimulus value for people.

Cognitive behaviour refers to the ability to judge and reason effectively and having a perception of surroundings. Children cognitive ability is not as developed as that of the adults; this has implication on the meaning that they make out of the things they watch on television. The age of the child is another factor that differentiate how television impacts on the child; Wartella & Robb (2007, p.42) note that children under two years of age are less able to systematically learn as much from television as they do from human interaction. Studies have shown that television has impact on children's cognitive behaviour. The kind of impact television has however depends on the kind of content that children are exposed to. Children who watch educational programming are more likely have higher grades, read more books, place greater value on achievement, and show more creativity than children who watch more violent or purely 'entertainment' television (Diehl and Toelle, 2011, p.3).

While children are watching cartoons, there is a form of learning process that is going on. Whatever children learn while watching cartoons, they tend to act out thereby influencing their mode of socializing with other children and with the world in general. Baran and Davis (2009, p.217) citing Horace Newcomb's book *Television: The Critical View* said "this book has useful insights produced by researchers in popular culture, emphasizing that popular media content

generally, and television programming specifically are much more complex than they appear on the surface. Multiple levels of meaning are often present”.

The above means that there is a lot more than goes on when a child is watching a cartoon. Some level of learning is going on. This will in turn affect the development of the child’s social behaviour as a whole. Baran and Davis (2009, p.200) argue that “Media have become a primary means by which, many of us experience or learn about many aspects of the world around us. Even when we do not learn about these ideas of the world from the media, we learn from other people who got their ideas of the world from the media”. An American study found that many cartoons can be harmful to the mental health of children under the age of 7, as they have difficulty distinguishing reality from fantasy as seen on television (Federman 1998, p.10).

Wilson (2008) also explores how media exposure affects children’s social development. It was established that violent television programming contributes to children’s aggressive behavior. There is also an indication that playing violent video games can have the similar harmful effect on children. Invariably, if children spend time with educational programs and situation comedies targeted to youth, such media exposure can have more prosocial effects by increasing children’s altruism, cooperation and even tolerance for others.

## **Television Cartoons and Child Development**

“From the time children learn to talk, they are mesmerized by the sounds and moving images of Sesame Street” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p.87). Meyrowitz cited in Buonanno (2008, p.19) says television “escorts children across the globe before they have permission to cross the street”. This underscores the role that television plays in the life of a child. Cartoons have been the favorite viewing choice of kinds. Cartoons are very entertaining and children do not like to be bored, so that is a good match. Cartoons also provide opportunity for children to learn so many things, and if fact expand children’s imagination. Besides, many cartoon contents are fantastic, this makes children get carried away by what they see though far from reality. Unfortunately, many of cartoons are filled with

violence and bad language and therefore have a negative impact on a child's developing mind; a child's mind is like a sponge absorbs everything they see and hear. Garden 2008) notes that If they are constantly exposed to cartoons with violence and fighting, it will affect them morally and may lead to teenage violence in the future" In their book "Psychology", Bourne & Ekstrand, (1982, p.35) had this to say about television and child development:

One of the most surprising things about television is that until recently nobody cared about its effects on human development. Although television stations are licensed by the federal government, there has been little supervision of program content considering that 25% of all television programs are aimed at children, that 96% of all U.S homes contain at least one set, and that one quarter of a child's waking hours up to the age of 18 is spent watching television, it is no surprise that the medium is finally been seen as the pervasive socializing agent it really is.

Meyrowitz (1985, p.242) observes that "television thrusts children into a complex adult world, and it provides the impetus for children to ask the meanings of actions and words they would not yet have heard or read about without television". This is one of the reasons why adults often wondered how expanded the understanding of modern children have become. The influence that these television programmes, especially, cartoons have on children can be either negative or positive. Positively, television cartoon is something that families can watch together and laugh at; it provides a medium of family bonding because some cartoons such as *Tom and Jerry* are ageless and humorous to any age group. Also, investigations by the American Pediatrics Association have led to the recognition that entertainment television has become a major teaching agent and, therefore, plays a widely unrecognized but potent influence on the development of children (Muss, 1999).

Negatively, it is argued that children who watch television are less likely to participate in more rewarding activities such as sports or reading. In fact, some sicknesses such as obesity has been associated with addiction to television viewing. Also television cartoons have been seen to create stereotypes with

its selective presentation of characters and stories thus giving the viewer (i.e. children) a false image of the world (Bourne & Ekstrand, 1982). In a study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2003, it was found out that nearly half (47 per cent) of parents with children between the ages of 4 and 6 report that their children have imitated aggressive behaviors from TV (Rideout, Vandewater & Wartella, 2003, p.8).

Also, children remember more of actions when they see it on television than when they hear it on radio because visual images help memory. But their thinking becomes more imaginative when they listen to the radio. Psychologists fear that children who are raised on TV “may have more information but be less imaginative and be less verbally precise and less mentally active than earlier generations raised with radio” (Wade & Travis, 1993, p.65).

## Parental Supervision

Parental supervision is an important factor to be discussed in this study because it can affect how the media influence children. The amount of parental involvement in supervising media exposure of children affects the influence the media have on them. Abelard (1999) wrote: “We live in an era where both parents are often working and children have more unsupervised time. It is essential that you make time for children and regularly inform yourself of their day to day experiences, including while they are at school if they attend school”(para4).

Television is rarely the only source of social learning and its influence depends on other sources such as parents, friends, teachers, etc. (McQuail, 2005). Josephson (1995, p.15) notes that “parents are the best mediators of their children’s viewing”. She further says that there are a number of ways parents can limit their children’s exposure to violence. Restricting the amount and types of programmes children watch is probably the most effective and common means of mediation for children of all ages. However, there are also strategies that are specifically appropriate for children at different ages. For older children, it is more useful for parents to discuss, explain, and challenge television. By doing so, parents can help their children to interpret television materials and overcome

the effect that televised violence has on their attitudes and behaviour (Chan & McNeal, 2003). Abanto (2014, p.10) notes that ‘a child develops selfconfidence, good sense of responsibility, and communication competence if the family he/she grew up with encourages open communication and warm display of care and love. When a child is securely attached to the family through active and co-viewing mediation, it will help the child process what is right and wrong in what he/she is viewing, and learn to cope realistically with social pressures and expectations.

## **Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory emphasizes the “reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental determinants” of human behaviour (Bandura, 1977: vii). It stresses the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Bandura (1977, p.198) states:

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, 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.

Social learning occurs through four main stages of imitation, namely: close contact, imitation of superiors, understanding of concepts, and role model behaviour. As explained by Baran and Davis (2003, p.196), the component processes underlying observational learning are attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation. Attention includes modeled events (distinctiveness, affective valence, complexity, prevalence, functional value) and observer characteristics (sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement). Retention involves symbolic coding, cognitive or organization, symbolic rehearsal, motor rehearsal. Motor Reproduction, includes

physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, accuracy of feedback. And Motivation involves external, vicarious and self-reinforcement.

From the discussion, it can be reliably argued that this theory appropriately addresses how television cartoons help in shaping the social behaviour of children. This is because these children are repeatedly exposed to these cartoons that affect their social behavior. They engage in a form of social learning process through some of the attributes as portrayed on TV.

## **Method**

The study adopted survey method; it was chosen because it is appropriate for assessing opinions and trends. The aim of this study is to find out the opinions of children, as well as their parents on the influence of television cartoons on their social behaviour. The population for this study included pupils from age 8 to 12 in primary 4 to 6 in in two schools. The selected schools, Kingdom Heritage, Ota, Nigeria, has a total of 217 pupils from primary 4 to 6 and The Bells Primary school, also in Ota, Nigeria has a total of 71 pupils from primary 4 to 6. The pupils in primary 4 to 6 were purposively chosen because they are in the position to complete the copies of the questionnaire. These schools were chosen because they have a good representation of children from different parts of Nigeria and a major percentage of the pupils come from middle class backgrounds, where they can afford cable TV which gives them unlimited access to a number of television cartoon stations. The sample size for the study is 150 respondents; 100 pupils and 50 parents. For the 100 pupils, the researcher chose 50 pupils each from Kingdom Heritage model school and The Bells primary school. The remaining 50 were distributed among the parents from both schools. A session of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also conducted in each of the schools with 10 children participants in each session.

## Results

The demographic analysis of the children respondents showed that 43% were males while 57% were females; 7% of them were 8 years old, 39% were 9 years old, 41% were 10 years old, 11% were 11 years old and 2% were 12 years old. Also, 21% of the respondents were in primary 4, 62% in primary 5 and 17% were in primary 6. For the parents, 98% of them were women and 2% men.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Hours Per Week</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Everyday</b>	57%	<b>1-3 hours</b>	66%
<b>Three times a week</b>	24%	<b>4-6 hours</b>	20
<b>Once a week</b>	19%	<b>7-9 hours</b>	6%
<b>Total</b>	100% n= 100	<b>10 hours &amp; above</b>	8%
		<b>Total</b>	100 n=50

Table 1: Respondents' (Children) frequency of watching TV Cartoons

The table above shows that 57% of the population watch television cartoons everyday while 24% watch it 3 times a week and 19% watch it once a week. This implies that a higher percentage of the respondents watch TV cartoon every day. The second part of the table shows that majority (66%) of the children watch cartoon for about 1 to three hours a week, an indication of children familiarity with cartoons.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Local Stations	9%
Satellite i.e. DSTV	91%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% n=100</b>

Table 2: Respondents' (Children) Source of TV Cartoons

The data in Table 2 shows the source from which respondents watch their television cartoons from. While 9% of the respondents watch from local stations like AIT, Silverbird, NTA, etc., while 91% watch their cartoons from DSTV stations like Cartoon Network, Boomerang, Disney Channel, etc. This is a clear indication that children watch cartoon mainly through satellite.

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Talk well	13.6%
Team Work	5.7%
Dress well	4.5%
Creativity	27.3%
Morals/Values	36.4%
Fighting	10.2%
Others	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% n=100</b>

Table 3: What Respondents (Children) Learn from Cartoons?

Table 3 shows what the respondents learn from television cartoons. 36% of the respondents learn morals/values, 27% of them learn creativity, 13% learn diction, 10% learn to fight, 5% learn team work and 2% learn other things from cartoons. This implies that cartoons generally expose children to varieties of good and bad things which will definitely have positive or negative effect on them.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Positively	84.4%
Negatively	15.6%
Total	100% n=50

Table 4: Parents' Response on the Kind of Influence Cartoons have on Children

The table above shows the perception of the respondents (parents) on whether cartoons affect their children negatively or positively. Overwhelming majority of parents see cartoons as having positive influence on their children.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Language	18.8%
Fighting	43.8%
Dressing	15.6%
Good Morals	6.3%
Others	15.6%
Total	100% n=50

Table 5: Respondents' (Parents) View on Affected Areas of Children's Behaviour

Table 5 pointed out that a higher percentage of parents, 43.8% are of the view that cartoon expose children to fighting and 6.3% are of the view that it boosts good morals. This is contrary to table 3, a higher percentage of the respondents' (children), 36.4% indicated that it increases good morals.

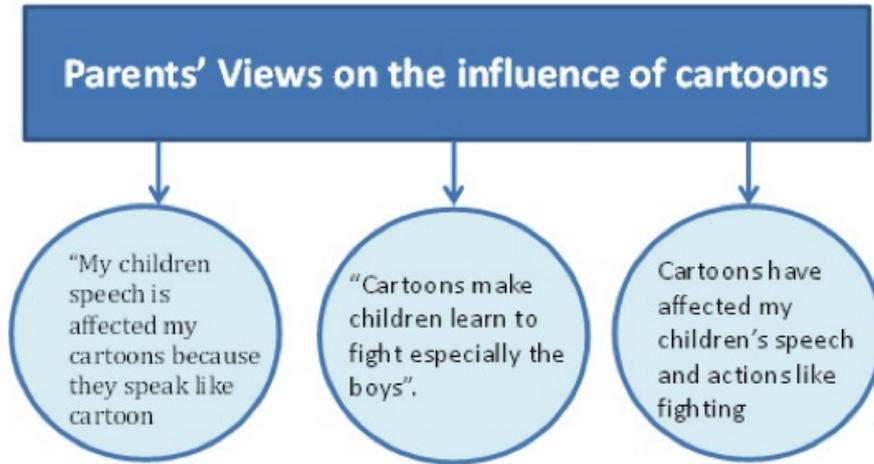


Figure 1: What aspect of your child's behaviour is mostly affected? (Parents)

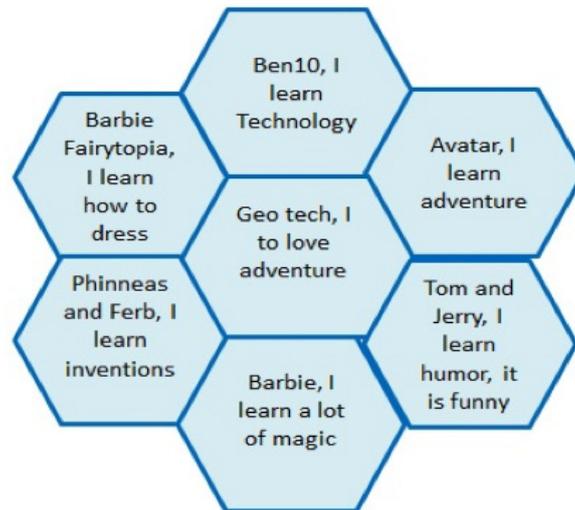


Figure 2: What is your best cartoon and what do you learn from it? (Children)

The above figures shows the views of the respondent (children) from the focus group discussion carried out.

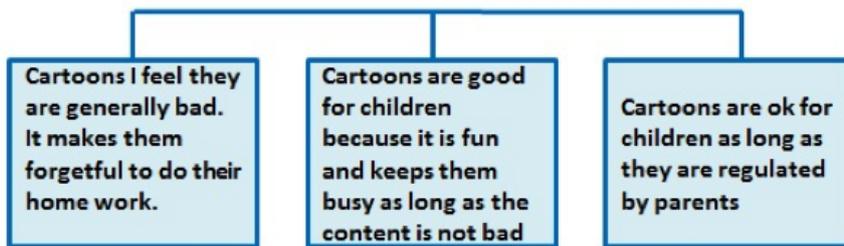


Figure 3: Parents General Opinion on Cartoons?

The above are the views of parents during the interview session.

Distribution of how often respondents watch cartoons	Distribution of respondents who learn how to fight by watching cartoons			Total
	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	
Everyday	24	29	4	57
3 times a week	7	14	3	24
Once a week	6	9	4	19
Total	37	52	11	100

Table 6: There is no significant relationship between exposure to television cartoons and Children’s Violence.  $X^2 = 3.844$ ,  $CV = 2.776$

Table 6 shows the chi-square test of the null hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between the exposure to television cartoons and children’s violence. The calculated chi square value of 3.844 is greater than the

critical value of 2.776 at 0.05 level of significance and 2 degree of freedom. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. Thus it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' exposure to television cartoons and children's violence.

Distribution of how often respondents watch cartoons	Distribution of respondents who like to talk the way cartoon characters talk			Total
	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	
Everyday	38	16	3	57
3 times a week	15	3	6	24
Once a week	7	8	4	19
Total	60	27	13	100

Table 7: There is no relationship between exposure to Television cartoons and Children's Language/diction.  $X=11.87$ ,  $CV= 2.776$

Table 7 also shows the chi-square test of the null hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between the exposure to television cartoons and children's language/diction. The calculated chi square value of 11.87 is greater than the critical value of 2.776 at 0.05 level of significance and 2 degree of freedom. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. Thus it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' exposure to television cartoons and children's language/Diction.

## Discussion

From the above data, it is obvious that most of the respondents watch television cartoons and have been exposed to it over a period of time as majority of the respondents (57%) watch cartoon programmes every day and about quarter 24% watch it thrice a day. Cartoons are without a doubt part of every child's life

because they make a point, tell a joke or tell a story, and most cartoons are about the things that every day people say and do (Atonoff, 2007).

There are various sources of television cartoons in Nigeria. The Local sources include Nigerian based television stations like African Independent Television (AIT), Silverbird, Channels Television, and National Television Authority (NTA), etc. Satellite televisions DSTV, CTL, etc.; these satellites have various stations on them that are dedicated to showing cartoons alone like Cartoon Network, Disney, Boomerang, Ktv, Nickelodeon, Kidsco, etc. The result shows that 90% of the respondents watch satellite stations while only 9 percent watch local stations.

Furthermore, the participants of the focus group discussion were asked to mention the cartoon program that they watched the most; they mentioned Ben10, Tom and Jerry, Avatar, Power puff girls, Barbie Fairytopia, Phinneas and Ferb, Spiderman, Superman, etc. Almost all of these cartoons are exclusively shown on DSTV except Tom and Jerry which is shown on DST as well as on the local stations. The source of a programme can affect a person's reaction to such programme. As stated earlier most of the cartoons watched by the respondents are from foreign stations so it is safe to assume that the cartoon programmes are foreign and therefore the content would be foreign based which means that the culture of the western world is portrayed very strongly in these cartoons. One of the parents in an interview said;

*Cartoons have influenced them (children) especially in their speech, sometimes you hear them speaking like the cartoons and I think it is better that they learn from cartoons, because we prefer them to watch it than to watch Nigerian Movies and home videos because the cartoon characters talk better and this helps the children to speak and understand English better.*

Here, we can see that this parent obviously noticed that the content of the cartoons are foreign and so is their English and accents and is preferred to the Nigerian alternatives. Children who are natural copycats imitate what they see on television especially what the cartoon characters do and this can affect their view of the world. Constant imitation of these characters can cause a child to

lose his or her own self-identity and if he/she continues to pay more attention to the resident culture of the cartoon there is a tendency for the child to adopt such as his/her own culture. However, parents do not see anything that is wrong in this.

Social behaviour has many elements which are aggressive behaviour/violence, language/diction, product preferences, dressing and so on. In Table 3, the respondents answered what they learnt from cartoons; 36% of the respondents learnt morals/values, 27% learnt creativity, 13% copied how to talk well or speak good English, 10% learnt teamwork, 5% said that that they learnt how to dress well. Data from focus group discussion corroborated the foregoing, when asked about what they learnt from cartoons. The participants responded that they learnt “technology” from Ben10 and how to make friends with people and help others”. Two FGD participants said: “*cartoons influence my behaviour because it teaches me like it educates me on science.*” One of the female participants Ifeoluwa said: “*I learn how to dress and do my hair from cartoons like Barbie; before, when I want to dress I used to wear color riot and all that but now I know what to wear*”.

In addition, another parent said:

*I think that cartoons are good for children because it provides them with fun and it keeps them busy and occupied because when they are watching cartoons if I give them food they will not even eat it. So I think that cartoons are good but when the content of the cartoons will affect them negatively, I will stop them from watching it.*

Also, another respondent gave her candid opinion on cartoons saying “cartoons broaden the level of imagination of children; it makes them believe that anything is possible, it is futuristic”.

The responses of some of the parents show that many at times cartoons or television generally is used as a bait to keep children busy and out of the way. The findings of this research agree with social learning theory which states the “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling, from observing others” who in this case are the cartoon characters.

However, some parents hold that cartoons are bad for children. One of the parents interviewed said cartoon has influenced children's behaviour negatively because they fight a lot especially the boys; *'they pick up some skills that you did not know they had; like my son now, he will just be behaving like the cartoon characters fighting'*. A child corroborated this by saying: *"I learn how to fight from Ben10; I do what Ben10 does sometimes, like anytime he punches someone I feel like punching my brother; I know it's not good but I still do it because of Ben10."*

A parent said:

*I feel that cartoons are generally bad for children, it's just that it keeps them busy especially when I do not want disturbance. I feel it is bad because it makes them forget what they have been taught, they do not concentrate on school work again, and they forget to do their homework except you force them. See it is not as if cartoons are not educative it's just that they end up learning even what you do not want them to learn, you hear them speaking funny and saying some slangs and all that.*

However, it is important to note that cartoons are not the only source of influence on the children; other factors play important roles in development of children's social behaviour. Some of these factors as indicated by parents include peer groups, church, parental influences, school, environment/culture, religion, books, etc. and this gives credence to McQuail (2005) when he noted that television is rarely the only source of social learning and its influence depends on other sources such as parents, friends, teachers, etc."

## Conclusion

The result of this study shows that children are frequently exposed to television cartoons and that this level of exposure plays a significant role in shaping their behaviour. But it was also found out that cartoons influence can be either negative or positive depending on the child and the particular cartoon that he/she

is exposed to. For instance, some of the respondents when asked what they learn from cartoons mentioned love/friendship, heroism, morals, etc. while others mentioned aggressive behaviors like fighting. It was noted by the researcher that many of the respondents who claim to learn violence, bad language, etc. from cartoons named cartoons like Ben10, Avatar, Spiderman, Superman, etc. as their favorite cartoons while those that mentioned Love/Friendship, morals etc. as what they learn mentioned mostly religious cartoons like David and Goliath, Noah Ark, etc. as their favorite cartoons.

It was also derived from this study that most of the cartoons watch by children in Nigeria are foreign based because there is a heavy influx of foreign programmes from satellite TV providers like DSTV which is what almost all the respondents claim to be watching. It is important to note here that this foreign cartoons have content that differ from Nigerian culture; their morals, values, language/diction and even mode of dressing are different from what prevail in Nigeria. The lack of locally produced cartoons in the opinion of the researcher is one of the major reasons why there are so many foreign cartoons and little or no Nigerian cartoon. But it is also noteworthy to mention that a number of the parents prefer the children to watch foreign cartoons because “it helps their English” as opposed to the Nigerian dialect as seen on locally produced programmes.

## **Recommendations**

Television plays an important role in shaping children’s social behaviour therefore it is important to regulate the content of television programmes in order to combat the negative influences that it might have on its viewers especially children who are generally vulnerable.

Unlike their TV traditional role which is to entertain children, cartoons have evolved and these days we find cartoons that have mature content that are not intended for children and should not be mistakenly aired during children’s TV viewing time which is usually between 2-8pm. It is the responsibility of

television programmers to set their programmes in a way that cartoons with mature content are not aired during children's programmes belt.

Children are young human beings between the ages of 1-12 years old. The younger children in this category (1-7) are most of the time unable to decide for themselves on what is right or wrong and real or unreal and the duty lies with the parents to decide for them as regards what they can and cannot watch. In the course of this study, the researchers discovered that most of the parents were unaware of the cartoon programmes that their children watch, they know their children watch cartoons but they are oblivious of the names and content of these cartoon programmes. This is not in order as children who generally have impressionable minds can pick different things from cartoons if they are not properly regulated. Therefore, parents and guardians should take special time to educate their children on what is right and wrong, what is appropriate for their age and what is not and regulate what they watch.

The government as well as Organizations, NGO's etc. should also play a vital role in the sponsorship and promotion of young and upcoming animators so as to encourage them to develop indigenous cartoons. People in this category should help to give these animators the right platform to do their work. There should also be some enlightenment programmes to educate parents and guardians on the need to monitor what kinds of cartoon programmes the children watch in order to ensure their appropriateness.

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