

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONVENIENCE OF CARTOON FILMS IN TERMS OF DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is investigating the convenience of cartoon films with respect to the developmental levels of pre-school children. Content analysis, one of the techniques of qualitative research, was used in the study. 10 cartoon films, five local and five foreign, showed in Turkish television channels from the year of 2014 to 2015 were investigated in terms of different points. A rubric including 20 items was used in the study and the tool was prepared by the researchers in the light of the related literature and views of the experts. Results showed that value factor was more frequently included in cartoon films while factors such as sexuality and superstitious beliefs were less likely observed. Furthermore, local cartoon films had more positive aspects in comparison with the cartoon films of foreign countries.

INTRODUCTION

Television continues its existence in an efficient manner in many houses no matter the financial status of the families is. In this way, children also start communication with television as well as their parent because television has become a member of the family (Akbulut & Kartopu, 2004; Babaroğlu, 2015; Erjem & Çağlayandereli, 2006). Television is watched by children to know and understand the world, and it also increases the information of them and develops their imagination (Aksaçlıoğlu & Yılmaz, 2007; Kaskun & Öztunç, 1999). In the preschool period, when children seek the help of the others almost in any topic, and looks for sincere relations based on trust, and imitate almost any behavior observed, children spend much of their time watching television (Postman, 1994; Oruç, Tecim & Özyürek, 2011). In this period, children not only develop the internal entity concept but also become aware of the functions of his/her body parts and organs (Senemoğlu, 1994). Since children start to acquire science, mathematics and scientific concepts in preschool period, the activities like stimuli are extremely important (Ayvaci, 2010). Children are exposed to various television broadcast and the messages in them (Akan, 1995). The television broadcast is extremely important in the formation and development of the personality of children, acquiring basic information, skills, habits and attitudes (Başal, 2005). For this reason, television programs must have many positive influences like developing the world and language of children, for children, help their education, and guide their mental and creative activities (Karacoşkun, 2002). Cartoons rank the first among the programs watched by children on television (Güler, 2013; Güngör & Ersoy; 1995; Yörükoğlu, 1998). Cartoons develop with each passing day because children watch them with great interest and are entertained by them. Cartoons increase their efficiency every day (Arıkan, 2001; Can, 1995; Küskün & Öztunç, 2011). Cartoons are a door that is opened to the imaginary world from the real world for children (Türkmen, 2012). When the contributions of cartoons to the development and educational process of children is considered, it is possible to claim that they contribute to the learning and grasping of children at earlier ages, develop not only their emotion and intellectual world but also their aesthetics, enhance their viewpoint on life, make them learn universal and cognitive skills in a fun way, encourage them to think and make comparisons, imitate some behaviors like being helpful and make them learn new things, make the learning become more efficient by including audio-visual enhancement, and make them learn reading earlier by adopting cartoon characters to cartoon comics (Yağlı, 2013). For this reason, cartoons are among the most important factors that influence the development and education of preschool children.

The number of the studies dealing with the influence ways of television programs on preschool children in the

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literature is quite few especially in our country. The studies conducted (Cesur and Paker, 2007; Kara, 2015; Önder and Dağal, 2006) generally focus on children's programs. Mainly the negative influences of the television programs have been dealt with in the studies that investigate the influences of the cartoons on children. When the factors included in these studies are considered, the results of these studies are extremely important. The majority of the cartoons in Turkey are mostly from foreign origin (Öçal, 1997). However, in recent years, cartoons made in Turkey that have educational purposes have characteristics with which children can adopt themselves (Öktem, Sayıl & Özen, 2006). The purpose of the study, which has been designed by considering these properties, is determining whether the cartoons are suitable for the developmental stages of the preschool children or not.

The Question of the Study

The answer to the question "How is the suitability of the cartoons to the developmental stages of the preschool children?" has been sought in the study.

Sub Questions

The contents of the native and foreign cartoons that are prepared for preschool children;

- How are the cartoons when evaluated in terms of ethical development and development of values of children?
- How are the cartoons when considered in terms of including violence and character traits?
- How are the cartoons when considered in terms of including cultural elements?
- How are the cartoons when considered in terms of including superstitions?
- How are the cartoons when considered in terms of including sexual elements?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study has been based on document review method. The document review covers the analysis of the written documents on the target topic of a study (Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2013). In this context, a quantitative research model has been designed in the study.

The population of the study consists of 5 parts of 10 cartoons released on televisions in 2014-2015 period. The sample of the study consists of the 5 parts of 10 cartoons released on televisions in 2014-2015 period.

Table 1. The cartoons watched in the scope of the study

| Types of the Cartoons | Names of the Cartoons |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Foreign Cartoons | Ben 10 |
| | Caillou |
| | Pororo |
| | Johnny Bravo |
| | Heidi |
| Native Cartoons | Niloya |
| | Pepee |
| | Folk Tales of Keloglan |
| | Dear Bro |
| | Köstebeğgiller |

Data Collection Instruments

Between the years 2014 and 2015, an analytical rubric has been formed by receiving the viewpoints of specialists and examining the literature on the cartoons released on Turkish televisions. The rubric prepared by the authors consists of 5 criteria (cultural elements, superstitious messages, values, violent elements, including sexual elements) and 20 items based on 3 levels. During the formation of the rubrics, 2 Turkish Language and Literature teachers and 4 Preschool teachers were contacted.

The cartoons determined were examined by considering the questions of the study in terms of cultural elements, superstitious messages, values, violent elements and sexual elements. These elements were separated into sub-elements and the study was examined in the light of these criteria.

Table 2. The elements of the Study

| The Elements | Sub-Elements |
|------------------------|---|
| Cultural elements | Foreign Cultural elements (Christmas, birthday, Halloween) Turkish cultural elements (Music, dances, verbal messages, artistic works, food, Islamic discourses, Islamic visual messages) |
| Superstitious Messages | Evil Eye Bead Various Verbal Messages Fantastic Elements (Magic, spell, changing dimensions, etc.) |
| Values | Responsibility Justice Self confidence Sharing Solidarity Respect Love Goodness-Tolerance Peace |
| Violent Elements | Physical Violence Verbal Violence Psychological Violence Negative Character Properties |
| Sexual Elements | Sexual Connotations in Friendship Physical Sexual |

Data Analysis

The Inductive Analysis, which is one of the exploratory content analysis methods, has been used in the study. The Inductive Analysis is conducted for the purpose of revealing the underlying concepts of the data given in an encoded manner and the relations between these concepts (Miles, & Huberman, 1994). 3 parts of 10 cartoons (5 domestic-5 foreign) which were selected randomly for Inductive Analysis were determined. The cartoons were encoded by watching by the authors of the study. He encoded cartoons were evaluated with the rubric prepared. The grading in the rubric was realized as follows; if the relevant element is not included, 1 points; if given some place, 3 points; and given place mostly, 5 points. The cartoons might receive 5 points according to each item in the rubric. 5 parts of 10 native and foreign cartoons were included in the study. There were 25 parts of the cartoons in total. When the cartoons are assessed in terms of each item, they might receive 125 points at the maximum level. Considering this situation, the percentage of each elements in the cartoons was determined.

FINDINGS

In this part, the data obtained at the end of the Inductive Analysis were given in percentages and categories.

Table 3. The results on including cultural and superstitious belief elements

| Categories | Contents of the Item | Native Cartoons | Foreign Cartoons (25 |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | (25 rubric) | rubric) |
| | | Percentage Points (%) | Percentage Points (%) |
| Cultural elements Including | Foreign culture | 4.8 | 51.2 |
| | Turkish culture | 80.8 | 23.2 |
| | Islamic culture | 67.2 | 21.6 |

When Table 3 is examined in terms of cultural elements, it is observed that foreign cartoons have a rate of nearly 22% in terms of Islamic Culture, and 23% in terms of Turkish culture. It has been determined that the native cartoons the Turkish and Islamic culture at the highest level.

Table 4. The Results on Including Superstitious Elements

| Categories | Contents of the Item | Native Cartoons (25 rubric) | Foreign Cartoons (25 rubric) |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Percentage Points (%) | Percentage Points (%) |
| Including Superstitious Belief Elements | Verbal Superstitious Elements | 22.4 | 28.0 |
| | Visual Superstitious Elements | 32.0 | 25.6 |

When Table 4 is examined in terms of superstitious belief elements, it is observed that native and foreign cartoons have nearly equal percentages in Verbal and Visual Superstition Categories with the native cartoons.

Table 5. The results on values

| Categories | Contents of the Item | Native Cartoons (25 rubric) | Foreign Cartoons (25 rubric) |
|------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Percentage Points (%) | Percentage Points (%) |
| Values | Responsibility | 74.4 | 56.8 |
| | Justice | 34.4 | 31.2 |
| | Self confidence | 74.4 | 51.2 |
| | Sharing | 66.4 | 52.0 |
| | Solidarity | 92.0 | 79.2 |
| | Respect | 63.2 | 48.8 |
| | Love | 87.2 | 67.2 |
| | Goodness-Tolerance | 90.4 | 71.2 |
| Peace | 28.0 | 26.4 | |

When Table 5 is examined in terms of values, it is observed that the native and foreign cartoons have the Goodness-Tolerance and solidarity elements in them. The Goodness-Tolerance, which is in the values category, solidarity, Love, Responsibility and Self-confidence elements are included mostly in the native cartoons. In addition, it is also observed that the native and foreign cartoons share the level in terms of Peace. On the other hand, the Peace element has a rate of 28% and included at the least level in native cartoons. The same situation is also observed in foreign cartoons with a rate of 26%.

Table 6. The results on including violent elements

| Category | Contents of the Item | Native Cartoons (25 rubric) | Foreign Cartoons (25 rubric) |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Percentage Points (%) | Percentage Points (%) |
| Including Violent Elements | Physical Violence | 14.4 | 40.0 |
| | Verbal Violence | 20.8 | 40.0 |
| | Psychological Violence | 17.6 | 38.4 |
| | Negative Character | 17.6 | 36.8 |

When Table 6 is examined in terms of Verbal Violence elements, it is observed that native cartoons have a rate of nearly 21%, and Foreign cartoons have a rate of 40% physical and verbal violent elements. It has been determined that native cartoons have Violent elements less than Foreign cartoons.

Table 7. The results on including sexual elements

| Category | Contents of the Item | Native Cartoons (25 rubric) | Foreign Cartoons (25 rubric) |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Percentage Points (%) | Percentage Points (%) |
| Including Sexual Elements | Sexual Connotations in Friendship | 0.0 | 14.4 |
| | Physical Sexual | 0.0 | 14.4 |

When Table 7 is examined in terms of Verbal Violence elements, it is observed that native cartoons do not include sexual elements, but Foreign cartoons include them. In Foreign cartoons, sexual elements are included at

a rates of 14% when Sexual Connotations in Friendship and Physical Sexual elements are considered.

DISCUSSION

Today, television has the duty of being a window opened to the world and is located at a very important position in many houses (Yapıcı, 2006). In the formation of Popular culture, and in the spread of the values of this popular culture, the media especially the television has a very important role and it cannot be denied (Şentürk, & Turğut, 2011; Yücel, 2015). For this reason, television has many important influences in terms of the family and especially the children.

It is considered that native cartoons are more proper for our Turkish and Islamic culture. When we examine the literature in this context, it is observed that cartoons come to the forefront with teaching cultural values, and the relevant studies show similar properties (Öztekin, 2008; Türkmen, 2012; Yağlı, 2013; Yaman, Bayburtlu, Tekir and Kırman, 2015). As a culturally influential art, cartoons provide children with conscious and deliberate reference frames that will enable children sole the codes of the cultural environment in which they are living, and therefore they have the role of being an important tutor for children (Kaba, 2014; Keloğlu İşler, 2014).

It has been determined in the study that native and foreign cartoons include superstitious belief elements, and even the rate of this element is nearly close to each other. Yorulmaz (2013) conducted a study and reported that this situation could influence children in a bad manner. Especially the events that happen during perceptual processes or wrong connections that might be established among objects will become superstitious belief elements after they are strengthened in time (Ayten, & Köse, 2009). This situation is extremely important for children. According to Piaget, since preschool children are at the symbolic processes, they have difficulty in discriminating between imagination and reality (Senemoğlu, 2009). Including superstitious belief elements in cartoons might lead to unwanted situations.

It has been determined in the study that native cartoons do not include sexual elements. It is considered that this situation stems from the fact that Turkey is under the Islamic culture, and the people living in Turkey being more sensitive on the topic. In Foreign cartoons, although the rate seems low, it is considered that these elements are presented in a level that can influence children. According to the Psycho-sexual Development Theory of Freud, these children and in the Phallic Period, and are interested in sexual differences and genital organs (Aydın, 2007). Teaching the subjects that have to be given during early adulthood in early ages can lead to dangers. It is not possible for children to protect themselves from videos that include extreme violence and sexuality (İlhan and Çetinkaya, 2013). For this reason, cartoons must be organized in a manner that would not include violence and sexual elements (Coyne, & Whitehead, 2008; İnanlı, 2009). It has been determined in the study that cartoons include violent elements and the native cartoons include less violent elements than the foreign ones. Children learn by imitating, try to apply what they learn, and imitate the cartoon characters they see (Özakar and Koçak, 2012). Uncontrolled television watching and unconscious wrong models may lead to the situation in which the personalities of children are shaped in a wrong manner (Öztürk and Karayağız, 2007).

It has been determined in the study that native and foreign cartoons include goodness, tolerance and solidarity at the highest level. However, bot native and foreign cartoons include less peace elements. Cartoons must carry positive properties in terms of values education (Samur, Demirhan, Soydan, & Önkol, 2014). Especially the ethical behaviors of the cartoon heroes influence children in a positive manner, and have important roles in values education (Güçlü, 2015). This situation might be assessed as an important contribution to the ethical development of children who are at egocentric level. In this way, it might be considered that they may have positive influences both in mental terms and in ethical terms. Making children acquire these values at earlier ages is extremely important (Işitan, 2014). The positive influences of cartoons may help families.

CONCLUSION

The development at preschool period is very fast, and creates permanent influences in the lives of individuals, and is important in this way. The most important things is guiding children to watch programs that include positive contents or decreasing the negative contents of the existing ones in some way or another (Özdemir Adak, & Ramazan, 2012). According to the results of the study, the positive properties of the native cartoons are higher than those of the foreign ones. When the contribution the cartoons to the development and educational process of children are considered, it is considered that choosing native cartoons will be more suitable.

Suggestions

- All parts of a selected cartoon may be examined in detail.
- The increase in the number of the native cartoons will help to raise good model individuals who have nationalistic conscience, which is stated in the Basic Principles of the National Education. For this

reason, native cartoons may be preferred in the preschool period.

- The existences of negative elements in cartoons that are imported from foreign countries threaten the healthy development of the children living in Turkey. For this reason, the important cartoons must be examined in detail by specialists who have academic insight and the negative elements must be eliminated before broadcasting.
- Native cartoons also have the duty in transferring the Turkish Language, which is one of the most important elements of the Turkish Culture. The fact that native cartoons will have an important role in teaching Turkish must be considered, and academicians who have duty in the field of Turkish Education must be consulted.

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