

Parental Sources of Educational Cartoons and User Guidelines for Children in Port Harcourt

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Abstract

Educational cartoon is an animated cartoon for delivering learning with some humour, used for teaching children alphabets, numeracy, colours, drawing, English language and its vocabularies. It encourages reading among children and aim at developing skills in mathematics, sciences and other disciplines. Educational cartoon helps children relax and encourage flexible thinking and must be carefully selected, monitored and supervised by parents for the educational objectives to be achieved. The study investigated parental sources of educational cartoons and the guidelines parents set for children. The area of the study was Port Harcourt city. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population consisted of 1,123,998 literate parents. The sample for the study was 300 parents. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings indicated that parents sourced educational cartoons from six out of ten listed sources such as: subscription to satellite cable stations, purchasing of cartoon in CD or DVD forms, local/terrestrial television stations, book shops, stationary vendors and computer games. Eight guidelines adopted in using educational cartoons were also identified. The study concludes that the sources of educational cartoon in the area are limited; also the guidelines parents apply in children's use of educational cartoons were limited. The study therefore, recommends that Government and institutions should see to the provision of different sources of educational cartoons.

Keywords: Parents, Educational Cartoon, Learning, Television, Parental Guidelines

Introduction

Providing an enabling environment is essential for optimal child development. This involves provision of basic needs such as food, clothing, play materials including toys and educational cartoons. Educational cartoons use television programs involving animated cartoons in the field for children. It is a way of delivering learning with some humor, without the issue of comedic timing being a factor, (Ogbonnaya and Anyakoha 2014).

According to Ogbonnaya (2013), educational cartoons are those cartoons that are used to teach children alphabets, numeracy, colors and drawings; and English language and its vocabulary. Cartoons encourage reading among children and aim at developing skills in mathematics, sciences and other

disciplines. Sultan (2014) noted that children depend on cartoons rather than reading from books. The pictorial displays enable to remember things easily, while keeping at their attention. Yaman (2010), showed that cartoons are vital and effective as educational tool. Children of different ages have been seen to watch and understand educational cartoons in different ways. Children experience it primarily as fragmented displays of light and sound which are only intermittently able to group into meaningful combination such as recognizable human or animal characters. According to Aliyeva (2014), children aged 18months and above develop interest towards television and later within 2 years and above become "active

viewers”.

The experiences children get from these educational cartoons are beneficial to their development. Doring (2002) noted that education cartoons help children relax and encourage flexible thinking and children in the middle childhood age (6-12years) watch these cartoons at all times-in the morning, before going to school, after school, during lunch and even when doing homework. Over the past few decades, the use of cartoons as learning and teaching materials have evolved both in homes as well as in schools. Cartoons are more appreciated by children and has become a form of reward as well as punishment used by parents to motivate children as a reward or to deprive its use as a punishment.

Television cartoons viewing, especially for children within the middle childhood age (6-12 years) is now the order of the day, (Ogbonnaya and Anyakoha, 2014). Several cartoon channels have been made available on the media, thereby giving children more options to choose from. Yousuf, Shehzad, & Hassan (2015) showed that children entertain themselves more with cartoons than with physical activities and as such their mental and physical capabilities are influenced. The moral behaviors exhibited by the cartoon characters may alter children's behavior and language which are the core components of learning. Also, some cartoons have been shown to teach violence and aggression among children whom researchers such as Ogbonnaya (2013) have proved to be vulnerable and susceptible at the tender formative years.

Smith (2011), highlighted the guidelines for use of cartoons such as limiting the time by which children watch cartoon programs, choosing cartoons programs that are suitable and teachable for the various categories of children and

discussing the content of cartoon programs in the home. Parental control and restrictions on access to cartoons as well as other programs may also be employed when the need arises for such measure to be taken. For instance, Kartheleen (2011) outlined some of the television cartoons guideline as follows: Turning off the television when not in use; selection of suitable children programs; allowing children to watch fun programs with no adult themes; and watching the programs with children while discussing salient points. These guidelines will be most effective when enforced by parents, guardians and other adult members of the household who all are responsible for the up-bringing of children.

The accessibility to cartoon programs through the internet, DSTV and other electronic gadgets makes it affordable for families to subscribe to and thus have the privilege of viewing various channels including “cartoon network” that are strictly dedicated to cartoons. It therefore becomes necessary to control children's cartoons viewing, choose the cartoons that are educational, control the time children spend in viewing and assess the impact of these cartoons on children academics or homework performance

The lack of quality family time stemming from the busy schedule of parents makes it difficult for them to supervise what the children watch to ascertain the educational quality. Consequently children do what seems best to them with the cartoons and learn what may not be in their interest or that of the family and the society at large. Again Ogbonnaya (2013), revealed that Children who consistently spend more than 4 hours per day watching cartoons are more likely to be overweight, show aggressive behavior and sometimes fear

that the world is scary, thinking that something bad will happen to them.

In line with this, the study investigated the educational cartoon utilization practices of parents in child rearing in Port Harcourt, sources from which parents get educational cartoons for children and the guidelines set for children in the viewing of educational cartoons.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to investigate parental sources of educational cartoon and guidelines set for children in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the study:

1. Identified the sources from which parents get educational cartoons for children.
2. Identified parental guidelines set for children in the viewing of educational cartoons.

Methodology

Research Design of the Study: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design.

Area of the Study: The area of the study was Port Harcourt City Rivers State, Nigeria. Port Harcourt is a cosmopolitan city, with the bustle of urban life manifested in the availability of electricity and all what it takes to use the electricity such as television and DSTV or the satellite cable. The city has a lot of people working in both private and government establishment offices, thereby, making alternative arrangement for child care such as provision of television viewing materials to keep the children busy

Population for the study: The population consisted of one million ,one hundred and twenty three thousand, nine hundred and ninety eight (1,123,998) families across

the twelve communities in Port Harcourt with literate parents (father or mother).

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample size was 300 parents (male or female). Multi-stage sampling was adopted in selecting the respondents from the six communities in Port Harcourt. Six communities representing 50% of the total number of communities in Port Harcourt were sampled using simple random sampling technique. Out of the selected communities 5 streets were randomly selected. This gave a total of 30 streets (that is 5 streets X 6 communities). Ten parents (father or mother) with children between 6 to 12 years old were then purposively sampled from each of the streets giving a total of 300 parents.

Instrument for Data Collection: A 26 item structured questionnaire was used for data collection. It comprised of two sections; A and B. The items were scored on a 5 – point responses scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three experts from Vocational Teacher Education Department and one from Mass Communication Department all from University of Nigeria Nsukka. The reliability of the data obtained was analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability technique. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. This indicated that the instrument was about 76% reliable and was considered thus.

Method of Data Collection

Three hundred 300 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by hand with the help of three briefed research assistants. The

respondents were given one week to complete the questionnaire at home. Retrieval of the administered questionnaire was also by hand. Out of the 300 copies administered, 273 were completely filled and returned representing 91% rate of return.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. The cutoff point mean was set at 3.00. Any item with a mean value of 3.00 and above was considered Agreed while items with mean values less than 3.00 were regarded as Disagreed.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Mean Responses on Sources from which Parents Get Educational Cartoons for Their Children. (N = 273)

SN	Sources of educational cartoons.	$\bar{X}_G$	SD	Remark
1	Subscription to satellite cable stations.	4.04	1.07	A
2	Purchase of cartoon in CD or DVD forms.	4.29	0.77	A
3	Local/Terrestrial television stations.	3.72	0.95	A
4	From book shops.	4.18	0.89	A
5	From stationary vendors	3.83	1.01	A
6	From Online shops	2.60	1.12	D
7	From Internet websites.	2.90	1.16	D
8	Computer games.	3.69	1.06	A
9	From friends /neighbours.	2.52	1.24	D
10	Drawings from newspapers.	2.81	1.16	D

$\bar{X}_G$ = Overall Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; RQ = Research Questions; A = Agree; D = Disagree

Table 1 showed that the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on 6 out of 10 identified sources of educational cartoons had mean values that ranged from 3.69 to 4.29 which are greater than the cut-off point value of 3.00. This showed that the respondents agreed that the 6 items are sources of educational cartoons in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The mean ratings on the remaining 4 items specifically items,

6, 7, 9 and 10 were 2.60, 2.90, 2.52 and 2.81 respectively which are less than the cut-off point value of 3.00. This showed that the respondents disagreed with the 4 items as sources of educational cartoons for children in the study area. The standard deviation values of the entire 10 items ranged from 0.77 to 1.24. This indicated that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and to the mean

Table 2: Mean Responses on Guidelines Parents Set for their Children in the Viewing of Educational Cartoons. (N = 273)

SN	Guidelines set by parents for children cartoon viewing.	$\bar{X}_G$	SD	Remark
1	View cartoons; for a maximum of one hour per day.	3.87	1.11	A
2	For more than one hour per day.	4.06	0.96	A
3	Two hours per day.	4.13	0.88	A
4	Before doing home work.	2.35	1.27	D
5	While doing home work.	2.01	1.13	D
6	After doing home work.	4.02	0.99	A
7	Only on weekends.	2.76	1.24	D
8	Only during holidays.	2.96	1.30	D
9	After completing domestic work.	3.98	1.00	A
10	When parents are not watching adult programmes.	2.80	1.11	D
11	When their father is at home reading newspaper.	2.85	1.03	D
12	When members of the family are not observing siester.	2.63	1.12	D
13	Only when adults are around to monitor and supervise.	3.66	1.10	A
14	Children should not scatter things in the sitting rooms while watching cartoons	4.24	0.82	A
15	Children should handle the CDs and DVDs with care to avoid damage.	4.31	0.85	A
16	Cartoon viewing should be built into the family routine.	2.28	1.22	D

X_G = Overall Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; RQ = Research Questions; A = Agree; D = Disagree

Table 2 revealed that the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on 8 out of 16 identified guidelines set by parents for children viewing cartoons had mean values that ranged from 3.66 to 4.31 which are greater than the cut-off point value of 3.00. This showed that the respondents agreed that the 8 items are guidelines set by parents for children viewing educational cartoons in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The mean ratings on the remaining 8 items ranged between 2.01 to 2.96 which are less than the cut-off point value of 3.00. This indicated that the respondents disagreed with the 8 items as guidelines set by parents for children viewing educational cartoons in the study area. The standard deviation values of the entire 16 items ranged between 0.82 to 1.30

indicating that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and to the mean.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that parents agreed that the sources of educational cartoons for children include: subscription to satellite cable stations, purchasing of cartoon in CD or DVD forms, local/terrestrial television stations, from book shops, from stationary vendors and computer games. This is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Mamhood (2010) on the Educational Cartoons for Child's Intellectual Development, who identified the major sources of educational cartoons for children to

include television shows, computer animation, media websites, stations and channels and DVDs. Similarly, the findings of the study on sources of educational cartoons is in consonance with the findings of Akin & Shin (2011) who found that the two most common cartoons were cartoon of opinion and cartoon of jokes. While cartoon of opinion focuses on domestic politics, social themes and foreign affairs, cartoon of jokes are designed to communicate humor.

Results show that parents agreed that the guidelines set for children in viewing educational cartoons include: viewing cartoons; for a maximum of one hour per day, for more than one hour per day, two hours per day, after doing homework, after completing domestic work, only when adults are around to monitor and supervise, children should not scatter things in the sitting rooms while watching cartoons and children should handle the CDs and DVDs with care to avoid damage. This is in agreement with the submission of Kathleen (2011) who outlined television cartoon guideline as thinking of alternative to television cartoons for children, turning off the television when not being watched, watching and talking about the program together and helping children to choose suitable program. In addition, the findings of the study corroborates with that of Kam, Andrea, Jane, Leila & Nick (2003) who identified that most children are comfortable watching television cartoon in the morning, as soon as they get home from school, after dinner, while working on their homework, during weekend mornings and evenings with supervision by parents.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Educational cartoon is an animated

cartoon for delivering learning with some humor, used for teaching children alphabets, numeracy, colors, drawing, English language and its vocabularies. It encourages reading among children and aim at developing skills in mathematics, sciences and other disciplines. Media is one of the sources of educational cartoons in Port Harcourt. Educational cartoon helps children relax and encourage flexible thinking although they must be carefully selected, monitored and supervised by parents for the educational objectives to be achieved. Is quite unfortunately that most times parents in Port Harcourt City Rivers State because of their busy schedule to monitor and supervise what children watch on cartoon and as a result most time the educational objectives are not achieved. Children should be allowed to view cartoons for a specific time.

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education through Government agencies should see to the provision of different sources of educational cartoon. Also, standard guidelines should be made available to parents in Port Harcourt City of Nigeria as this will enable parents to effectively use it to achieve educational objectives.

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