



# Cartoon Addiction and Executive Functioning in School Going Children



Maryam Arshad<sup>1</sup>, Nida Zafar<sup>2\*</sup> and Dr. Rukhsana Kausar PhD<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alumnus, Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>PhD Scholar in Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore & Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Lahore Garrison University, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup>Professor and Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Management and Technology, Pakistan

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**\*Corresponding author:** Nida Zafar, Department of Psychology, Lahore Garrison University, Pakistan, Tel: 3314915677;  
Email: nida.zafar28@gmail.com

## Abstract

With the advancement in technology, human beings have turned images into moving objects, making an imaginary world of fantasy in the minds of children. Watching excessive cartoons has made children addicted to these animate objects, affecting their behavior both physically and psychologically and urging them to mimic such characters in their everyday life. The present research investigated the relationship between cartoon addiction and executive functioning in school going children. It was hypothesized: cartoon addiction is likely to predict poor executive functioning in school going children. The data was taken from the sample of 100 mothers. For assessment, Cartoon Addiction Test by Young [1] and Parent-Teacher Executive Functioning Test by Gerard, Grioia [2] were used. Findings showed that; being in nuclear family, being a second born child, gender and cartoon addiction predict poor executive functioning in school going children. This research has important implications for parents to understand the addictive behavior of their children and to take remedial measures.

**Keywords:** Cartoon addiction; Executive functioning; School going children

## Introduction

Cartoons are one of the most favorite programs of children. Cartoons play an important role by providing entertainment to the children [3,4]. Colorful, fantastic and attractive animations attract children to watch cartoon more and more [5]. School going children usually spend more than two hours every day before television screen. On weekends, this time period of two hours is usually exceeded [6]. When children spend more time in watching cartoons, they get swayed by the content shown in cartoons [7]. This is because children learn through imitation and develop certain actions in real life by observing the things they watch in cartoons [8].

At present times, children are becoming addicted to cartoons [9,10]. These cartoons include Jan, Doraemon, Horrid Henry, Barbie, Ben Ten, Superman, Mr. Bean, Tom & Jerry, The secret world of Arriety, Looney Tunes, Power Puff Girls and Oggy & Cocroaches etc. Research evidence showed that addiction to cartoon leads to disruption in cognitive and executive functioning, memory problems and affects decision making power of children. Executive functioning includes gratification, problem solving, shift, and organization of materials, inhibition, working memory, planning, self-regulation and monitoring [11].

Researchers have explored that the worse self-regulation and working memory occur in children due to watching cartoon programs [12].

Review of literature shows that numerous researchers have examined the impact of cartoon movies on children's gender development. The children learn about the clichés regarding the gender roles set by the society depicted in the form of cartoon characters. They learn from the way this character type walks, speaks and dresses up. These cartoons character have human like features. Hassan, Daniyal [13] suggested that cartoon network and its impact on behavior of school going children and focuses on the impact of watching cartoon programs on the behavior of the children. The famous channel cartoon network is admired by the children all over the world. It is broadcast 24hours a day, so children spend most of their free time in front of TV screens. This channel not only attracts the children due to its amusing colorful pictures, interesting content, and sound effects but it also inculcates positive and negative habits among children. The main factor which has a great impact on the behavior of children is violence. Violence is usually shown in most of the cartoon programs. Children are attracted by violent content. This study

investigated the impact of violence presented in cartoons on children behavior. They not only copy their favorite cartoon characters but also insist their parents to buy the same clothes or accessories as displayed by different cartoon characters. This study also shows this fact that the behavior of the children in class is affected by watching different cartoon programs [14].

Lillard, Petersosn [11] suggested that the immediate impact of different types of television programs on young children’s executive function and the goal of this study showed that the excessive use of television affects executive functioning of school going children. The findings showed that the children who watched the fast-paced cartoon have poor executive functioning. This research discussed that parents should be aware that the executive functioning of children is impaired by watching cartoons and the children also watch television due to the influence of their school friends [15]. Rai et al. [16] conducted the research on the effects of cartoon programs on behavioral, habitual and communicative changes in children. The findings showed that the children who watch excessive cartoons become more aggressive and violent. The other findings showed that cartoon watching affects the behavior of the children in positive and negative manner. The boys show more aggression in order to show their strength.

**Objectives**

The objective of the research was to investigate relationship in cartoon addiction and executive functioning in school going children. Furthermore, this research also aimed to investigate predictors of executive functioning in school going children.

**Hypotheses**

- a) H1: There is likely to be a negative relationship between cartoon addiction and poor executive functioning in school going children.
- b) H2: Cartoon Addiction is likely to predict poor executive functioning in school going children.

**Method**

**Research Design**

Correlation research design was used to investigate the relationship between addiction of cartoons and executive functioning in school going children.

**Sample**

The sample comprising of 100 mothers of school going children (n=53 boy’s mothers; n=47 girl’s mothers) were taken. The sample of mothers of school going children was taken through two private schools of Lahore. The sample of mothers of school going children was taken from nearby areas of both schools. The age range of the children was from 5 to 12 years. Demographic characteristics showed that the mean age of the participants was 7years. Most of the children belonged to primary level and the medium of instruction in school was English for eighty five percent children. Children belonged to both nuclear and joint system. Most of the children were first and second born. On average children were watching cartoons for 3hours daily. Most favorite cartoons reported by child were Jan and Doraemon. The academic percentage of the majority of the school going children was 61-70 percent (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of the Children (N=100).

Variable	M(SD)	f(%)
Age	7.97(2.33)	
<b>Sex</b>		
Boys		53(53)
Girls		47(47)
<b>Class</b>		
Nursery		16(16)
One		10(10)
Two		14(14)
Three		16(16)
Four		14(14)
Five		21(21)
Six		9(9)
<b>Medium of Instruction</b>		
English Medium		85(85)
Urdu Medium		15(15)
<b>Family System</b>		
Joint		58(58)
Nuclear		42(42)

Birth Order		
Only Child		1(1)
First born		35(35)
Middle born		39(39)
Last born		25(25)
Child duration of watching cartoon in hours per day	3.86(2.38)	Min-Max
		1-12
Child favorite cartoon		
Jan		45(45)
Doraemon		26(26)
Tom and jerry		11(11)
Oggy and cockroaches		10(10)
Benten in urdu and in English		8(8)
Favorite TV channel		
Cartoon network		37(37)
Disney		12(12)
Cinemachi Kids		3(3)
See tv		36(36)
Pogo		12(12)
Academic Percentage		
Below 50		4(4)
51-60		14(14)
61-70		25(25)
71-80		23(23)
81-90		19(19)
91-100		15(15)

### Assessment Measures

**Demographic Information Questionnaire:** Demographic Information Questionnaire comprised of different questions which was constructed by the researcher. It included information about age, class, subject, school, gender, family system, birth order, number of siblings, duration of watching cartoon of the child, favorite cartoon of the child, favorite channels of the child and academic percentage.

**Cartoon Addiction Test:** Cartoon Addiction test was developed by Young [1]. Cartoon addiction test is designed for the children who watch cartoons frequently. It consists of 20 items that measure mild, moderate and severe level of cartoon addiction. Cartoon addiction test is designed for the children who watch cartoons frequently. The answer sheet was given through which it was checked whether the participant marked on the statement which predicts cartoon addiction. The 20-item questionnaire measures characteristics and behaviors associated with compulsive use of the cartoon that include compulsivity, escapism, and dependency. The questions also assess problems related to the cartoon addiction. Questions are randomized and each statement is weighted along a Likert-scale continuum that ranges from 0=less extreme behavior to 5=most

extreme behavior for each item. The reliability index of cartoon addiction test by original author was .89 and in current research it was .94. The scale was translated in Pakistan national language Urdu.

**Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning:** This scale was developed by Gerard [2]. It was used to measure the executive functioning of the child and record the social emotional functioning. It has two forms one is for parents and another is for teacher. Parents form was used in this study. It was consisted of 86 items which measure inhibition, shift, and emotional control, initiation, working memory, plan/organization, and organization of materials and monitoring the behavior of the child. This scale was used with age range 5-18 years old. There is 3-point likert scale from 0= Not true, 1= somewhat or sometime true. 2= very true or often true. 15-20minutes were given to complete the questionnaire. The scale was translated in Urdu and this translated version of scale was used. The reliability of behavior rating inventory of executive functioning according to original author was .82 to .98. The reliability of Inhibit was .91, Shift was .81, emotional control was .92, Initiate was .82, working memory was .92, plan/ organization was .91, organization of materials was .88 and monitor was .85 and in current research it was .96.

The reliability of Inhibition was .85, shift was .89, emotional control was .79, initiate was .73, and working memory was .80 plan organizations was .89, organization of material was .78 and monitor was .76.

**Procedure**

Prior to data collection, an authority letter explaining the nature of research was sought from Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan and was presented to the authorities of schools. After getting permission from authorities of schools, researcher first selected the mothers of different students as participants from schools during their results meeting time. The mothers were selected on the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Researcher explained the nature and procedure of the study and took informed consent from the participants for data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to participants and they were told that they have right to withdraw from the research any time during the research.

Then researcher administered all assessment measures in a separate room of schools. Only those mothers were approached who signed informed consent and fulfilling inclusion criteria of the research. It took them 20 minutes approximately to fill all the assessment measures. The participants were thanked after collecting data. The collected data was fed in SPSS and results were analyzed.

**Result**

This chapter presents results based on statistical analyses of data. A series of statistical analyses was conducted to test hypotheses. The socio-demographic information of the sample was examined by computing descriptive statistics. Pearson product moment correlation was used to assess relationship in cartoon addiction and poor executive functioning. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to investigate cartoon addiction as predictor of poor executive functioning. Internal consistencies of the scales are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Psychometric Properties of Cartoon Addiction Scale and Executive Functioning Inventory (N=100).

	<i>k</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>	Range	
					<i>Actual</i>	<i>Potential</i>
Cartoon Addiction	20	39.08	21.35	.94	20-88	20-120
Executive Functioning	86	153.01	33.91	.96	86-231	86-258
Inhibition	15	25.97	6.20	.85	15-36	15-45
Shift	11	20.39	5.76	.79	11-29	11-33
Emotional Control	10	18.65	4.08	.79	10-27	10-30
Initiate	8	14.52	3.66	.73	8-22	8-24
Working memory	11	19.32	4.76	.80	11-29	11-33
Plan/ Organization	15	26.23	7.04	.89	15-39	15-45
Organization	8	13.97	3.63	.78	8-23	8-24
Monitor	8	14.14	3.63	.76	8-21	8-24

Note: *M*=Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation, *k*= Total number of items, *α*= Alpha; Cronbach's index of internal consistency.

**Table 3:** Relationship between Demographic Characteristics, Cartoon Addiction and Executive Functioning in School Going Children (N=100).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Gender	.12	-												
3. DWC	.12	.02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Family System	.23**	.14*	.14*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Birth Order	.14*	.16*	.23**	.06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. Cartoon Addiction	-.10	.36**	.31**	.43**	.80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7. Inhibition	-.09	.21**	.71**	.55**	.67**	.71**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8. Shift	-.09	.07	.55**	.71**	.53**	.54**	.77**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9. Emotional Control	-.09	.16	.64**	.81**	.73**	.62**	.67**	.78**	-	-	-	-	-	-
10. Initiate	-.09	.06	.55**	.73**	.73**	.69**	.75**	.87**	.69**	-	-	-	-	-
11. Working Memory	.04	.20*	.73**	.82**	.82**	.75**	.66*	.67**	.92**	.65**	-	-	-	-
12. Planning	.03	.09	.68**	.84**	.65**	.74**	.72**	.82**	.83**	.75**	.82**	-	-	-
13. Organization	-.14	.04	.67**	.74**	.60**	.64**	.70**	.70**	.79**	.71**	.54**	.79**	-	-
14. Monitor	.01	.16	.67**	.85**	.69**	.85**	.69**	.81**	.80**	.68**	.77**	.85**	.85**	-

Note: DWC= duration of watching cartoon; Family System, Nuclear= 1; Joint= 2, \*p<.05; \*\*p<.0.

Psychometric analysis showed that all scales have moderate to good reliability index. It was hypothesized that cartoon addiction would positively relate to poor executive function in school going children. Pearson product moment correlation was

applied for analysis. Results are presented in Table 3. Results of correlation analysis showed that cartoon addiction have significant positive correlation with poor executive functioning. It was hypothesized that cartoon addiction is like to predict poor executive functioning in school going children. Hierarchical regression analysis was applied for analysis. Results are presented in Table 4.

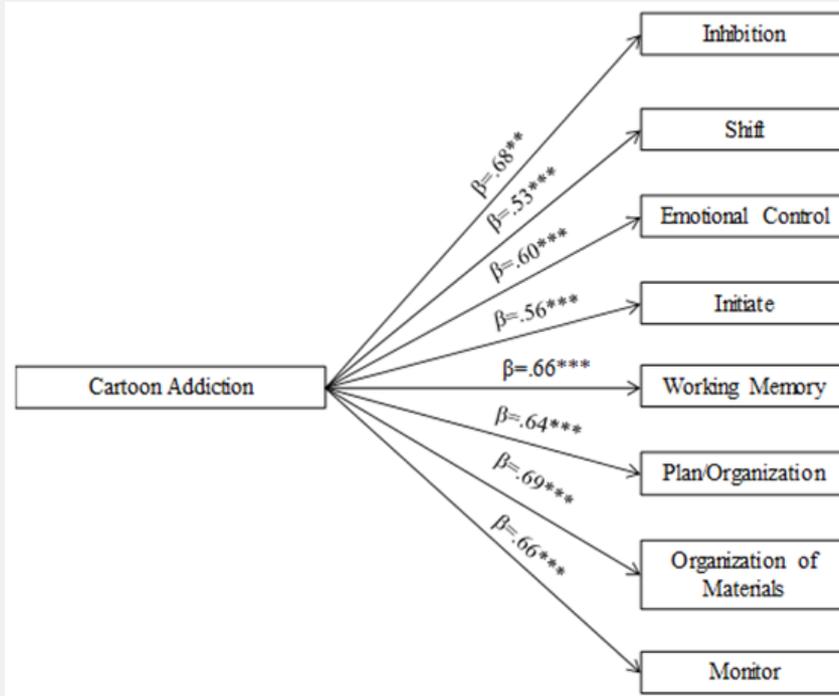
**Table 4:** Hierarchical Regression Analysis showing Cartoon Addiction as predictor of Executive Functioning in Children (N=100).

Predictors	Inhibition		Shift		Emotional Control		Initiate		Working Memory		Plan Organization		Organization of Materials		Monitor	
	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	β
<b>Block 1</b>																
Age	.22	.16**	.16	.21**	.17	.25**	.19	.25**	.31	.23*	.41	-.31**	.11	.18**	.17	.31**
Gender	.13	.96**	.13	.14**	.23	.09**	.16	.19**	.30	-.17**	.24	1.2**	.21	.06**	.14	.14**
FS	.12	.13**	.22	.19**	.35	.16**	.15	.12**	.12	.53*	.26	-.23**	.21	.20**	.22	.23**
BO	.15	.14**	.21	.20**	.23	.26**	.24	.23**	.23	.25*	.33	-.12**	.12	.20**	.18	.12**
DWC	.35	.31**	.26	.16**	.32	.25**	.16	.12**	.13	.34*	.35	-.11**	.31	.20**	.21	.23**
<b>Block 2</b>																
CA	.27	.68**	.16	.53***	.21	.60***	.18	.56***	.25	.66***	.24	.64***	.27	.69***	.25	.66**
R <sup>2</sup>	.96		.71		.92		.76		1.17		.97		.94		.81	
F	7.68***		3.76***		6.20***		4.30***		9.63***		7.20***		7.39***		5.50***	

Note: DWC=duration of watching cartoon; CA= Cartoon Addiction; Family System, Nuclear= 1; Joint= 2, \*\*p<.01.\*\*\*p<.001.

The results of hierarchical regression analysis showed that age, gender, family system, duration of watching cartoon and cartoon addiction are significant positive predictors of poor

executive functioning in school going children. Being in nuclear family predicts higher addiction to cartoon in children. Statistical model of regression is presented in Figure 1. Figure showed statistical model showed that cartoon addiction is a positive predictor of poor executive functioning in school going children.



**Figure 1:** Statistical Model for Poor Executive Functioning.

### Discussion

The present research was conducted to explore the relationship between cartoon addiction and poor executive functioning in school going children. Usually, school going children are addicted to cartoons because they watch cartoons as a continuous story whereas toddlers watch the cartoons in bits and parts. The executive functioning of the cartoon addicted children is at times impaired. Different theories also state that a cartoon addicted child is lazy, dull and passive [17]. Moreover, through different theories it has been explored that different social factors affect the learning and behavior of a child. If the world of cartoons is considered as the environment of a child then the influence of cartoons can be observed in his behavior and actions. Bandura [6] also states in this regard that the social factors have a great influence on the actions and reactions of a child.

The hypothesis was to investigate the negative relation among study variables i.e. cartoon addiction and poor executive functioning in school going children. The hypothesis result explained that correlation analysis on boys and girls have cartoon addiction tendencies are increased while executive functioning is decreased but the current result shows that cartoon addiction tendencies increased than executive functioning also increased. Another study results related by current research such as cartoon are a basic source of knowledge which help the child learns the social values of the world [18]. In another result found that cartoon addiction is explored, it is consistent with current findings. Oyero, Oyesomi [19] found that both parents and children share similar understanding of the influence of cartoons on children as being positive. Cartoons are effective in enhancing children's spoken English, learning skills and good morals, as well as keep children busy. The another positive result that influence on behavior of children which positive impact of cartoons makes them obedient and inculcates the positive values like helping the needy or feeling for the poor [20]. The other similar research found that cartoon series especially Ben Ten have a great impact on the children's behavior as well as on their language [21].

The further hypothesis that cartoon addiction is likely to predict poor executive functioning in school going children. The current result shows that cartoon addiction is likely to predict poor executive functioning in school going children. The similar research showed that the violence shown in cartoons can be traced in the behavior of the school going children who watch these cartoons. The other related research found by Sudha [20] which states that duration of watching cartoon predicted executive functioning in school going children. According to Blair, Razza [15] conducted the similar research found that parents should be aware that the executive functioning of children impaired watching of cartoons and the children also watch television due to the influence of their school friend. The other related research found that the children who watch excessive cartoons become more aggressive and violent.

The present finding showed that the children not copy their favorite cartoon characters but also insist their parents to buy the same clothes or accessories as displayed by different cartoon characters. Furthermore, the similar current study showed that the cartoons effect on the child's mind and the child develops the negative concept in his mind after watching the cartoons. The similar research showed that the cartoon addicted children become passive and lazy and school going children spend more time on cartoons instead of spending time with their parents. Hence, they are unable to learn moral ethics from their elders. The similar research showed that the effects of violence depicted in animated serried on child's behavior which turns aggressive [22].

### Limitations and Suggestions

It is recognized that the sample size was very small due to non-cooperation of school administrations. Another limitation was that the data was collected only from the private schools whereas it can be gathered from the government schools as well to make finding more generalize and a comparative study can be made between school going children of rural and urban areas. Moreover, the mothers of the children were not inquired if they teach their children or they are taught by some other tutor; the mothers did not tell exactly for how long their respective child watches cartoons and the mother related information regarding her qualification or profession was not taken. The sample size was small. Large sample could improve the executive functioning in cartoon addicted children. The study included mother's perspective only. By taking other caregiver's members perspective as well could create or yield comparable result. Schools should held productive campaigns and seminars to guide the children and their parents for choosing the proper channel and cartoon for watching on television. Parents should be instructed to guide their children while watching cartoons [23-34].

### Implications

Notwithstanding the limitations described above, the implications of this study will help the parents to understand their cartoon addicted children and the negative consequences of watching cartoons due to which their behavior is also affected. Second was the present study can also facilitate mothers to understand the attitude and behavioral problem by reflecting on the components of executive functioning and on the practical level the present study can guide the cartoonists to arrange for a proper and creative content for their cartoons. Finally, the result of this study will help the favorite cartoon of the children to be used as stimuli for making them work in a good way.

### Conclusion

In a nutshell, the study gave the results that there is a significant positive relationship between cartoon addiction and poor executive functioning in school going children. The result revealed that cartoon addiction positively predicted poor

executive functioning in school going children. Additionally, the results also showed that middle age children are more addicted to cartoons. Furthermore, the most important finding showed that the majority of the school going children watches cartoons for 3hours.

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