



## **PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES IN PRIMARY CHILDREN**

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Television serves as a significant means of both amusement and knowledge acquisition for many individuals. Undeniably, television plays a crucial role in the daily routine of many individuals, and its influence can shape their thoughts and actions worldwide. In this sense, television programmes and activities affect every person in Sri Lanka. School-aged children in Sri Lanka tend to spend considerable time watching television at home. Children between five and six years of age try to imitate the behaviours of others, and they mostly learn by imitating other characters around them. It may affect their behavioural changes positively or negatively. Therefore, this study aimed to determine parents' perception of the impact of television on social behavioural changes in primary children. The research method uses a quantitative approach using a survey design. The population of this study comprised parents of Grade One children in the Kesbewa Division in the Piliyandala Educational Zone. There are 26 schools in the Kesbewa Division including 1AB, 1C, and type 2 schools; and from these schools, five schools were selected randomly. The questionnaire was distributed among all parents of grade one students in the selected schools. A total of 105 parents responded to the questionnaire, constituting the sample. Data was analysed using descriptive statistical methods. According to parents' perceptions, 49% were neutral about their children's social behaviour, and 37% highlighted their children's positive social behaviour patterns. However, only 14% of the parents stated that their children exhibited negative social behavioural patterns. It could be identified that there is a link between children who show negative behavioural patterns and exposure to violent content on television. It is recommended that parental guidance should be provided when viewing programmes on the television and that the children be involved in outdoor activities rather than providing opportunities for students to watch television at home.

Keywords: Social Behavioural Changes, Impact of Television, Parents' Perception

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Television has long been recognised as a powerful medium capable of shaping the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals, particularly among student populations (Taj, 2021). In an era characterised by unprecedented access to diverse television content through traditional broadcasts, streaming platforms, and social media, understanding its impact on behavioural changes among students is of paramount importance (Rideout et al., 2019). Recent studies have shed light on the intricate relationship between television consumption and behavioural outcomes among students. Coyne et al. (2017) emphasises that exposure to violent television content is associated with heightened aggression and desensitisation among adolescents. While the potential of television to influence negative behavioural changes has been well documented, scholars have also explored its educational potential in promoting positive outcomes among children. This enhances cognitive skills, academic achievement, and prosocial behaviour in children (Barr, 2018). Recent advancements in interactive and immersive television formats have opened new avenues for experiential learning and skill development among students (Johnson, 2014). However, the pervasive influence of advertising on television poses additional challenges, particularly concerning consumerism and materialistic values among students (Livingstone et al., 2006). The integration of commercial messages within television blurs the boundaries between entertainment and marketing, potentially shaping students' preferences, purchasing behaviours, and socioeconomic aspirations (Livingstone & Helsper, 2019). As electronic media use increases because of the growing production of electronic devices, children are being targeted more frequently. According to studies by Dorey et al. (2017), children spend an average of 6.5 hours daily on various media types, including music, television, computers, and the internet. In addition, Pempek and McDaniel (2016) noted that new technologies have led to the increased use of smartphones and tablets in families with young children. This trend has confirmed the hypothesised significant positive and negative effects on cognitive and communication development (Sharma, 2015). In addition, parents' perceptions of the impact of television on social behavioural changes in children vary according to different studies. Some research suggests that TV programmes have positive effects on children's behaviour, enhancing their social and cognitive skills (Patel, 2021). Other studies highlight concerns about the negative influence of television, such as its impact on the academic performance of school children and hindering social interactions (Chaudhari et al., 2021).

The main objective of this study was to explore parents' perceptions of the impact of television on social behavioural changes in Grade One students. The findings will help educate parents to minimise negative social behavioural changes and promote positive behavioural changes in children.

The study has three specific objectives: First, to identify social behavioural problems related to television viewing in primary children; second, to determine the impact of television viewing and social behavioural changes in primary children; and finally, to make recommendations informing



parents to minimise negative social behavioural changes and enhance positive social behavioural changes in primary children.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey design to investigate parents’ perceptions of the impact of television on social behavioural changes in children. Surveys are employed in educational research to capture and describe individuals' opinions, beliefs, and attitudes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The population of this study comprised parents of grade 1 children in the Kesbewa Division in Piliyandala Educational Zone. There are 26 schools in the Kesbewa Division including 1AB, 1C, and type 2 schools and from these schools, five schools were selected randomly. The questionnaire was distributed among all parents of grade 1 students in the selected schools. Both male and female parents participated in this study. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions. A total of 105 parents responded to the questionnaire, constituting the sample. Small samples are common in education research because of financial constraints, logistical challenges, or the exploratory nature of studies (Lakens, 2022). The questionnaire was administered to the parents, who were advised to observe their children for two weeks before completing the questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods, including percentages and graphs, to investigate parents’ perceptions of the impact of television on social behavioural changes in primary children.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the parents, the most preferred television programmes among their children were cartoons and dramas, accounting for 41%, followed by cartoons alone at 39%. Cartoons and sports received 6% of the preferences, while drama alone garnered 3% and sports 11% (Table 1). Research data from other studies indicate that cartoons are the most preferred programmes among children, as indicated by parents in Pakistan (Nader, 2021). Shanthipriya and Prabha’s (2017) research indicates a high level of interest among children in watching cartoons on the television, reflecting the popularity of this form of entertainment among the youth in India.

The survey responses of this study were analysed to identify social behavioural problems related to television viewing in Grade 1 children. Parents highlighted positive behaviours such as sharing, using polite words, and practicing good manners, as well as negative behaviours such as attention problems, use of inappropriate words or phrases, fighting with siblings, aggressiveness, and talking back to the parents.

**Table 1**

*Parents’ understanding of their children’s television preferences.*

Parents were asked to identify their child’s favourite television programmes, the findings of which are summarized in Table 1.

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Cartoons	41	39%
Cartoons and Drama	43	41%
Cartoons and Sports	6	6%
Drama	3	3%
Sports	12	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>



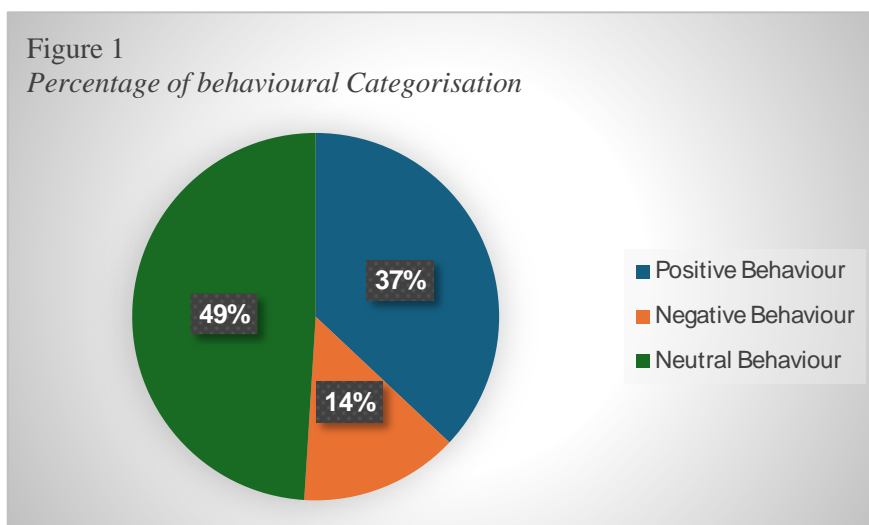
### Positive and negative behavioural changes in children

According to the parents, the percentage of children exhibiting positive behaviours is 37%, while exhibiting negative behaviours is 14% and neutral behaviours are 49% (Figure 1). Mahmood (2020) emphasises that parents perceive television programmes as having a significant impact on children’s behaviour, leading to negative outcomes such as demanding, nagging, and pestering.

However, educational programs like "Sesame Street" have been shown to positively influence children’s social attitudes and skills, aiding in their socialisation process (Makhovskaya et al., 2014). The findings of this study align with those of the literature.

**Figure 1**

*The percentage of behavioural changes in categories in children.*



### Categories of cartoons according to the behaviours

Table 2 represents the preferences for cartoon categories among the three social behavioural categories. It is evident that almost all children in the negative behavioural category preferred cartoons that contained violence (100%). Furthermore, 8% of children who watched violent cartoons also liked comedy cartoons. The majority of children in the positive behavioural category preferred educational cartoons. Despite the negative and positive behavioural categories, most children in the neutral behavioural category also liked watching cartoons containing violence (53%). According to these findings, it is clear that children in the negative behavioural category are exposed to more violent content on television than children in the positive behavioural category. Additionally, most children in the neutral behavioural category are also exposed to violent content on television. Therefore, it can be concluded that television viewing has a negative impact on the behavioural patterns of grade one children.



**Table 2**

*Percentage preferences of cartoon categories according to the behaviours.*

<b>Behavioural category</b>	<b>Fighting</b>	<b>Comedy</b>	<b>Educational</b>	<b>Adventure</b>
Positive	23%	31%	38%	23%
Negative	100%	8%	0%	0%
Neutral	53%	54%	29%	18%

### **Imitation of cartoon & drama characters**

Based on the answers given by the parents to the question “Does your child imitate the characters in the cartoons or dramas?”, 92% of the parents of children who belonged in the positive behavioural category agreed that their children imitated the characters in the dramas or cartoons. This indicates that the negative as well as the positive behavioural changes in grade one children may happen due to violence or prosocial content in television. Mahmood et al.’s (2020) study has shown that children imitate aggressive patterns of behaviour observed in real-life models, cartoon characters, and films, highlighting the influence of different media sources on social behaviour.

**Table 3**

*Imitation of cartoon & drama characters*

<b>Behavioural category</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Positive	36	92%	3	8%
Negative	15	100%	0	0%
Neutral	36	71%	15	29%

### **Imitation of cartoon characters**

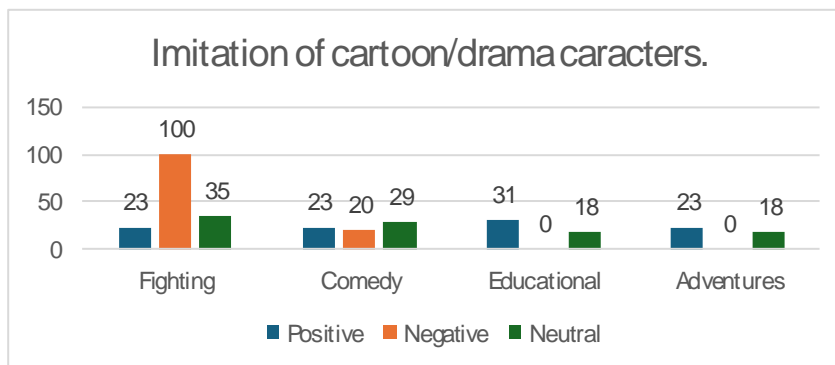
As shown in Figure 2, 31% of children imitated characters in educational cartoons or dramas. Additionally, 23% in the positive behavioural category imitated characters in both violent and comedy content. However, it can be concluded that students who are exposed to less violent content on television may develop more positive behavioural patterns when they are exposed to prosocial or similar content. Moreover, the table reveals that 100% of students in the negative behavioural category tended to imitate characters in cartoons or dramas that contain violence.

Furthermore, it was revealed that 35% of students in the neutral behavioural category tended to imitate characters in violent cartoons and dramas, exhibiting an equal average of positive and negative behavioural patterns. According to these findings, both negative and positive behavioural changes in grade 1 children may result from exposure to violent or prosocial content on television.



**Figure 2**

*Child imitate characters*



The findings of this research highlight the distinct behavioural categories observed among grade 1 children, namely positive, negative, and neutral. The majority of the children in the study were categorised under the neutral behaviour category with a significant proportion exhibiting positive behaviour patterns. Conversely, a smaller percentage, approximately 14%, displayed negative behavioural patterns. This distribution underscores the diversity in behavioural tendencies among children, reflecting varying degrees of responses to external influences such as television content. Children exhibiting negative behaviours tended to be more exposed to violence on television, suggesting a potential influence of television content on behavioural outcomes. Overall, the research findings suggest that television content and viewing habits may significantly influence behavioural patterns among grade 1 children. The study advocates for greater awareness among parents about the types of programmes to which children are exposed, emphasising the role of age-appropriate educational content in fostering positive behavioural development. Further research in this area could explore the longitudinal effects and additional factors influencing children’s behavioural responses to television, contributing to better informed guidelines and interventions in primary-age television consumption.

**CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATION**

This research clearly indicates three behavioural categories among grade 1 children: positive, negative, and neutral. Most children fall into the neutral behaviour category. However, only 14% of the children exhibited negative behavioural patterns. It was identified that there is a link between children who show negative behavioural patterns and their exposure to violent content on television. Positive behavioural changes among children are also influenced by prosocial programmes on television. Moreover, it is recognised that the amount of time spent watching television may cause behavioural changes among grade 1 children. Overall, the research findings indicate that television may contribute to behavioural changes among grade 1 children.

Based on the key findings, parental guidance is recommended when children watch television. It is also advisable to involve children in outdoor activities rather than providing opportunities for them to watch television at home.

It is also important to educate parents about choosing suitable programmes that encourage children’s natural curiosity and creativity. Therefore, awareness programs should be developed and implemented for all types of families. These programmes should include information on the effects of electronic media and strategies for parents to manage screen time for grade 1 children. Finally, children’s programmes should be suitable for their age group, free from violence and inappropriate content.



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Regulations should be implemented to ensure that programmes are appropriate for children's developmental stages.



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