

**Is *Ben 10* an Evil Cartoon?
Selected Mothers' Perception of the Influence of *Ben 10* on
their Children's Behaviour**

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Abstract

The study was informed by a controversy raised in a book written by a Colombian lady (Zambrano, 2009) who said she died and went to hell where she saw many people among which was a young boy who went to hell because he was watching Ben 10 films which led him to disobey his parents. Nigeria is a deeply religious country and many Christians in Nigeria who had read the book branded Ben 10 cartoon film a tool of the devil. The survey method was adopted for this study. Questionnaire distribution and depth interviews were used as data gathering techniques for this survey research. The study was aimed at ascertaining from mothers whose children are exposed to Ben 10 films, the nature of influence, if any, exposure to Ben 10 film had on their children. The results revealed that

mothers in Nigeria agreed that there was a level of influence of Ben 10 films on behaviour of their children, and this influence was both positive and negative but not evil. The study recommended strict parental guide on children's exposure to animation and other movies to ensure that children do not expose themselves to movies with harmful content.

Key words: Cartoon, Exposure, Child behaviour, Influence, Ben 10

Introduction

After the printing press, the most important invention in communication technology till date has been television. In Nigeria today, television is a household medium and a major source of everyday information, education and entertainment (Nwabueze, 2006). It is a key instrument of socialization that has strong influence on human behavior, including the young and the old (Nwabueze, 2006).

Cartoons are the most frequent and easily accessible sources of entertainment for children (Bibi and Zehra, 2012). With the vast media channels, it has become easier for children to watch their favourite cartoons on a single click and at the same time more convenient for parents to provide children with this all-time favourite activity of theirs (Bibi and Zebra, 2012). Time previously spent by children in out-door activities is now replaced by constant glue to television sets for long hours, peering at all sorts of cartoons, mostly without the supervision of elders who are completely unaware that this might have certain effects on children's behavior. This constant exposure of children to

television programmes especially the violent/aggressive cartoons or films can result in children being exposed to adult materials that are potentially harmful to their social and moral development.

Brehm, Kassim and Fein (2002) note that TV models on television as well as in cartoons can act as powerful models of aggression. Violent cartoons can affect a child's mental development, self-confidence and ability to grasp concept in learning situations leading to poor educational outcomes; Children over exposed to violent television viewing scenes might start mimicking such acts and acquire traits for bullying and other anti-social related behavior patterns which in turn generally impact on them negatively (Brehm, Kassim and Fein, 2002).

Until now, people seemed not to have taught much or realized the effects of TV cartoons on children (Okonkwo, 2012). This is possibly because cartoon originated with the print media, which merely targets the adults. More so, before now, television was found only in few homes. But with the subsequent revolutionary trend in information and communication technologies (ICTS), television sets, cables and video tape players become readily available in most Nigerian homes especially those in the urban and semi-urban towns. This led to many people - the adults, youths and children having access to many TV channels and programmes in most homes (Okonkwo, 2012).

Cartoon is one of such programmes regularly watched by children. Some TV channels are dedicated only to various kinds of cartoons and such cartoon channels are mostly children friendly. Today, children are seen mimicking what they see in cartoon, both positive and negative traits (Okonkwo, 2012). Studies have established that exposure to cartoon films has various kinds and levels of influence on children (Mussen and Rutherford, 1961; Steuer, Applefield and Smith, 1971; Silvern and Williamson, 1987; Kirsh, 2006; Bibi and Zebra, 2012).

Among the animation movies popular among children in

Nigeria is 'Ben 10' (Okonkwo, 2012). However, this movie generated controversy in Nigeria after Zambrano (2009) while commenting on her journey to and experiences in hell, claimed to have died for some time. Zambrano further claimed that during her experience while dead, she recalled seeing an 8-year-old boy sent to hell for watching cartoon figures like Dragon, Boy Z, Ben 10, Pokemon, Dora etc. Zambrano described these cartoon characters watched and sometimes adored by children, as Satan's instruments for destroying humanity. Because Nigeria is a deeply religious nation, Zambrano's story grew in popularity in the country as a result of which some churches and predominantly Christian schools started telling children that 'Ben 10' was in hell, and that watching Ben 10 movie was ungodly.

This is why this study is aimed at determining mothers' perception on the level of influence the animation movie 'Ben 10' has on their children. This is especially in the light of the controversy that children exposed to 'Ben 10' film may end up in hell (Zambrano, 2009). Mothers' understanding of what Ben 10 cartoon is all about will also be ascertained. The study is an exploratory research which focuses on the perception of mothers in Nigeria on the level of influence exposure to Ben 10 has on the behaviour of their children.

Research Problem

Cartoon ranks among the oldest core contents of mass media of communication. Some cartoons are useful in developing the moral character of children while some other cartoons especially violent ones produce anti-social behavior (Muzvidziwa, 2011). Children's exposure to TV films and cartoons has a lot of undesirable effects. Okonkwo, (2012) observes that it is not uncommon to see Nigerian children playing or fighting with dangerous weapons and acting in several ways viewed as *unAfrican*. Exposure of children

to risk becomes inevitable as they consider things watched on cartoon films to be real since they are unable to differentiate between fantasy and reality (Bibi and Zebra, 2012).

'Ben 10' is a popular cartoon film around the world, especially among children. However, this animation movie stirred controversy in Nigeria after it was associated with negative influences that can lead children to hell fire. Zambrano (2009) while commenting on her journey to and experiences in hell, after she claimed to have died for some time, recalled seeing an 8-year-old boy sent to hell for watching cartoon figures like Dragon, Boy Z, Ben 10, Pokemon, Dora etc. Zambrano revealed further that these animated cartoons seen daily on TV were Satan's instruments used in destroying humanity. Zambrano's story grew in popularity in Nigeria as a result of which some churches began to teach children that 'Ben 10' was in hell and associating with this cartoon character displeased God.

Given the stigma Zambrano's story has placed on 'Ben 10' especially among some religious audience members, this study seeks to find out from mothers what their observations are with regards to 'Ben 10' influence on their children. Do their children exhibit traits of evil character as asserted by Zambrano (2009) after exposure to 'Ben 10' episodes? This exploratory study therefore attempts to ascertain the extent to which exposure to 'Ben 10' influences the behaviour of children, from the perspective of mothers.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:-

1. To ascertain Nigerian children's level of exposure to *Ben 10* based on their mothers' observation.
2. To find out the level of recall of *Ben 10* content by Nigerian children from the perception of their mothers.
3. To determine the perception of *Ben 10* cartoon by Nigerian

mothers.

4. To ascertain whether Nigerian Mothers' attribute children's deviant/positive behaviour to exposure to *Ben 10* series?
5. To determine Nigerian Mothers' perception of *Ben 10* influence on child's socialization.

Research Questions

1. How often do Nigerian children watch *Ben 10* cartoon as observed by their mothers?
2. Do Nigerian children remember and discuss *Ben 10* content after watching from the observation of their mothers?
3. What is the perception of *Ben 10* cartoon by Nigerian mothers?
4. Do Nigerian mothers attribute children's deviant/positive behaviour to *Ben 10* series?
5. What is the perception of mothers in on Ben 10 influence on child's socialization?

Theoretical Base

This study is anchored on the social learning theory and cultivation theory. The social learning theory suggests that much learning takes place through observing the behaviour of others (Anaeto, 2008). Bandura (1986) states that people learn behaviour, emotional reactions and attitudes from role models whom they wish to emulate. This becomes more poignant when we consider the effect of some of these observations on children at their formative years and in this instance through the home movies and cartoons they are exposed to. Bandura highlights four basic steps in the learning process which include thus:

1. Paying attention and perceiving the relevant aspect of behaviour.

2. Remembering the behaviours, either through words or mental images.
3. Converting the remembered observation into actions.
4. Being motivated to adopt the behaviour.

Thus, it is arguable that the attitudes, values and dispositions that children learn now may form the bedrock upon which their future reinforcement will be based. Children watch television programmes with an independent mind and innocence and may come to believe the content as the bases for their future behaviour.

The Cultivation theory will also be chosen to give backing to the Social Learning theory in this study. Examining the relevance of this theory to the study, the concern will be on the frequency at which the children are exposed to *Ben 10* cartoon, their perception of what constitutes reality and the acceptable forms of social behaviour as perceived by mothers. Cultivation theory in its basic form suggests that exposure to television overtime, subtly “cultivate” viewers perception of reality (McQuail, 2005). Gerbner and Gross (1976, p.175) believe that “television is a medium of socialization of most people into standardized roles and behaviours. Its function is in a word, enculturation.” Cultivation theory looks at media as having a long term passive effect on audiences which starts off small at first but has a compound effect; an example of this is body image and the bombardment of images (Morgan, 2009)

Therefore, the two theories suggest that television is one of the vital agents of socialization and exposure to TV programmes has some influence on the viewers' behaviour.

Literature Review

Influence of Cartoons on Children's Behaviour

The issue of cartoon influence on the behaviour of today's children has remained a matter of concern to various scholars. The current

increase in animated film classics and new television series as seen on cable/satellite television has equally increased viewership of these films by children who are the major cartoons target audience.

Kirsh (2006) writes that violence is an integral part of cartoon which is higher there than in live-action dramas or comedies. Kirsh states further that cartoons rarely portray death where necessary or seeing victims suffering for their actions unlike in life actions dramas where pains and sufferings of the victim were often highlighted.

In his research findings on cartoons influence on early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence, Kirsh leaves open the possibility that a child's desire to act aggressively increases following media exposure but that socialization experiences cause them to control their behaviour. Kirsh reviewed the works of various scholars on disruptive behavioural disorders and revealed that there is an indication that children are affected largely by violent imagery than youth without psychopathology.

Fredrich and Stein (1973) exposed preschool children to either 20 minutes of 'Batman' and 'Superman' or to a series of neutral live action film. They viewed these selected media three times a week for four weeks. At the end of the experimental period, physical and verbal aggression towards peers, rule obedience and tolerance for delay was assessed. Children watching the violent cartoons were more disobedient and less tolerant of delay. Moreover, children who exhibited high levels of aggression prior to the experiment became more aggressive as they watched the violent cartoons than when they watched the non-violent cartoons. Similarly, Steuer, Applefield and Smith (1971) found that 11 daily 10 minutes sessions of watching Saturday morning programmes (which had a preponderance of unspecified cartoons and occasional live action programs) resulted in greater physical aggression towards peers in comparison to young children watching a series of non-violent cartoons. The amount of physical

aggression displayed by the children who watched Saturday morning programming increased throughout the experiment period.

Silvern and Williamson (1987) conducted a field experiment involving cartoon violence and 28 preschool boys and girls. The experiment took place over a three days period, involved the assessment of baseline aggression during dyadic play with a classmate, the view of humorous violent cartoons “Road Runner” and the playing of violent rider game “space invaders” were assessed. Result indicated that after watching the comically violent cartoons, preschool children demonstrated higher rates of aggressive behaviour and lower rates of prosocial behaviour.

Research on effect of violent cartoons on children in middle childhood demonstrated an increase in aggressive behaviour (Mussen and Rutherford, 1961). The field experiments found out that the viewing of violent cartoons resulted in an increase in aggressive behaviour towards peers. Thus, cartoons with violent elements appear to affect aggression-related construct in young children, such as aggressive thoughts and desires, but fail to alter actual aggressive behavior.

Bibi and Zebra (2012) write that there is a wide range of cartoons from fairy tales like “Beauty and the Beast” to action based cartoons like “Ben 10” and ‘Pokemon’. They said that children between the ages of 6-8 have different preferences, girls usually into fairy tales and animated “Barbie” series whereas boys and some of the girls still have their favourite superman hero cartoons like “Spiderman” “Batman”, or action flicks like “Bay Blade”, Ben 10” or Dragon Ball-z”. Bibi and Zebra discovered that children at such an early developing stage consider things they watch in cartoons to be real since they are unable to differentiate between fantasy and reality and often believe that if Elmer Fudd for instance, remains unharmed after being bashed by Bugs Bunny with a hammer a number of times, so can they. They exemplified

the above scenario with the account of Mukarran, 8, studying in primary 2 who received a warning from his school after he got caught for beating up a fellow student. When asked for explanation the child innocently replied that he was just showing his friend one of the moves he saw in a cartoon the night before. His family members admitted the fact that they never kept an eye on his TV activities (Bibi and Zebra, 2012).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric (AACAP), after a combined study on television and child behaviour found that children who view shows in which violence is very realistic, frequently repeated or unpunished, are more likely to imitate what they see (cited by Bibi and Zebra, 2012).

However, Bibi and Zebra noted on the other hand that there are lots of cartoons, which are not only the best source of entertainment for kids, but could also be used for educational purpose. For instance some cartoons like “Barney” can be used to stop some toddler from crying where as “blue Clues” or “Dora the Explorer” can be used for some brain activity making children to learn shapes and to identify colours etc. They noted the comments of one of the teachers at a local primary school who said that for mind building and constructive learning of children, students have a cartoon period once a week, and the teachers try to show them standard cartoons after thorough selection so that they could derive something positive out of it (Bibi and Zehra, 2012).

Influence of Television Programmes on Children

Television programme can affect a child positively and negatively as well. Okonkwo (2012) talks about the influence of Television on a 9-years Flora who is so crazy about cartoon characters especially “Ben 10” that she certainly insisted that everything she used must bear 'Ben 10', be it school bag watch, games, sandals,

exercise books etc. Flora's mother became tensed not able to understand how just a TV programme can influence her daughter's life so much. She jumped and shouted, "an idiot box called TV greatly influences kids" (Okonkwo, 2012). Okonkwo sees children as clay which get molded according to the environment and TV programmes as part of this environment that influences the growth and development of a child.

Summarizing the positive and negative influences of TV programmes on children; Okonkwo says that some TV programmes have good effects on children; TV shows on some channels like Discovery or National Geographic Channel can increase child's knowledge which is needed in this competitive age. Other channels also help the children in understanding the importance of proper nutrition, health, and exercise. Some others help them in academic learning in programs like quiz competition. While some channels provide opportunity to prove child's talent in dancing, acting, painting and more which can prove beneficial to them.

Most scholars argue that TV is an early window, which allows children to see the world well before they are capable of competently interacting with it. Okonkwo (2012) writes that that TV programmes escort children across the globe even before they have permission to cross the streets.

Steele and Brown (1995) identify three main reasons why media influence should be given a close look;

1. Young people spend more time with the mass media than they do in school or with their parents.
2. The media are full of portrayals that glamorise risky adult behaviour such as excessive drinking and sexual promiscuity.
3. Parents and other socialization agents have arguably shirked their responsibility when it comes to directing youths away from risky forms of behaviour thereby

allowing the media a more fundamental influence.

In the context of the discourse, many commentators agree that by the age of 18, an individual will have spent more time watching television than any other activity besides sleep (Miles and Anderson, 1999). However, Miles (2000, p. 73) is of the view that young people are affected more directly and negatively by the media than any other age group.

Ben 10 Series

1. Ben 10: Alien Force

This is the second series of Ben 10 and came up five years after the first series when Ben is 15 years old. Then Ben has taken off the Ominitrix but when his grandfather Max got missing, he puts it back. In this series, Ben the Hero is no more by chance but by choice. He is more conscious of his powers and fights aliens in a strategic way; fell in love with Julie and shows how one can become a master of the action. Ben 10 Alien Force approaches to the contemporary life style of the boys; suggesting more and more action, alien transformation, breathtaking battles and emotions. Bens old enemy Kevin Levin join Ben's team.

2. Ben 10: Ultimate Alien

Several weeks after the end of Alien Force that saw the destruction of Ben's Ominitrix in the final battle. Ben now has a new device the "Ultimatrix" which allows him to 'evolve' his aliens into more powerful form called the "Ultimate" hence the name of the series. By now Ben, Gwen and Kevin are 16 years old and managed to defeat all the evil plans that threaten the earth. But then, Ben is faced with a new unknown enemy, his own fame. Being famous for Ben, proves to be a bigger problem then he could imagine for while his friends and classmates are grateful for all his deeds; the adults consider it a threat forgetting everything he has done to save the earth.

3. Ben 10: Ominiverse

A year after Ultimate Alien; Ben gets a new Ominitrix along with a new set of aliens. While Gwen and Kevin go off to college, Ben is ready to become a solo superhero. But Max pairs him up with Rook, a by-the-brook rookie plumber. Max sends Ben and Rook to investigate a hidden alien city. Meanwhile an intergalactic bounty hunter called Khyber targets Ben.

4. Ben 10: Ultimate Challenge

This is a game titled Ben 10 Ultimate Challenge developed for television by United Kingdom-based company, Twenty-Twenty. It airs on Cartoon Network in many countries. Ultimate challenge is a trivia show tasking children with answering questions about all three series. Following the success of all the Ben 10 animated TV series and films, various Ben 10 Merchandise have been released for general sale. These items include comic books, card games, video games, toys, beddings, colouring books, bags, watches, footwear etc. These may account for children's clamour and insistence of Ben 10 materials.

The Method

The survey method was adopted for this study. Questionnaire distribution and depth interview were the two data gathering techniques used in this study. The population of 728972 (gotten from National Population commission of 2006 census) comprised all the mothers in Awka South Local Government Area made up of 8 communities. However, it is not possible to cover all these mothers within the LGA, thus resident mothers in Awka metropolis, Amawbia and Nise were purposively chosen based on discretion and convenience for the researchers to be a fair representative of the entire population. The respondents who are mothers whose children actually watch *Ben 10* series were surveyed to determine the level of influence exposure to *Ben 10*

has on their children's behaviour. The choice of Awka South Local Government Area and the three communities for the study was based on discretion and convenience by the researchers. This is an exploratory research, which could be replicated in other areas or states in Nigeria by other researchers.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Thus, because of the large population of resident mothers in the three chosen communities a sample of more enlightened and younger mothers between 25-54 years of age who will possibly have younger children still within the age bracket of cartoon watching was selected. Since the population of these sampled mothers is 728,972, the sample size of this study was realized through the use of Taro Yarmane's formula thus:-

$$n = \frac{1+N(e^2)}{N}$$

where

n= Sample size

N= population figure

e = error margin

Thus n = sample size to be determined

N= population figure = 728,972

e = Error margin = 5% or 0.05

Thus, 400 mothers formed the sample size for this study.

Extended interviews were held with 20 mothers who were randomly selected across the major cities of Nigeria – Abuja, Port Harcourt, Owerri, Awka, Lagos, and Kaduna. The mothers were aged between 25 and 45 years. This was to ensure that those interviewed had children who watched Ben 10 cartoons. The researchers combined both face-to-face and telephone interview techniques to speak with the mothers. The mothers were interviewed mostly in the evening time during week days and morning hours on weekends when they were a bit free and relaxed

to freely respond to the questions. The depth interview technique was adopted to find out from 20 randomly selected mothers across Nigeria their observations on influence of Ben 10 cartoon film on the behaviour of their children. The interview also sought the views of respondents on the notion that *Ben 10* is demonic and can take children to hell, as postulated by Zambrano (2009). The selection of 20 mothers was purposively done and was based on discretion and convenience by the researchers.

Results

Also in this study, 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents for their response. Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 380 copies were returned and found usable and valid. This represented 95% return rate while the 20 copies not returned represented 5% not reliable for the study.

Survey Research Result

Data from the field shows that 50 respondents representing 13.2% fall within the age bracket of 25-30years, 180 of 47.4% fall within 31-35 years, 80 (21%) account for 36-40 years, 20 (5.3%) within 41-45 years, 40 (10.5%) within 46-50years and 10 (2.6%) fall within 51-55years.

The occupational distribution of respondents indicates that 200 (52.6%) are civil servants 100(26.3%) were trading, 50 (13.2%) Artisans while 30 (7.9%) are farming.

Data on marital status shows that 45 respondents representing 11.8% are single mothers, 315 (82.9%) married while 20 (5.3%) were divorced. On educational qualifications, 30 respondents representing 7.9% had FSLC, 75 (19.7%) has SSCE,

195 (51.3%) had OND, TC II and NCE whereas 80 (21.1%) had HND, Degree and other higher qualifications.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question One

How often do children watch Ben 10 cartoon?

The responses are presented in the table below.

Table I. Respondents view on how often their children are exposed to Ben 10.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	77	20.3
Often	263	69.2
Sometimes	31	8.1
Rarely	7	1.9
Very rarely	2	0.5
Total	380	100

The above table shows that 77 (20.3%) of the respondents most often exposes their children to Ben 10 series.

Research Question Two

Do children remember and discuss Ben 10 content after watching?

The exact question that answered this research question reads: Do your children remember what they watched in Ben 10 and discuss it freely and always with other children? Responses to this research question were presented in the table below:

Table 2: Respondents' view on level of recall of Ben 10 content by children

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Y es	352	92.6
No	5	1.3
Can't say	23	6.1
Total	380	100

The above table reveals that out of 380 respondents sampled, 352 (92.6%) indicated that their children recall and discussed Ben 10 series with their colleagues.

Research Question Three

What is mothers' perception of Ben 10 cartoon?

Data obtained on this question were presented in the table below:

Table 3: Respondents view on what they think about Ben 10.

Responses	Frequency	%
It is educational	7	1.8
It is too violent	62	16.3
It is not good for children	152	40
It helps in child's development	6	1.6
It helps in child's socialization	75	19.7
It teaches children good behaviour	4	1.1
Others, please specify	74	19.5
Total	380	100

It is clear from the above table that 7 (1.8%) of the respondents see Ben 10 as being educational, 62 (16.3%) see it as too violent, 152 (40%) says it is not good for children, 6 (1.6%) says it helps in

child development while 75 (19.7%) see it as helping in child socialization, 4 (1.1%) see it as teaching children good behavior while others 74 (19.5%) specified mainly that it influences children choice of items to use (everything must bear Ben 10).

Research Question Four

Do the respondents attribute children deviant/positive behaviour to Ben 10 series?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked two questions which read: do you think your child's exposure to Ben 10 influences his behaviour? If yes above, in what ways does the cartoon influence their attitude and their response were presented in the table below:

Data gathered on this question are presented below;

Table 4: Respondents view on whether exposure to Ben 10 influences child's behavior.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	281	74
No	37	9.7
Can't say	62	16.3
Total	380	100

Source: research field survey, 2012

The above table reveals that 281 (74%) of the respondents agreed that exposure to Ben 10 influences child's behaviour.

Table 5: Respondents view on various ways Ben 10 influences child's attitude.

Responses	Frequency	%
The child tries to emulate the violent behaviour of Ben 10 and his team	58	15.3
The child emulates the good behaviour of Ben 10	4	1.1
The child speaks like Ben 10	70	18.4
The child dresses like Ben 10	74	19.5
The child copies the bad behaviour of the characters in the movie like Ben 10 and his enemies fighting	83	21.8
Others, please specify	91	23.9
Total	380	100

The above table shows that 58 (15.3%) of the respondents indicated that children try to emulate the violent behaviour of Ben 10 and his team after watching.

Research Question Five

What is the perception of Awka mothers on Ben 10 influence on child's socialization?

Respondents were asked whether they think Ben 10 helps a child's socialization and in what ways it does and their responses are presented in the table below.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	278	73.2
No	72	18.9
Can't say	30	7.9
Total	380	100

The above table clearly shows that 278 (73.2%) of the respondents said yes to Ben 10 helping in child socialization.

Table 7: Respondents view on various ways Ben 10 helps in child socialization.

Responses	Frequency	%
Children discuss various Ben 10 series with their peers	132	34.7
Children discuss various available Ben 10 materials like, watch school bag, sandals, T-shirts games etc	145	38.2
Children discuss the hero or strongest man in their midst	103	27.1
Total	380	100

The table above shows that 132 (34.7%) of the respondents sees children mixing together and recalling Ben 10 content after exposure, 145 (38.2%) gather to discuss the various available Ben 10 materials for use while 103 (27.1%) see children clamouring for popularity or the greatest among them.

Discussion

Research question one sought to find out how often children watched *Ben 10* cartoon. The findings show that majority of the respondents exposed their children to *Ben 10*. The result reveals that 69.2% of respondents agree their children regularly watched Ben 10, 20.3% indicated theirs are almost addicted to this particular cartoon (to these ones it is either *Ben 10* or the television will be shut down). This implies that greater percentage of children are exposed to this very cartoon and this finding is however reinforced by earlier findings in cartoon and children which shows

that cartoon is one of the television programmes preferred by children and described as children companion or children friendly (Okonkwo, 2012). The findings also lend support to the sayings that cartoons are the most frequent and easily accessible source of entertainment for children (Bibi and Zebra, 2012).

Data from the depth interviews also corroborated data from the survey. The mothers that were interviewed said their kids were almost addicted to *Ben 10* films. One of the respondents said, "Sometimes my husband watches the film with my children because he likes *Ben 10* films also. My children prefer it to other cartoons and this helps me a lot because whenever I don't want the children to distract me I put *Ben 10* for them to watch."

Research question 2 sought to find out whether the children actually recall *Ben 10* content after watching the movie, from the perspective of their mothers. The result shows that majority of the children remember *Ben 10* the content so well and discuss what they have watched with their colleagues as indicated by 92.6% of the respondents. All the mothers that were interviewed also said their children showed various levels of recall of the movie by their actions even long after watching the movie. This ranged from discussion of some episodes with their friends, narration of the story to their parents, attempting to behave like the characters, especially Ben 10 and Gwen, among other traits. One woman who lives in Owerri, the capital city of Imo State, Southeast Nigeria said, "My son will always try to behave like Ben 10 by trying to move around the sitting room as if he is pursuing enemies. He often narrates the movie to his father whenever he returns from work. The level of recall is high." This supports earlier findings that most children watch cartoon films and get infatuated with them that they start frequently using dialogues and languages used by their favourite cartoon characters (Okonkwo, 2012).

Furthermore research question 3 reveals the respondents perception of what *Ben 10* is all about. The results show that majority of the respondents see *Ben 10* as not good for children as indicated by 40% of them. Most of them stated that their church forbids children from watching it based on the controversy that *Ben 10* is in hell; 23.9% of the respondents gave various reasons why *Ben 10* is not good for children, to some most children are being so addicted to Ben 10 materials and considers inferior any material without Ben 10 pictures while others say children exposed to Ben 10 always want to be in charge, attacking and fighting back saying they want to defend the weak, that is copying some violent actions in the film as expressed by. However, some respondents (15.3%) said there was something positive about Ben 10. They said it helps in building the social life of the children giving them opportunity to express themselves when they were with their friends.

One of the mothers interviewed said, "I discovered that one of my children who always kept quiet in the house actively participated in discussions with other children whenever they discussed *Ben 10* films. The film helps children to social with their friends. They always get excited whenever they discussed *Ben 10*." Still very few respondents agree that Ben 10 is educational and equally teaches children good behaviour. This was co

Research question four reveals a general agreement of *Ben 10* influence on child behaviour by the respondents; 74% of the respondents in the survey indicated that exposure to *Ben 10* had a lot of influence on child behaviour. Most of the mothers that were engaged in the depth interview said they observed some influence on the behaviour of their children, especially on the heroic aspect. They some said their kids tried to play the role of a person who saves others from trouble by trying to move into a dark room first or try to find out what was wrong with their younger ones. Few women complained that it actually led their kids into violent act against their siblings. None of them said it made their kids

disobedient or led them into 'evil' acts, as postulated by Zambrano (2009). One woman who lives in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria said, "My kids have never shown me any form of disobedience because they watched Ben 10. the film teaches them how to save others from trouble and how to be your brother's keepers. There is nothing evil about the film that I can say I have seen on my children."

However, the fact that some respondents said exposure to Ben 10 films led their children into outright violence corroborates the example of Mukarran, 8 as earlier noted by Bibi and Zehra (2012) who when asked for an explanation for beating up a fellow student, replied, he was just showing his friend one of the moves he saw in a cartoon the night before. One of the women interviewed said that her 10 years old son will always want to judge people fighting and try to discover who is wrong and right and will go extra mile to fight the wrong person, saying he is powerful Ben 10 sent to defend the oppressed. All these are some of the findings of Ben 10 influence on behaviour of children.

It was also observed that from the survey and depth interviews that one of the ways exposure to *Ben 10* influenced children was that it made the children clamour for materials with *Ben 10* pictures on them. From the survey results, 21.8% said their kids copied some of the bad behaviours shown in the film like fighting scolding others whereas dressing and speaking like Ben 10 records 19.5% and 18.4%.

Finally research question 5 addresses the respondents view on Ben 10 influence on child's socialization and 73.2% of the mothers studied in the survey aspect of the study believes that *Ben 10* helps in their children's social life and provides an opportunity for them to mix up an chat with their colleagues. The depth interviews also revealed that children discussed Ben 10 series with their friends. Those of them that were introverts at home found it easy to chat with other children whenever they were discussing *Ben 10*. One of the respondents, a 38-year-old housewife

confirmed that Ben 10 has helped her children in a number of ways. According to her: “My 8-year-old daughter Lillian in primary 3 who hardly talks in the class now discusses freely with other colleagues just to show her mastery of the cartoon content and series. She knows all the series and the titles and teaches other children what Ben 10 series is all about.” This respondent further confirmed that her daughter's teacher noticed that Ben 10 discussion has helped in developing Lillian socially by removing certain level of timidity and shyness from her.

Another respondent who had said *Ben 10* was an evil cartoon, which should not be watched by children, however said she still allowed her children to watch the movie. “I cannot stop them from watching Ben 10 now because that seems to be about the only cartoon series that always interests them. You won't believe that their father even joins them in watching the movie. How can I stop them when their father watches it with them?”

Conclusion

This study shows that there is a significant relationship between the children's frequency of exposure to cartoons generally and their social behaviour. It was also noted that cartoon influence on children could be positive or negative depending on the individual child and the kind of cartoon they are exposed to. The study shows that majority of children whose mothers were sampled were actually and regularly exposed to *Ben 10* cartoon series. From the findings, it was observed from the respondents that cartoon programme had a great influence on the behavior of children used in the study as they learn effectively from what is shown on the screen. The negative impacts are mostly manifested in their behavior noted in their addiction to *Ben 10* cartoon and *Ben 10* materials, regular fighting among children in the name of defending the weak, imitating and imbibing some of the actions and characters seen in *Ben 10* films. This is because television teaches children which attitude to adopt in a given situation

without the child knowing whether these attitudes are good or bad because of their age and feeble minds.

Recommendations

Therefore the following recommendations are made;

Since family is one social institution that plays a vital role in shaping children's social behaviour, parents and guardians should devote ample time to educate their wards on the difference between reality and what they watch on cartoon films and TV stations. Parents should keep an eye on their children's activities, observe peculiar changes in their behaviour, and try to provide cartoon films that will have a positive impact on them.

In addition, parents should have interrogation sessions with their children at regular intervals and try to clear the reality of things and answer controversial and ambiguous questions they have in their minds, especially based on what the children may have watched on TV.

The Nigerian Films and Video Censors Board must realize that it is not enough to grade films, but to also see to it that the children's interest are protected before films are released into the market.

The Nigerian home video producers should liaise with the Federal Government of Nigeria in production of educative and moral cartoons useful for our children.

The body in charge of regulating broadcast content in Nigeria, National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), should ensure that broadcast standards are not compromised. Government agent such as National Broadcasting Commission responsible for regulating broadcasting organizations should wake up to their responsibility of controlling, regulating and limiting the types of TV programmes transmitted by TV stations to ensure discipline and sanity in the broadcasting industry.

Proper attention to behavioural change or children's attitude re-orientation involves wide participation from these agents - the family, schools, churches, government at all levels, and the mass media. These bodies must cooperate and articulate uniformed positive messages aimed at promoting good and moral values in children since they are easily influenced by what they hear and see.

Further studies should be done on a content analysis of Ben 10 series to establish the nature of content, whether it has predominantly negative content or vice versa.

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