

Digital Learning of Children through YouTube: Perception of Young Parents in Lahore

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This research seeks to explore the perception of young parents about YouTube as a source of learning for their children.

Methodology: The research incorporates qualitative research design, conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews of 10 young parents, who have kids aged between 1-5 years. The couples are selected through convenient sampling technique from Lahore. The researchers adopted cognitive development theory and social learning theory as theoretical framework for this study. The researchers used thematic analysis to analyse the data.

Findings: The findings of the current study highlight that YouTube is playing an important role in language learning through phonics and rhymes, inculcating etiquettes, object recognition and pre-school education (alphabets and numbers recognition). YouTube also plays a role in familiarizing the children with global culture and it contributes to their personality development. However, the study also reveals that children are also learning aggressive behavior and that they tend to engage more with the digital world rather than physical one. The children are also learning different patterns of social interaction, while watching videos on YouTube.

Conclusion: The study adds to the body of knowledge in terms of explaining the dimensions of YouTube consumption among children and contribute to the discussion on the role of technology in the development of early childhood.

Keywords: YouTube, Toddlers, YouTube consumption, Social Media Learning, Childhood Learning, Parents Perception.

Introduction

Internet has immersed as a powerful tool in this era. The access to it has become very facile with the passage of time. In urban localities, almost every house has easy access to internet. The new generation, even the toddlers, relish the use of internet, as they are born in the internet era and they find themselves quite comfortable in embracing the technology. YouTube has arisen as one of the biggest data reservoirs on the planet. User's produced content has surpassed the conviction of whatever was screened on television. The cutting-edge world prefers YouTube for a heterogeneity of reasons and it is a routinely

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utilized platform (Sheikh et al, 2023). Many parents allow their kids to watch YouTube videos and play with gadgets—an effective method to calm an annoyed kid (Gold, 2015). While infants feel no obligation to conform to a disciplined routine, with more exposure to active screen display, they become inactive, incurious about their surroundings, and even too lethargic to move, which, in turn, can have a bearing on their physical and mental health. Furthermore, in the absence of parental supervision, kids can have unrestricted access to all YouTube videos (Jindal & Kanozia, 2019). Under parental guidance the child will receive direction and will have desirable learning. Toddlers between the ages of two and four improve their vocabulary with use of YouTube. A kid, engrossed in the videos, finds it easy to learn and retain what is learned. Children benefit from the wide variety of video content accessible on the YouTube to learn and master foreign languages in an enjoyable manner (Dayanim & Namy, 2015). Kids may acquire knowledge more rapidly, preserve it in their minds, and use it recurrently with the assistance of YouTube. A person's use of language is exceedingly becoming principal mode of communication in a world where far off distances have been bridged by technology ensuring greater human-to-human interaction even across the borders. Language development is usually seen in infancy period, but the action of language development begins even prior to the child's birth. Children's language development is important during their first five years of life. In these years, they are able to learn any language that they come across. Language development, surveillance, memorization, and information processing are all included in the category of cognitive development. Instead of relying only on the language spoken in their surroundings, children all over the world are exposed to the YouTube channel, which gives them opportunity to learn and replicate the sounds and actions that they observe.

Learning through YouTube Kids

A common internet application among kids is YouTube (Neumann & Herodotou, 2020). YouTube introduced the YouTube Kids Channel so that parents may restrict their kids' search venture and make the website safer for kids (Mullick et al., 2018). YouTube videos featuring children have consistently maintained the highest viewership. As per Imaniah et al. (2020), YouTube Kids' search results have over 10 million subscribers. Since it offers an enjoyable learning environment, the YouTube Kids channel is crucial in fostering a sense of community among children (Yelland, 2016; Burroughs, 2017). Kids can listen to, appreciate, and even sing nursery rhymes, which are classic melodies or poems written in short, simple sentences by anonymous authors (De Mello et al., 2022).

Child psychologists are apprehensive of the quality of content that youngsters are watching on these YouTube kids' channels because of the increase in their utilization. Since TV and other communications habitually highlight programs that target grownups as their audience, guardians picked YouTube as a platform appropriate for their kids. YouTube children's channels in 2015, started providing parents control over their child's search preferences to make watching videos safer for kids.

Nursery rhymes, also known as Mother Goose rhymes, are well-known to be geared towards children. These are rhyme-based traditional tunes or little poems (Mullen, 2017). According to John (2019), the Indonesian National Education System Law 2003 states that young children fall between the ages of newly born to 6 years. Nursery rhyme knowledge improves kids' phonological awareness (Harper, 2011). Understanding of rhyme and rhythms are positively correlated with children's growth and they enhance kids' ability to identify patterns. Children's reading ability and phonological awareness are improved by rhyming skills (Bhatti & Hassan, 2014). Research on rhymes and similar sounding word usage in verse evoked from small kids proposes that sound-based language assumes a critical part in language improvement (Dowker, 1989).

Problem Statement

Nowadays kids are more attached to the screen rather than playing outside and that's why parents have decided to make their kids indulge in watching and learning YouTube based educational videos. Parents are using YouTube as a tool to make their children busy in watching videos on YouTube so that they finish their chores without any hassle.

From the past few years, the rate of viewing YouTube videos among toddlers has been multiplying. However, the quantity of children content on YouTube, potential positive and negative influences on child well-being, vary widely. The goal of this study to address the obstacle being created by the YouTube on kids' ability to comprehend physical and social evolution, as well as their academic and their overall personality development. Escorted by the growing popularity of YouTube Kids Channels, child psychologists are anxious about the characteristics of information that kids are presented with on TV that include vicious and grown-up centred content.

Objectives of the Study

The motivation behind this study is to take a glance at what YouTube means for kids conduct in various ways among the main goals are

- To understand learning behavior & attitude of children towards YouTube channels.
- To evaluate the patterns of digital learning through YouTube videos.
- To understand impact of Animation & Music-integrated videos of Pre-School in improving children attitude towards learning.
- To scrutinizing overall personality development in response to YouTube exposure.

Research Questions

- How YouTube is helping toddlers in social learning?
- How YouTube affects a toddler's language development?
- In what ways does YouTube support children in learning phonics or counting?
- How can YouTube rhymes introduce toddlers to a variety of ethnicities, cultures, and accents?

Literature Review

In a 2010 paper, Balezadeh and Dargahi discuss how nursery rhymes improve children's EFL reading abilities. The authors highlight the benefits of rhymes for language acquisition. Children can learn English, as a foreign language, through nursery rhymes. According to Sayakhan and Bradley's (2019) babies, as young as nine to ten months old, could discriminate between films and actual events. They also maintained that videos had emotional impact and significance for young babies. But presentations from the actual world piqued children's curiosity more and had the potential to engage them.

According to the research by Valkenburg and Vroone (2004) children responded to media information that differed just slightly from what they already knew and could do. Additionally, it's been noted that prominent aural and visual cues like cheers and unexpected visuals draw in young children. From 18 to 30 months of age, the focus shifts from these prominent features to more generic content. Media focuses on children issues and content in a commercial way (Hassan et al, 2022). According to Barr et al (2008) media exposure prior to 12–18 months of age increased a kid's regard for media, and watching media assisted small kids with zeroing in on the substance. Fidler et al (2010) also noted the same things when they looked at kids between the ages of six and eighteen months. With some parental assistance, children in the middle of 15 and 24 months were discovered by Krcmar et al (2007) to be capable of learning new words through television viewing but there is disagreement over the scope of this learning and its long-term implications. Without parental assistance, Richert (2010) discovered that children at the period of 12 and 24 months have difficulty learning words from videos. According DeLoache et al. (2010), guardians who understand their kids' media use overestimate how much their kids were learning from it. Children between the period of 12 and 18 months were found to be incapable of acquiring words from videos. Richards and Cronise (2000) discovered that infants in the middle of 6 and 12 months were unable to follow a program's audio and video in order. They couldn't tell a genuine video from a progression of

indiscriminate pictures. Kabali et al. (2015) found that kids, who have surpassed the age of infancy better appreciate watching YouTube. Children as young as 15 months old could pick up expressive communication signs from films, according to Dayanim and Namy (2015). Still, infants favoured real-world interaction over screen watching. Infants between the ages of 12 and 18 months could mimic activities more accurately if they had witnessed them in person rather than on recordings, corroborated this. Kids between the ages of 6 and 18 months showed a greater interest in toys than in films, according to research by Courage et al. (2010). Galway (2017) provides a broad definition of nursery rhymes as brief tunes and lines that are frequently recited or read aloud to children. She continues by saying that nursery rhymes are characterized by an easy-to-remember rhythm and rhyme scheme, as well as a variety of styles, subjects, tones, and themes. They consist of many kinds of songs, games, finger plays, counting-out rhymes, lullabies, riddles, and ballads. Galway noted that certain rhymes are designed to be humorous, while others are instructional and didactic. She also notes that nursery rhymes, which are frequently paired with pictures meant to entice young readers.

Doležalová (2007) notes that a popular English nursery rhyme is frequently performed to mock the political, royal, and historical figures and events. He continues, saying that rhymes are employed as a quick way to convey significant ideas that people are not likely to forget. Nursery rhymes incorporate senseless jingles, amusing melodies, character rhymes, bedtime songs, kid-accommodating diversion, nursery counting-out recipes, enigmas, tongue twisters, nursery petitions, singing games, rhymes of divination, sorcery spells, toe-counting rhymes, highlight naming rhymes, letters in order rhymes, mantras, climate legend in doggerel, plainly obvious recommendations, and "provoking" rhymes (Prošić-Santovac, 2012). Dixon (2014) reports that children aged 2 to 11 have been less interested in watching television and have become more interested in watching videos on the internet. In early childhood, the majority of brain cell networks influence every aspect of a person's life. It's crucial to choose educational resources and media that kids can easily comprehend (Maftutah, Jannah, & Utama, 2021).

Researchers claim that there are still a lot of kids who have struggled to learn basic vocabulary in English, including words for different colours, animals, both the alphabet and fruits. This is the rationale behind the early start of English language instruction (Kristiani & Pradnyadewi, 2021).

Children younger than two years of age are dependent on vivified content, and guardians frequently give their children screen time for diversion (Kanozia and Jindal, 2019), however this innovation affects their wellbeing and prosperity, and many are worried about reports of malevolent substance on YouTube (Bila, 2018). The fundamental reason for investigating these stages is to understand the advantages and downsides that can influence babies and children.

Theoretical Framework

Social learning theory was proposed by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory takes into account the trade-off between mental and regular factors that contribute to quality learning. This theory states that human learn from interaction and observation. After observing the behaviour, people reflect that behaviour, especially if the behaviour is positive one or there are rewards related to the behaviour. Social learning theory is the most acclaimed theory of learning and development. It also consists of many traditional learning theories. This theory is also called a bridge between behaviour theory and learning theory because it is based on attention, memory, and motivation. Social leaning theory states that people learn varying information by observing the behaviour of others and for that reason the theory is based on three general principles of learning; Observation, Imitation & Modelling.

It is crucial to remember that the impact of the YouTube rhymes on infants' personality development is intricate and diverse, and each child may experience them differently. Regarding the process of learning by observation, he suggested that kids as youthful as two years of age started to learn through perception. Nonetheless, research has shown that babies are likewise ready to notice, imitate and copy. The major rationale of using this theory in the current study was to determine in what sense youngsters are learning

current behaviours via YouTube video for kids. Scholars aimed to investigate how YouTube kids acquire both positive and harmful habits (Fitzgibbons, 2019).

According to Bandura, imitation takes place when a young kid figures out some way to talk—for instance, a mother frequently engages the child to make him or her speak a particular word. She makes the child copy her by getting close to the infant so that he could perceive how the mother makes the shape of her mouth to pronounce a word.

By observation, Bandura means picking up knowledge from witnessing the actions of others. For example, when a youngster witnesses his or her parent mistreating an animal, the kid may follow the suit and mistreat the animal the same way. By modelling, he means emulating another person's behaviour to create a new one. In the event that a parent responds forcefully to a new circumstance consistently, the youngster will respond in much the same way to that new circumstance.

Cognitive Development Theory was presented by Piaget in 1930's. As per Jean Piaget's hypothesis of mental turn of events, learning happens in four phases for kids, as well as making sense of how newborn children process information, his hypothesis plans to make sense of the knowledge itself. These four stages are; Sensorimotor stage: Birth to 2 years, Preoperational stage: Ages 2 to 7, Concrete functional stage: Ages 7 to 11 and Formal functional stage: Ages 12 and above.

As per Piaget, kids take part effectively in their schooling and act similar as youthful researchers as they perform tests, record perceptions, and gain information about their environmental factors. Kids continually add to their current information, develop it, and change their assumptions considering new data as they draw in with their general surroundings. The current research study draws from both theories in constructing the theoretical framework to know about the digital learning of toddlers from the YouTube.

Method

In-depth semi structured interviews were conducted to collect the data. The interviewees were selected through convenient sampling technique. The researchers selected the young parents from Lahore city, who have kids between the age of 1 to 5 years. All these parents were married in last seven years and majority of the respondents have only one child. The interviews were managed physically and both of parents answered the questions. Themes were derived from the literature review; inductive approach were used to design the themes. Researchers transcribe the audio of interviews and the material were divided into the categories of themes. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interviews and the finding and discussion is based on analysis and literature. There was material other than the themes which were excluded. This research particularly focusses on the digital learning that's why we exclude the psychological effects, physiological effects and social effects of YouTube watching in Kids.

Thematic Analysis of Interviews

Language learning through YouTube Videos

Language becomes more effective when it is in the form of rhyme and kids watching YouTube cartoons mostly use language that they had learned from cartoons. Kids are capable of learning new words through rhymes. One of the participants said;

“My younger kid language is getting affected because of rhyme or YouTube cartoons. he is 3 years old and he mostly used cartoon language with her younger sister, while playing he is endeavouring to embrace that language and the etiquettes.” (Interviewee No 3)

Another Mother added;

“Now a days children are learning those things which we parent are unable to teach them at home due to shortness of time. Kids Learn lot of the stuff like Alphabets, counting,

poems at very early age. they know how to pronounced the words and they also recognized the words.” (Interviewee No 9)

Through the videos of YouTube, cartoon and rhymes kids are getting exposure of different languages, dialects and accents. Those kids who are excessive viewers of YouTube kids, have direct effect on their accent. Majority of kids are getting exposed with English language content and their English language accent and pronunciation of the words are exceptional. They are directly picking the words from the sounds of native speakers. One Mother added;

“There are some positive attributes in pronunciation and accents as well. My kid’s speech enhanced due to rhymes, his accent also improved by mimicking rhymes or cartoon characters and his listening power is getting stronger day by day.” (Interviewee No 7)

Young children are exposed to nursery rhymes in both foreign languages, such as English, and their own mother-tongue. Because the song's rhythms are catchy and easy for young kids to grasp. Viewing coco melon as a platform for English language instruction, billions of parents and kids throughout the world have benefited from it by learning English. Children's EFL reading skills are enhanced by nursery rhymes. One of the Participant said;

“I have seen advancement in my kid, whose mother language is Urdu but now he is trying to learn English with rhymes as well. He has picked some words, which I had not heard from him before. So that’s why I think rhymes are helping the kids in improving their speaking abilities as well as vocabulary.” (Interviewee No 5)

Another mother was just happy because her daughter is good in speaking English language,

My daughter learns many poems like twinkle twinkle, jonnio jonnio, and many more from YouTube and it help my daughter in speaking. I am helping she speak English fluent.” (Interviewee No 9)

Learning of Social Behaviour/Etiquette

Media is one of the sources of socialization and now the family and media are the very first institution of socialization for new born. According to Bandura the children learn what they watch on media and now a days the most consuming media is social media and networking websites. Through YouTube content toddlers learn the basic socialization. One of our interviewees said;

“Our Daughter learn many social behaviours from YouTube videos, for instance shaking hand, greetings others and dining tables manners” (Interviewee No 9)

One father added

“In COVID-19 days our son learn about health care issues, hand washing, use of soap and sanitizers, use of tissue, putting hand during coughing or sneezing and much more.” (Interviewee No 3)

Learning of New Cultures

Kids are getting exposed to different cultures from YouTube videos. They learn about the cultural practices of different cultures and festivities. In Pakistan many children content is Hindi doubled. Children are learning Hindi language words. YouTube content is also introducing the Western festivals and cultural activities. As per the thoughts of one of the interviewees;

“YouTube rhymes introduces your child to different cultures. my child is getting exposure due to these rhymes and I will say it had a positive effect on my kid. She knew about all the events we celebrate; he also knows about the festivals of other cultures; my son asked me about Devali. He also knows about Christmas and Easter. (Interviewee No 1)

One of the other participants who is father of a 5 years old daughter added;

“My daughter fantasies the stories and characters of different European fairy tales. She asked to buy the toys of such characters, she is more familiar to Christmas than Eid. Last time she forces us to buy different colours to celebrate the Holi. (Interviewee No 6)

The exposure to other cultures is good as it opens the windows of world to kids but if it counters your own culture, it is concerned.

Kinaesthetic Learning through YouTube

Kinaesthetic learning is physical way of learning in which participants are actively take part during the process (Gunawan, 2023). Many YouTube channels are creating content which provides practices of different art, science-based activities learning. One trainer or performer perform some learning activity and viewers follow these activities and learn some new activity. One of the interviewees who is mother added;

“My daughter asked me to provide the stationary and some other stuff to follow the video she watches on YouTube. She learning paper craft and art activities from YouTube Channel,” (Interviewee No 3 & 6)

One other mother said;

“My daughter helps me during the preparation of her brother’s birthday. She follows the YouTube videos and want the same decoration for her brother’s birthday and for this she made different decoration piece, paper craft and paintings. She learns painting from different YouTube videos.” (Interviewee No 4)

Imitation of Cartoon/Rhymes Characters

Kids imitate or copy the character from cartoon after viewing rhymes and sometimes they embrace that behaviour. This imitation help in children memory and developing confidence. It also increases their expressiveness and performing art abilities. One of the participants said;

“My kid does not give attention to other activities while watching rhymes or cartoons. He did not bother what is going around. My kid mostly watched TOO TOO BOY cartoons on YouTube because the boy in this cartoon is his favourite character and most of the time, he also performs the same activities. He speaks like the character and try to copy him. (Interviewee No 5)

One other father added in this;

“My daughter gets inspiration from rhymes character and she tried to copy her. But these rhymes also made children passive. Now kids spend more time on screen and their physical or out door activity is limited. These cartoons are damaging their creativity. Media is affecting kids’ cognitive abilities. My child is having speech delay because she is just listening the videos and not speaking, these video watching is not interactive.” (Interviewee No 3)

YouTube as Pre-School Learning Source

Internet and social networking websites are becoming a problem solution provider, some referred it as internet philia. Now on average one year child got the exposure of internet through different means. Before the age of school kids learn most of the pre-school stuff through YouTube and TV cartoons.

“Now a day’s kids are already prepared before going to school they know most of the things and this is because of YouTube. they know name of birds and animals, names of fruits and vegetables, which they learned from YouTube.” (Interviewee No 6)

For many parents YouTube is working as a pre-school teaching source because their kids are learning a lot of stuff from videos.

“We parent have not sufficient time to our children; YouTube is playing important role in preschool-learning. YouTube helps our children to learn lot of stuff, like recognition of objects, counting, social manners and alphabets.” (Interviewee No 1)

Some parents emphasize on the parents’ supervisions about the usage of YouTube or other social networking websites;

“YouTube rhymes help your child in pre-school learning, but it’s a parent’s duty to download some learning channel so their kids watch and learn from video my daughter has learned Allah names from such videos. My baby is able to recognize certain words and animals name or animal sound by watching rhyme” (Interviewee No 8)

Findings and Discussion

The interviews we conducted consisted of questions and all the questions were pertaining to children social learning, overall personality development, behaviour and language learning through YouTube. The responses we received from 10 young parents.

Children start using the Internet at a very young age. Today, kids are being brought up in a computerized world that is changing and proliferating at a phenomenal rate. While some adults are not that much aware of these technologies, the toddlers and infants find digital technologies easy to use, even before being able to learn and speak. Nowadays, kids are more attracted towards screen rather than playing outdoor games, so parents have decided to make their kids watch YouTube rhymes. This research paper suggests that children, while watching YouTube, get indulged into the screen rather than the reality around them. They are learning continuously from YouTube. They are learning language, social behaviour, social etiquettes, basic maths and science and object recognition.

Children attention remains focussed on the YouTube program and they become oblivious to their surroundings. Their keen watching of the screen only makes them understand and learn what is happening on the screen. While parents are of the view that their kids are able to know a lot of things from the YouTube and are of the belief that YouTube is helping and supporting their kids in preschool learning as well. But a majority of parents in our sample reported that their kids are becoming aggressive and have started screaming without any reason and that they learned this from the cartoon programs that they used to watch on the YouTube channels.

Conclusion

YouTube is a leading source of digital learning for children. The children content on YouTube helps the toddlers in pre-school learning. They learn alphabets, counting, social manners, objects recognition and it also helps in the personality development. Many channels on YouTube also help in Kinaesthetic learning and create an interactive environment for children. In this study majority parents of our sample give credit to YouTube for language learning, pronunciation, increase in vocabulary and correct accent. Many parents pointed out that their kids become more aggressive and often shout or yell without any reason. It is very crucial to filter the content kids are consuming, restrict their screen time, support jumpers’ exercises, and advance solid web-based propensities. Balancing computer utilization with other aspects of kids’ life will help in guaranteeing that kids may harvest the advantages of innovation without succumbing to its traps. YouTube influencing the toddler cognizance in a negative manner alongside the language improvement is made visible by this research. There is a lot of inappropriate content accessible to the youngsters to disturb their experience of growing up and influence their mind-set, thus the observations and worries of guardians become vivid.

The participants of the research also recognized apparent advantages and disadvantages of utilizing YouTube. While YouTube can offer instructive advantages, guardians and parental figures should be

cautious about its utilization. While the kids become aggressive after watching YouTube channels, their language, while improving, also reflects learning of those words, which are inappropriate to their age. Elimination of any aggressive or improper effect from the minds of the kid, which they might have learned from YouTube, is important to ensure secure character and language development. The result of this research indicates that YouTube has dominated toddlers' life as YouTube created millions of opportunities for millions of kids to learn alphabets, counting, recognize words and other content that facilitates preschool learning.

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