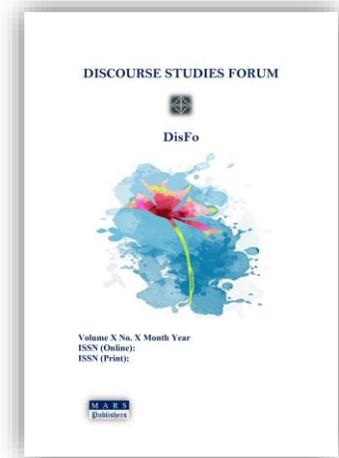




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Ideological Schemas in Animated Cartoons: A Study through Van Dijk's Square Model

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Abstract

This study is about animated cartoons and the deeper relationship children have with them to build their ideology and childhood memories. The findings and conclusions presented here are expected to aid in the promotion of these types of media content that can educate Pakistani children to live in ways that are socially and culturally appropriate for them. In the last few decades, Pakistan has witnessed the rapid growth of television channels that present foreign content and promote their lives through the lens of different ideologies. These TV channels



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and satellite television have availed a vast number of animated cartoons that transmit European, North American, and Japanese views of life instead of our own local culture where we live. The analysis of media is related to their mental capabilities, which are not only limited to their imagination; they also have a very deep effect on their physical growth and development of the inner self. The idea of portraying these types of images and dialogues stems from childhood aggression and exploitation. The purpose of this research is to explore the hidden messages used in Disney movies that result in the exploitation of children's cognition. The study draws upon Van Dijk's Square model of ideology as the main framework to understand the deeper meanings portrayed through dialogues and visuals. CDA is used to examine films in which the various implications of discursive practises are revealed through various dialogues and character appearances. According to the study, parents should pay more attention when selecting entertainment for their children. It can also be a source of realisation for our media industry to create effective content that is based on our culture and ideology. This is a trivial step for our media directors and producers to follow and stop them from watching the foreign content that results in the disturbance of ideological schemas.

Keywords: animated Cartoons, CDA, ideological square model, manipulation, influence on children

1. Introduction

This paper anticipates explaining the impact of animated cartoons on the ideological schemas of children. It took 6-7 Disney films to focus on their physical and mental development. These series illustrate the changes that occur in their mental and moral values. Further, it emphasises the need for parental care and attention to avoid major problems and challenges.

Language itself has a dynamic role in building the mind of a child or an individual. Every word conveys its message. It is not restricted to linguistics or non-linguistics, verbal or non-verbal. It depends on the signs and the knowledge they convey. Humans are created in such a way that they need to communicate through specific signs and symbols. It requires some accessible sign to produce verbal and non-verbal meanings. Moreover, language is a powerful mode of communication. It all explains itself through visuals, which contain a meaningful message and affect our thinking process (Trenholin, 1986). This is an era of electronic media, and those who perform all these acts regarding producing any content are known as producers. Graphic makers all use visuals and symbols to convey their message. It is such a sensitive job for them to use the right medium for producing these contents, which are related to children's psyches and mental growth.

The language itself has a background; sometimes it refers to any cultural aspect, and sometimes it refers to a personal aspect. In both ways, it affects our ideological schemas.

Ideology itself refers to a “set of beliefs, characteristics of a social group, and individual” (Ideology, Dictionary Definition, 2021).

This concept of "ideology" helps you grow as a person according to your culture and social barriers. As a person, every individual shares some common beliefs that are different from those of other civilizations. One who is living under a different ideology and patronising others for growth and competition would create personality clashes and problems for that individual based on different cultures and socio-economical boundaries.

However, it sometimes leads to questioning your identity. The purpose of this research is to address these issues, which are not even bothered by our parents or government on a higher level. A child is an asset to your country. His initial stage needs keen observation and extraordinary care. when he looks at the content, which does not belong to his identity or ideology. It alters his thinking and learning patterns. While looking at it from a broader perspective, it is a great threat to his culture and in-built ideology.

The context of these visuals plays an important role in building their personalities. So, to formulate the dominance and inequalities brought about by these visuals, the analysis is conducted in the framework of CDA following Van Dijk's ideological square model. It further reveals the obstruction caused by these cartoons in their language, behavior, cognition, and ideological schemas.

There are five different types of schemas, which touch different contents differently. It includes social schema, ideological schema, formal schema, linguistic schema, and content schema.

The word "social" is prominent in the social schema because it refers to all of our social belongings: the people we lived with, interacted with, and a community where we shared the same norms and values. Social cognition researchers are particularly interested in societal-based issues; they used to look into challenges caused by social interaction and how it affects social ideology on a bigger level.

Ideological schema generates opinions and attitudes that we generally acquire from social and political issues. This is specifically based on our mind's perception and thinking. The research represents ideological schemas affected by animated cartoons for children. It is a more difficult and sensitive schema and stage for beginning learners.

Formal schema belongs to different rhetorical structures of the written text; it explains the ideas and interpretations of different writers in their writing styles. The narrative style, by addressing different topics, discusses the same issue with a different interpretation and correspondence structure.

The linguistic schema brings down the decoding features that a person needs to understand while using a language, such as what kind of words he has to choose in a sentence to make it appropriate. how it carries the sense to complete your sentence. It also helps you understand how the words should be organised in written and spoken discourse.

Content schema belongs to the content of a text. It mainly focuses on the idea that we get from the content of the existing text. Which genre the text belonged to, who it addressed, what it perpetuated, and how it was explained.

However, many cartoon channels are promoting exciting and imaginative content to attract children towards these visuals. The Disney Channel is considered to be more famous and attractive among other channels. The goal of this research is to bring to light the sensitive issue caused by these cartoons on children's ideological schemas. The primary goal of this research is to identify the problems caused by these contents, which do not affect their personal lives but are a result of manipulation in society as a whole.

1.1 Research Questions

- 1) What types of ideological schemas are represented in the cartoons?
- 2) What are the hidden agendas behind animated cartoon characters to attract our children to foreign cultures?
- 3) How are their ideologies influencing our children's cognitive skills through animated cartoons?
- 4) How do these animated cartoons affect the ideological schema of our children?

The present research throws light on the ideological schemas that affect the mental growth of children after watching animated cartoons; these include Frozen Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and a few others. It further explores the hidden ideologies behind the animated cartoons. Further, it is very useful for parents to take precautionary measures for their children to stop them from watching these kinds of media contents, which result in the manipulation of their ideological schemas.

- To explore the hidden messages that are shown through animated cartoons
- The effect of these cartoons on children's ideological schemas
- Selective factor justifies the purpose of doing this research
- Strategies are discussed to overcome the problem of watching this media content, which results in damaging their ideological schemas.

The data used in this analysis were derived from Disney films. The justification of this selection depends on the length of each movie, which is based on a period of one and a half hours. It is easy and convenient to watch one movie rather than focusing on a lot of series. These animated cartoon series are easily available on the Disney Channel, YouTube, and Netflix. On YouTube, it is very helpful to watch the visuals with subtitles.

It is broadcast on the national and international levels and dubbed in too many languages, including Urdu. These films drew the most attention from children around the world. The Disney Channel is one of the most popular television networks in the United States. These movies have a billion viewers, and they are still being praised by a large number of audiences.

The crux of this study is based on animated cartoon movies that are affecting the cognitive abilities of children. Van Dijk's square model of the ideological structure is taken as the framework to explain all the factors. The purpose of choosing this topic is to create awareness among parents and encourage government policies to take strict notice when airing this type of media content. It is considered a very sensitive issue these days, which is why this study is being held to go beyond the root of this agenda. The methodology has helped to visualise these factors while taking into account the main framework of Van Dijk's model to approach different dialogues under these categories, like jealousy, love, hatred, physical appearance, verbal aggression, greed, isolation, slang, respect, and trust. The analysis has explored all these dialogues by adapting the model of Bradford and Jackson for the categorization of these factors. The findings of this study validated the negative impact of these media contents on their cognitive abilities. The solution to this problem has been given in the discussion, as this problem is very sensitive and difficult to resolve until parents and the government apply some strategies and policies to stop them from watching these types of media contents.

It is understandable that the media plays an important role in promoting their cultural impact through these contents. The study has looked at how globalisation has expanded access to their culture, knowledge, and ideologies that may not be obtainable in the immediate environment. The information conveyed by these films is the result of a negative impact on children's ideological schemas.

2. Literature Review

This paper looks deeply at the factors that are involved in media-based content. It demonstrates how seeing this content affects their mental capabilities. It scrutinises the stylistic development in animated cartoons, violence, and elements of sexuality infused in these series. The interpretation of a few characters in the movies is creating hype in their minds, which is not only affecting their cognitive abilities but also their ideological patterns. Children are using their extra hours watching these movies instead of utilising them for

constructive work. It also looks into the content that is needed to promote our local culture in the media series.

The investigation is built around Van Dijk's ideological square model. There are different studies that talk about the influence of media content in our daily lives and how they are affecting our lives as a whole.

Matu and Lubbe (2007) articulated Kenya's print media using critical discourse analysis and transitivity from systemic functional grammar. This study has extracted the few articles based on Kenyan print media and their portrayal of political parties regarding the election campaign held in 1997. This illustration and construction aim to show how political groups in the sense of us vs. them and the representational processes of transitivity construct ideological discourse.

The paper further exemplifies how the concepts of ideological square and transitivity assist in making overt the mediation processes and practises that are generally used secretly and often unconsciously in the construction and evaluation of participants in a political process.

The political discourse analysis was explained by Van Dijk (1997). Its main focus is to highlight where it is used and what its purpose is. Critical-political discourse analysis deals particularly with the reproduction of political power, power manipulation, or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance. The main aim of this paper is to spell out what is meant by political discourse analysis and how to use it critically.

Animated cartoons are not specifically a medium of entertainment. It is being associated with the feelings of young children. They get fascinated by their appearance as well as emotionally attached to them.

Dias and Paiva (2005) examined the effect of these cartoons on the emotions and feelings of the viewers. A study is being conducted to determine the reason for feeling attached to the majority of the television programmes that are watched. These environments are inhabited by unreal characters that guide and stimulate the children's activities. This paper recommends an architectural model to build inspired characters, where the agent's reasoning and behaviour are influenced by its emotional state and personality. We conducted a small-case study to see if the characters elicited positive empathic reactions in the users.

Furthermore, Muslimin (2017) discussed the denotative and connotative meanings used in the "Masha and Bear" cartoon movie. The study aims to analyse its overall meaning and function. The findings reveal that there are several references to connotative and denotative meanings. Ronald Barthé's theory is used as a framework to inculcate the findings. The study

concluded that those meanings that are dominantly shown in the movie are allusive meanings.

Additionally, Yousaf, Shehzad, and Hassan (2015) highlighted the psychological behaviour of children affected by watching animated cartoons. This study sampled a specific area of the city of Gujarat. The study has used media cultivation theory to collect the data for the survey and justify the theoretical work. The research concluded that the Cartoon Network special "Ben Ten" influences the children's behaviour as well as their language. A significant change has been noticed in children's behaviour regarding cartoons, as they prefer to watch their favourite shows instead of showing their interest in physical games.

There are cartoon programmes that present their language to promote their culture and ideologies. The children get influenced by their culture and start idolising it according to their own ideologies and cultural norms.

The research addressed above is a great source of help in developing the literature review for this paper. It also analysed the secondary data, which is related to animated cartoons and their demand among children. These series of cartoons are not limited to the entertainment industry. Hence, it is considered to be a great source for developing different skills among them. The theory illustrates that at their initial age, these children are still developing their cognitive and learning abilities, so picking up learning and other social interaction has a great impact on their minds. They are still coping with the development of moral decision-making dilemmas. It consequently forms a concrete basis for understanding the issues under examination in this research.

The theories point out that the animated cartoons usually watched by children influence their development and behavior. Different theories like social-cognitive theory, critical discourse, and the ideological square model deal with the influence of media in our society. It offers a great source of help to overcome the dilemma of watching foreign content. There are numerous different functions and types of information being shared in these movies, which is not considered to be a healthy step for children. When children get used to these channels without any mature supervision, there is no telling what ideas are being reinforced and transmitted into their minds, which results in a massive disaster later. Keeping this in mind, this paper aims to reveal the hidden messages behind these animated cartoons that result in a change of language and ideological schemas. That is what this research needed to investigate.

3. Research Methodology

This section discussed briefly the steps and procedures used to carry out the research. The focus of this paper is to extract the factors that are involved in demonising the ideological

schemas of children. The main feature of this research is critical discourse analysis, which focuses on the ideologies in several forms and structures of text.

The present research is qualitative in nature. This is considered to be a more accurate type of research, which is further linked to the approach of descriptive research. There are various forms of descriptive research, which further focus on the investigated, historical analysis, and content analysis of the chosen text.

The recent study is all about the material found in movies and how it affects child learning and ideological schemas. Since descriptive research explains the phenomenon chosen for any research in a very precise way, it is very helpful for this study as well in terms of explanation and addressing different questions. The question that lies under this research is mostly based on "why" and "how." So, this research responds to these questions. Thus, it is a very useful tool to answer the question of this current study.

Moreover, this study explains the hidden messages behind animated cartoons that are exploiting young minds and learning at a very early stage. That is one of the aspects of choosing this topic for the current study.

The selective population of this study is based on Disney's creations, which produce plenty of movies every year. The data was drawn from a series of 8-9 movies that aired between 2011 and 2020. Disney Channel and YouTube are the data sources used to collect the information. A few factors can assist the researcher in locating the various meanings evolved in these films. Van Dijk's Square model is used to extract material that is harmful to children's intellectual abilities. According to Van Dijk's work (1993–2000), it theorises ideological square as a framework through which discourse production and comprehension can be scrutinised and linked to society.

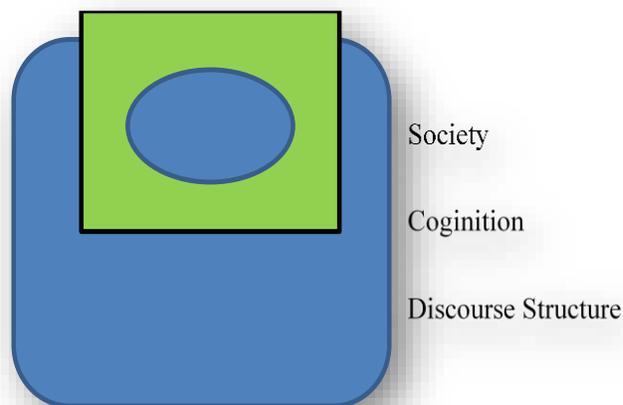


Figure 1: Ideological Square Model of van Dijk

Through this model, the research justifies the impacts of animated cartoons on the developing schema of our children. It also differentiates between the cultural limitations that we and foreign cultures have and how they manipulate the minds of children in different ways.

4. Data Analysis

In this chapter, the in-depth analysis of four factors found in different movies is addressed. The study follows Van Dijk’s square model of ideological schemas to extract the meanings from different dialogues. It is divided into two categories. The first category points out different dialogues that represent these four factors. while the second category explains its relationship with ideological schemas. The analysis of this study is done after analysing these factors in a detailed way.

Data pre-processing consists of steps taken to collect, clean, and choose the data that match the categories proposed in the adoptive model of Bradford and Jackson (2001, p. 1).

4.1 Categorization of Factors That Affects the ideological Schemas of Children

Verbal Aggression	Cinderella, Snow White
Physical Appearance	Barbie Twelve Dancing Princess Cinderella
Trust	Frozen
Greed	Frozen, Beauty and the Beast, Rapunzel, Snow White and Seven Dwarfs

4.1.1 Verbal Aggression

Beauty and The Beast	Roared a voice —You took my rose! —You will pay for this! The Beast yelled. —You will die
Cinderella	You? Yelled the stepmother. —Who said YOU were going to the ball? —Quick! Yelled the stepmother. —Get ready! One of you must be the one to fit your foot in that slipper. —WHAT? Shouted a step-sister. —Not HER! Screamed the other step-sister. —This cannot BE! Yelled the stepmother

<p>Snow White and Seven Dwarfs</p>	<p>"What?!" yelled the Queen. "No one is fairer than I! —What do you know – you ‘re a mirror! Roared the Queen —That’s impossible! Screamed the Queen. The Queen turned red with rage. She screamed, —She will not get away with this! </p>
<p>Frozen</p>	<p>Frozen: you a monster She nearly killed me. I said, enough! He roars. Spikes shoot out of his joints.</p>

Anger and verbal aggression fall into the same category. As many characters have shown their anger in the given dialogues, Anger is not considered a healthy activity as it brings negativity and anxiety. Here, the given references have shown the impact of anger through their dialogues. It later brings them remorse and threats.

4.1.2 Physical Appearance

<p>Frozen</p>	<p>physique helps I’m sure too I like. My sore eyes can’t wait to see the Queen and the Princess. I bet they’re lovely. I suddenly see him standing there. A beautiful stranger is tall and fair.</p>
<p>Cinderella</p>	<p>Cinderella was all clean. She was dressed in a beautiful blue gown. Her hair was set up high on her head inside a golden band.</p>

Almost every Disney film has depicted someone's physical appearance. It has caused an inferiority complex among children regarding their appearance. They start idealising the characters and want to look the same. It teaches the children to wear sensual clothes, enhancing their identities, and they will be noticed by everyone. This will lead them to success in all fields of life.

4.1.3 Trust

<p>Frozen</p>	<p>you can trust her I don’t want you getting hurt.</p>
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Among all these cartoon series, only "Frozen" has shown the concept of trust, which later causes her harm and shows that strangers are not the ones to trust. Either hidden message has two dimensions. First, it reveals the identity of the "prince" as a person, and second, it shows later in the movie that trusting strangers would lead us to danger and harm.

4.1.4 Greed

Beauty and The Beast	On the way out he passed a rose garden. —I will take just one, ¶ said he. And he picked a rose for Beauty.
Snow White and Seven Dwarfs	—I would like very much to buy your apple, ¶ said Snow White
Rapunzel	How fresh-looking were those big green heads of lettuce! —It is just what I need to eat! ¶
Frozen	No, you’re no match for Elsa. I, on the other hand, am the hero who is going to save Arendelle from destruction. She wrenches her face out of his hands

Greed, once again, is portrayed negatively in most films. It shows that a greedy person would face challenges in his life. But this notion is completely different and new for a child to understand. He might understand it as a game, and it causes harm to him. All the above factors show negative influences through different expressions and dialogues, which result in the destruction of cognitive abilities in children.

5. Data Analysis and Conclusion

The present study aims to analyse the hidden messages portrayed in different movies that influence the minds of youngsters. Ten films were selected for analysis. All of them have revealed many interpretations that cause destruction to the intellectual mind. They are on the edge of the initial stage of development. After witnessing these types of media-based content jeopardise their concepts, they begin to follow the trend without realising the dangers and consequences.

Van Dijk’s square model distinguished three circles that belong to a person’s ideology. It evolves society, discourse, and cognition. The reason for choosing this model for referred research is to throw light on the main features highlighted by Van Dijk. The selective cartoon series and their dialogues address this model briefly.

The study here represents many factors that have hidden messages behind every dialogue. Through visuals, it shapes their minds in the way they perceive animated cartoons. On one hand, it helps them to make their memory strong, while on the other, it affects their memory in terms of ideology and traditions. They are getting knowledge from the symbols. It is helping them know about the diversity around the globe. A young child's age makes them extremely sensitive to what is good and bad for them to learn. is difficult for them to decide about entertainment and exercising.

Parents need to be very keen and selective about their activities regarding cartoon programs. If they are ignored, they develop their schema at a young age. It will have a negative impact on their lives later on. It will get complicated for them to know about the facts of life.

No one can deny that power nuances and dynamics, power sustainability, and media are all inextricably linked in today's world. It was before the time when capitalism was at its peak and people were urged to follow it. The advancement of technology has provided the common people with the ability to communicate. During all these hassles, the media works like an independent platform where everyone can speak for themselves. However, with the rise of capitalism, including the media, everything turns into a tool of profit and investment. Cartoons are considered a source of entertainment. The audience that is watching this entertainment is mostly children, who are considered to be the best imitators.

The previous study focused on animated cartoons and the hidden messages they revealed through their dialogues and character appearances. It is aimed to analyse the messages that are having a negative impact on the ideological schemas of children while using the theory of the ideological square model of Van Dijk. After discussing all the features that are taken from the selective movies, it is concluded that these movies feature negative content in terms of behavior and physical and mental schemas.

This platform is made for children to show them fun and entertainment. Ironically, it is not properly fulfilling its objectives. The majority of these films highlight negative issues and agendas that are harmful to a child's sensitive mind. Secondly, it is very problematic to make them understand the difference between local and foreign cultures at this stage. They are fond of foreign culture and content and start exercising all these actions in real life to become dominant and famous. Based on their knowledge, it is considered good that they are acquiring other skills that will help them understand what is going on around the world, but this is not the case in this age.

The media is manipulating their minds through dominant ideologies without considering their age or ideological schemas. It is more appropriate to say that producers can inject any kind of power dynamics through their content and get billions of dollars from the audience in return. Any of these cartoons that transmit definite ideologies should be measured as serious intimidation. Because the marked and targeted audience is children, they cannot see what is happening with their minds; they are only connected to the source of entertainment. The harm they cause behind all these attractive series is limitless.

Consequently, it is very important to analyse this media content before showing it to children. Children are assets for every country. It is the equal responsibility of our government and media to make local content stronger so that our children know our values and ideologies. Likewise, it would be more helpful to save them from the negative impact of watching

animated cartoons (foreign content), which results in the manipulation of their ideological schemas.

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