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## **Animated Movies with Animals as Major Characters: A Study of Its Impact on Children Aged 5-8 Years**

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### **Abstract:**

Previous empirical researches have investigated children's knowledge of the natural world, but it is to say that little attention has been paid to the impact of the social and cultural instances that are reflected through animated movies displaying animals in motion. In the current research, I experimentally examined the impact of the exposure of such movies that act as a common and relevant cultural and social tool for learning about living things: Animals' Movies. While anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman phenomena, has long been a feature of children's literature, researchers have only recently focused on actually quantifying its impact on children's behavior. This research is a quantitative research study to test a sample of students falling under the age group of 5-8 years and collect the data for analysis.

**Keywords: Children, Animals, Movies, Impact, Anthropomorphism.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Talking animals have become commonplace in the realm of children's movies and are perhaps even expected. Animals of all kinds populate picture books and even movies, they exhibit varied degrees of human-like qualities. The anthropomorphism extends beyond speech to encompass clothing, upright walking, cooking, playing instrument, and dwelling in houses. Animal stories frequently dominate lists of children's movies, demonstrating that many children prefer movies with non-human characters. The including of talking animals in stories is a conscious choice made by authors and illustrators. It's not surprising that most of us remember a favorite story from our youth. There is frequently a common theme among the various stories that we have watched or had been read to us, there is typically one that spoke to us deeper than the others, a narrative that touched an emotional chord, representing a strongly felt need, concern, or

set of beliefs. This story remains strong and complete in our thought. Hearing it brings back memories and sensation that we may have forgotten.

Several studies have shown that children are more likely to generalize factual information and novel solutions when presented in reality rather than fantasy contexts implying that children learn less about real animals from media that represent animals in unrealistic ways.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Media frequently portrays animals in highly unrealistic and human-like ways. The review of over 1,000 current picture books for young children discovered that nearly half of them had animals as key characters, and these animals were nevertheless anthropomorphized with names, conversational capacities, and recognizably human behavior (Marriott, 2022).

Anthropomorphic characters may not be suitable for educating children about animals, but they may be useful for helping children with social and moral lessons (Mierek, 2010). The use of animal characters instead of humans help to make tough themes less intimidating (Burke & Copenhaver, 2004; Marriott, 2002) and avoid any kind of identification of gender or ethnicity that may leave any kind of impact on the minds of children. “The movies are interesting because of their features which have been created with cheerful and colorful nuance, uncanny animation and interesting story“ (Hasanah, 2019).

Waxman, Hermann, Woodring and Medin (2014) discovered that 5-year old children who were read a realistic animal storybook (First Animal Encyclopedia) before completing a reasoning test demonstrated a biological pattern of responses, attributed equally to animals and humans. It's not unexpected that children are not learning fact about real animals. A study of British children's television programs revealed that animals appeared in 87% of the shows with anthropomorphic animals appearing in more than half of them. These movies not only help children in learning the social and cultural patterns but also help them in acquiring the language. “In Bloom's Taxonomy of motor (learning) skills, the practical experiences have been given the highest weightage, i.e., the more practical environment we give to the babies the more they adapt to the phonetic patterns of different words” (Ishtiaque, 24-25). The similar pattern is seen in kids aged 5-8 who are not only getting entertained by watching animated movies with animal characters but are also unknowingly picking up language and sound systems.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**These are some of the questions that will be answered in this research:**

- 1) Why are talking animals so prevalent in children's movies?
- 2) What is their function, and why are they so popular?
- 3) Is there a negative impact on children when they watch animals in movies?
- 4) How does watching animals do certain activities in movies influence children's view of animals?
- 5) What kind of social or cultural impact does children have on them by watching animals in movies?
- 6) How does watching animals in movies make children empathetic?

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

**This research has four main objectives. They are as follows:**

1. To figure out the purpose of animal characters in innumerable children's stories.
2. How does movies have more powerful impact on a child than it is sometimes imagined.
3. To analyze how animal-stories influence children, both their attitude and behavior, and not just in facilitating their understanding of literature.
4. To find out the animals and animal's stories which are more appealing to the children aged 5-8.

## **Research Significance**

Considering the great importance of the impact of animated movies on children, the current study's focus is on the impact of anthropomorphism and factual movies in children. This study is about how movies affect children positively and negatively. On the positive side, there are many movies that give good lessons and sermons that children benefit from; by doing good things and help them differentiate between fantasy and reality.

## **Methodology & Procedure**

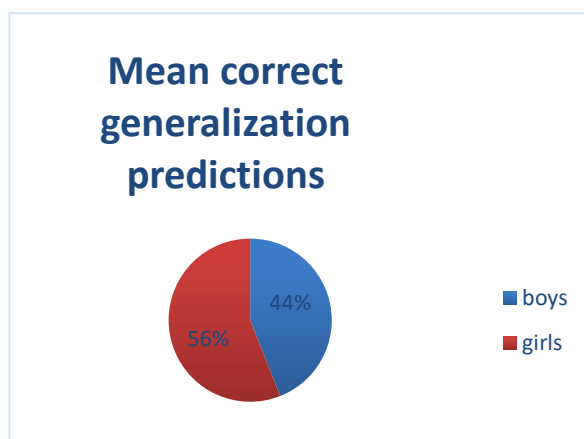
This research provides two studies, the first one is the percentage of children who were affected by anthropomorphic movies compared to the children who were affected by factual pictures of animals. The other study is a mean number of correct generalization predictions by 40 boys and girls. The children who were the subjects of this study were aged 5-8 years from the Primary School in the city of Al-Namas, Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia. They were assigned to participate in the experimental conditions with equal numbers of boys and girls in each condition. Children were made to watch the selected movies - Ratatouille, Lion King, & Belle and Sabastian - in a quiet area and their comprehension of the topic and their memorization of the animal's characters was measured.

## Result

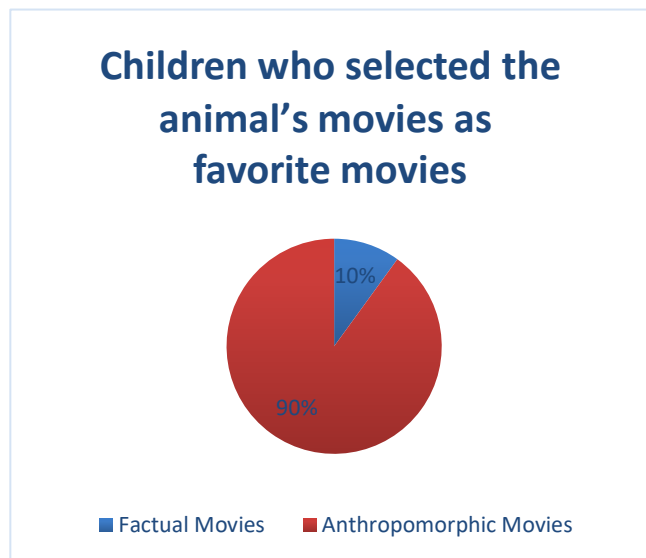
A number of questions were prepared to be answered by the children in the presence of the researcher. The graphs show the result of those questions. The first question was about correct predictions. They were asked about what will happen next in the movie. To this, 19 from 21 of the girls gave correct answers while 17 from 21 boys gave correct answers. Second question was about what were their favourite movies. The 90% from girls and boys chose animated movies as favorite movies. Third question was the ability to remember the types of animals in the movies; The study found that the girls' ability to remember the types of animals was more than that of boys. Last question was about their preference for the favorite character -whether it is an animal character or a human character. To this, the majority of children chose the animal character. Look at the graphs below for the pictorial representation of the answers acquired from children.

i)

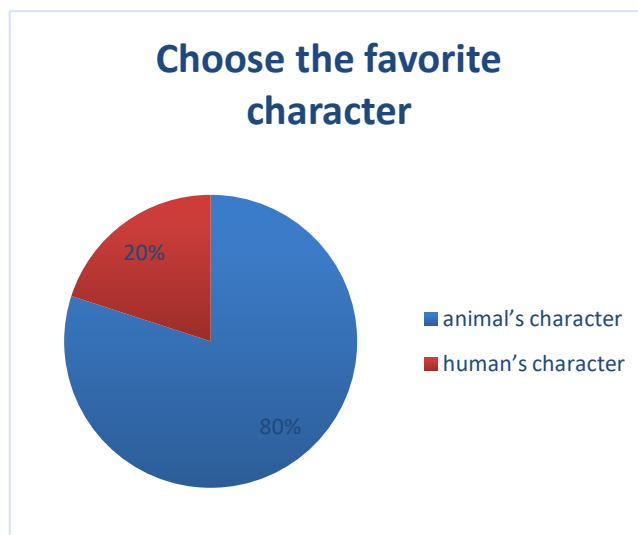


*mean number of correct generalization predictions of what will happen in selected clips by girls and boys.*

ii)

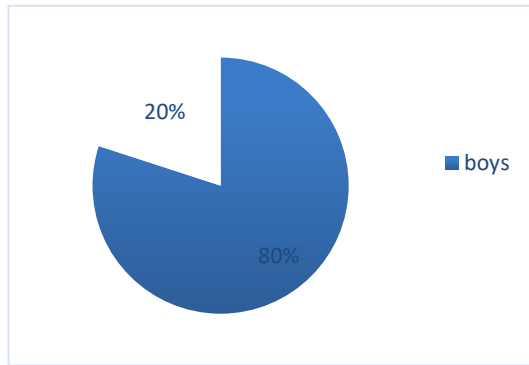


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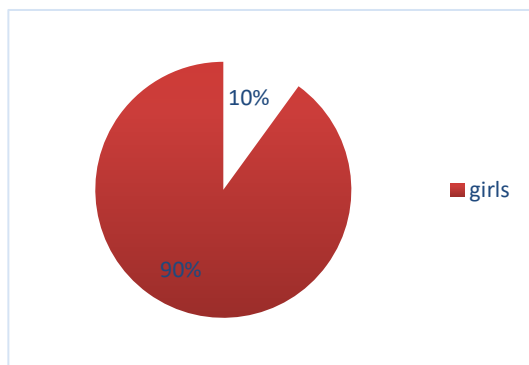


**The ability to remember the types of animals in the movies**

iv)



v)



## Discussion

### Anthropomorphism in Children's Movies

Ever since the early days of Disney, there has been an enormously popular pattern in animation that we tend to forget is at any way odd - that of anthropomorphised animals.

Rather than bothering with traditional people, this concept gives human form and features to beings from the animal realm, with varying degrees of realism. This can occur for a variety of reasons. So, how did things become so popular, and how far have they traveled in the current societal consciousness? The most evident reason for the adoption of these forms is their relationship to the fantasy foundation from which animation is born. Because animation allows for a level of flexibility that is not achievable in real life, it makes sense to take advantage of it as much as feasible. This means that fantasy settings, characters, and narratives stimulate the part of the imagination that loves originality and novelty.

Looking at the big picture, the answer to why these animals are so popular may be boiled down to a few key factors. Animals that have been anthropomorphized are fantastical yet relatable. They may take the sting out of what is often a brutal real world, while also approaching genuine concerns in ways that make us laugh or grin. In summary, they provide a level of flexibility that strict humanism cannot. This is why they will always be at the forefront of animated entertainment.

### **How does movies have more powerful impact on a child than it is sometimes imagined?**

Movies can have a greater impact on a child than is sometimes assumed.

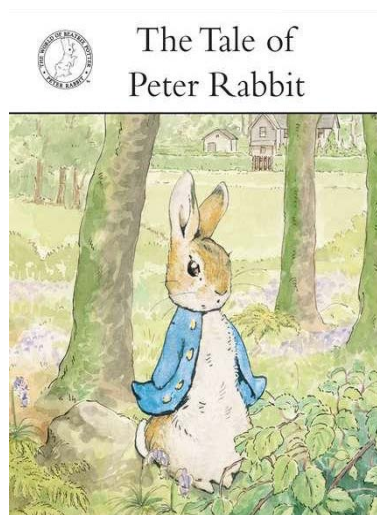
And the impact can be felt for a lifetime. The hardest lessons to change are those learned early in life. We must stop viewing children's stories as childish and acknowledge that the body of children's stories represents contentious issues at the heart of our culture. Children take these topics seriously through their observation and learning.

### **The Value of Children's Movies and Animal Stories**

Children's movies can assist children develop empathy for others and become less egocentric. Furthermore, children's stories have the power to foster emotional intelligence and moral growth. This is performed through the use of storytelling, that that address issues that are controversial or of philosophical matters. Furthermore. Children's stories teach them about cultural heritage and other people's traditions. This is an important consideration. because it is critical that youngsters establish a positive attitude toward diverse cultures. As a result, it is vital that stories that do not depict individuals from specific groups be chosen. A cultural story told in stereotypical ways Mr. Peter Rabbit.

Another benefit of children's stories is that they foster the development of imagination and allow youngsters to experience fresh sirilarion from afar. There are numerous varieties of children's stories, each serving a certain function. One of these genres includes humanized creatures.

Animal stories for children have a long history, dating back to the seventeenth century. Animal stories served educational reasons such as teaching the alphabet and reading, counting, and assisting children in understanding the world. Stories such as



Beatrix Potter's 'Peter the Rabbit' (1902) are also used to teach children about correct behavior and the consequences that might result from disobedience. The humorous and adventurous story is characterized by Peter the Rabbit's misbehavior causes him troubles. The tale is about Peter the Rabbit, who disobeys his mother and enters Mr. McGregor's Garden, which is full of vegetables. He soon, is spotted by Mr. McGregor is chased all across the garden and shoes near the cucumber frame. Peter the Rabbit finally finds the gate and returns home frightened but wiser. such stories convey a moral message that children

could potentially incorporate in their own behavior and learn from them.

This ability might depend on children's capacity to recognize the story as something and to classify what the something represents. Anthropomorphic animal stories and drawings may so challenge children's capacity to discriminate between fact and fiction, as well as their reasoning about real-life animals. A. A. Milne and English illustrator E. H. Shepard invented the fictitious anthropomorphic teddy bear Winnie-the-Pooh. The earliest collection of stories about the character was the book Winnie-the-Pooh (1926), in which Pooh and his companions go on a journey to retrieve Eeyore's missing tail and save Christopher Robin from a frightening creature known as The Backson while seeking for honey. Children can learn about love, forgiveness, patience, trust, and acceptance from the Winnie the Pooh books. Even if they contain discreetly mental health or undiscovered disorders, they normalize them and dispel the stigmas that today's society has imposed.

Some academics suggest that stories with realistic content are better for learning about animal biology or scientific ideas. The researchers find that the developmental stage of youngsters has a significant impact on their learning.

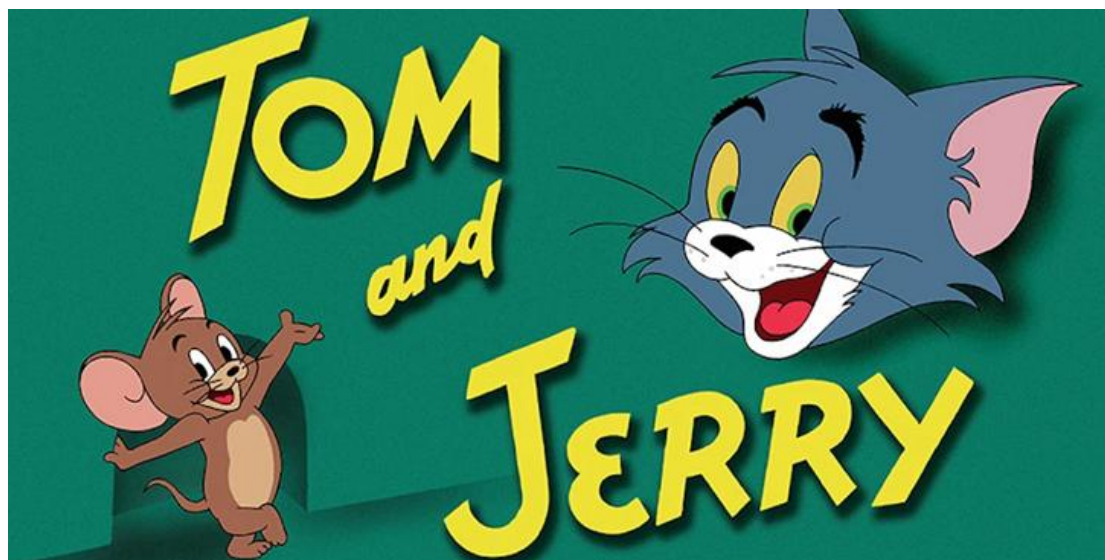
When it comes to selecting transferable information from picture books to a real-life event or an animal, some developmental elements, such as the ability to discriminate between reality and fiction, may be crucial. When selecting a movie, parents should consider their children's age and learning objectives. The

*Fig. 2. While searching for honey, Pooh and his friends embark on an adventure to find Eeyore's missing tail and rescue Christopher Robin from an unknown monster called The Backson.*



*Fig. 1. The humorous and adventurous story is characterized by Peter the Rabbit's disobedience which causes him trouble*  
Source: <https://bit.ly/3GrLmgw>

manner in which knowledge is expressed and animals are depicted has a substantial impact on their analogical thinking and ability to transfer that information to real animals.



*Fig. 3. American animated cartoon series about a hapless cat's never-ending pursuit of a clever mouse.*

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/04/tom-and-jerry-terrorists-of-the-cartoon-world/>

Audiences loved Tom (the conniving cat) and Jerry (the feisty mouse). Animators William Hanna and Joseph Barbera created over 100 episodes for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). Several of these films earned Academy Awards for best animated short subject, including Yankee Doodle Mouse (1943), The Cat Concerto (1946), and Johann Mouse (1952). In most episodes, Jerry thwarted Tom's attempts to please him and lived to torment him another day, while Tom would occasionally win the upper hand or the two would team up against a common foe. The series was entirely concerned with action and visual humor; the characters rarely spoke. Like Tom and Jerry when we learn to enjoy small things, we realize that life is bigger than we can imagine. Happiness is only in sharing Tom and Jerry fights with each other but also fight for each other. From their sweet conflicts, it is understood that happiness is in sharing happiness.

### **Negative impact on children when they watch animals in movies**

Early studies were criticized for failing to demonstrate that television has a direct effect on aggressive behavior, but research in the last two decades has shown that it does (Paik & Comstock, 1994; Wood et al., 1991). The vast majority of studies indicate that

experiencing violence influences youngsters to become more aggressive, either in their attitudes or in their behavior. The harm done to genuine animals as a result of childhood illusions and future misunderstandings leaves them appraised by unrealistic, androcentric standards that they rarely meet. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children who watch violent children's cartoons or films tend to be tense and angry, and they disobey their parents' directions.

There are negative effects of movies violence on children. Children become insensitive to the pain and grief of others. They become children who are undisturbed by any traces of violence they see around them in real life. Children become more susceptible to aggressive reactions, violent behavior, health problems and lack of empathy. Therefore, parents should carefully select cartoons for their children so as not to have a negative impact on them.

### **Conclusion**

The animated movies have become one of the most popular movies today. Therefore, the primary goal of the study was to examine the impact of animated movies with animals as major characters on children. The results of the survey I conducted and through its previous studies showed that the children preferred animated movies more than factual movies. I found out that what makes the children empathize with the animal characters are the good activities that they do. After conducting the experimental study, there was a clear consensus between boys and girls to prefer animal characters in all the movies that were shown to them. I also mentioned the significant effect of animals even on adults.

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