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THE INFLUENCE OF ANIMATED YOUTUBE VIDEOS ON CHILDREN SUFFERED IN MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR AT HYDERABAD (SINDH)

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ABSTRACT

YouTube became a popular application of sharing animated cartoon videos. The present study aims to analyze how high screen time on YouTube causes maladaptive behavior problems among children and what the parental role is in controlling screen time. A quantitative research design employed and collected 100 parents of children aged between 2 to 12 at Hyderabad (Sindh), who watches animated YouTube videos. The findings reveal a statistically significant negative correlation between screen time and maladaptive behavior patterns (β = -1.492, p = 0.005), where increased screen time does not directly magnify maladaptive behaviors. It has found that animated cartoons emerged as the most influential content type on maladaptive behavior; such as aggression, inappropriate actions, conflict, distraction, and attention seeking. Moreover, parental supervision demonstrated less influence on screen time (β = -0.010, p = 0.964). The surprising finding is that despite high parental supervision, there is no significant control over children's screen time. Additionally, age showed no significant direct relationship with maladaptive behaviors (β = -0.353, p = 0.552), although descriptive statistics showed that younger children have the highest screen time and consume cartoon-based content. It has revealed that animated YouTube videos significantly influence younger children's maladaptive behaviors, with screen time and content type playing critical roles in shaping these behavioral outcomes, whereas parental supervision has no significant control over children's screen time.

Keywords:*Animated YouTube Videos, Children, Maladaptive Behavior, Screen Time.*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era of globalization, social media serves as a primary engine for reshaping social discourse, communication modalities, and interpersonal dynamics, with profound implications for the psychological health of users (Toor, 2024; Yusri, 2024; Zhang, 2023; Ostic et al., 2021). Within Pakistan, this digital shift is evidenced by 66.9 million active social media accounts recorded in early 2025 (DataReportal, 2025). Central to this digital expansion is YouTube, which commanded a user base of 55.9 million during the same period (DataReportal, 2025). The platform's reach is particularly pervasive among younger demographics, a trend

that has accelerated since the previous year (DataReportal, 2025). As of October 2025, YouTube reported approximately 2,580 million monthly active users, positioning it among the most widely used social networking platforms globally (Statista, 2025). This high level of engagement reflects the increasing dominance of video-based content and the platform's capacity to integrate entertainment, education, and social interaction. The widespread adoption of mobile technology and algorithm-driven content delivery further contributes to its global reach and user retention. Overall, YouTube's prominence illustrates a broader shift toward multimedia-centered digital communication environments.

In the localized context of Pakistan, the platform reaches approximately 71.70 million individuals (DataReportal, 2024). While YouTube functions as a significant medium for both academic enrichment and leisure (Mostafa et al., 2023), its decentralized structure and lack of rigorous age-gating mechanisms pose substantial behavioral risks to pediatric users (Saleem, 2022; Yasin, 2024). Recent scholarship by Munzer et al. (2026) suggests that child development is now deeply embedded within a "digital ecosystem" where algorithmic content delivery and specific visual features may exert more influence than total screen time. Early exposure is common, as caregivers often utilize smart devices as tools for emotional regulation during infancy (Panjeti-Madan et al., 2023). Consequently, excessive digital consumption has emerged as a significant public health challenge (Qi et al., 2023), with approximately 65% of children's online activity dedicated to YouTube (Alqahtani et al., 2023).

The behavioral impact of such platforms is best understood through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Bandura's (1986) model of Triadic Reciprocal Determinism posits that human functioning is the result of a dynamic interplay between three factors: personal factors (cognitive and biological), environmental influences, and behavioral patterns. In the context of YouTube, the "environment" is the digital content and parental supervision, which shapes a child's "personal" cognition and subsequently manifests in "behavioral" outcomes, such as maladaptive habits (Balcombe et al., 2023).

Pediatric engagement with the platform is largely characterized by unsupervised viewing of vlogs, gaming, and 3D animations (Ahmed et al., 2021). As a medium, 3D animation utilizes volumetric digital environments to render complex ideas through a synthesis of vivid imagery and linguistic cues (Au, 2014; Rohmiatun, 2025). However, this high-engagement content is not without psychological consequences. Saeed et al. (2021) identified that 26.8% of children aged 3–12 exhibited noteworthy behavioral shifts following exposure to animated movies. Moreover, Salsabila et al., (2026) posits that the repetitive sensory stimuli found in YouTube videos can facilitate "character transformations" in children via the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) pathway.

Despite the growing body of literature, a critical gap remains regarding the specific link between animated YouTube content and maladaptive behaviors. Defined as actions that obstruct daily functioning and social integration (Gary, 2013), maladaptive behaviors are highly susceptible to early environmental influences (Cudo et al., 2024). While existing research has explored problematic gaming, Munzer et al. (2026) emphasize that the impact of "bedazzling" animation features on a child's executive functions is under-researched. This deficit is particularly evident in regional settings such as Hyderabad, Sindh, where unique cultural and familial dynamics may influence media effects.

The present study aims to analyze how high screen time on YouTube causes maladaptive behavior problems among children and what the parental role is in controlling screen time in Hyderabad. By investigating variables such as online viewing volume (AOV), age-specific engagement, and the dichotomy between educational and entertainment-based content (Elias & Sulkin, 2017; Saleem, 2022), this study seeks to identify the most vulnerable age cohorts. Ultimately, this localized analysis intends to provide actionable insights for parents, educators, and regulatory bodies—including the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to better manage the digital risks associated with youth-oriented media.

Reviews of Literature

The Dual Impact of YouTube Animated Content

Contemporary scholarship increasingly acknowledges the profound influence of YouTube's animated content on the psychological and behavioral development of children (Kim et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2021). Sheikh (2024) identifies the platform as a potent tool for early childhood pedagogy, facilitating language acquisition, phonics, and object recognition. However, this educational utility is contrasted by a "dark side" of animated media, where excessive consumption is linked to detrimental social and cognitive growth (Sheikh, 2023). This dichotomy is further evidenced by recent data suggesting that while YouTube fosters cognitive development through informative content, it simultaneously correlates with increased aggression and diminished academic performance (DataReportal, 2025). Furthermore, Imaniah et al. (2026) posits that repetitive sensory stimuli in animated videos can facilitate "character transformations" via the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) pathway, mirroring the observational learning components of Social Cognitive Theory.

The Dynamics of Screen Time

The concern regarding pediatric screen time intensified following the COVID-19 pandemic, which catalyzed a significant surge in "hyper-connection" across all socio-demographic groups (Tintori et al., 2024). Research indicates that early-life screen exposure is a predictor for developmental challenges, including autistic-like behaviors among preschoolers (Çalhan &Goksu, 2024). While technology offers certain cognitive benefits, Panjeti-Madan et al., (2023) argue that sustainable progress across developmental domains requires controlled observation and monitoring. Adding to this, Munzer et al. (2026) highlight that the digital ecosystem—driven by "bedazzling" content and algorithmic persistence influences a child's executive functions more significantly than duration alone, a factor particularly relevant to the high-engagement 3D animations popular in 2026.

Age-Specific Vulnerabilities

The impact of animation varies significantly across developmental stages. Studies targeting age groups from 4 to 15 suggest that younger cohorts (ages 4–7) are more susceptible to the "weakening effect" on inhibitory control when exposed to high-fantastical content (Fan et al., 2021). This susceptibility is underscored by the prominence of channels like "Cocomelon" and videos such as "Baby Shark," which dominate the viewing habits of infants and toddlers (Statista, 2025).

Consumption Patterns and Gendered Representations

YouTube content consumption is not gender-neutral. Lyles et al. (2024) observed that feminine characters often exhibit higher positive emotionality, reinforcing traditional stereotypes. However, the platform possesses the transformative potential to promote gender-fair socialization if content remains diverse (Lyles et al., 2024). Engagement patterns also reveal a disparity between parental intent and child motivation; while parents prioritize educational value, children are primarily driven by hedonic play and sensory enjoyment (Scott et al., 2023). Moreover, Balcombe and De Leo (2023) warn that the platform's recommendation algorithms can exacerbate feelings of loneliness or create social dependencies in vulnerable young viewers.

Behavioral Patterns and Maladaptive Outcomes

A critical area of concern is the emergence of maladaptive behaviors—actions that interfere with daily living and social integration (Gary, 2013). Kim et al. (2024) established a link between early YouTube initiation and subsequent self-regulation difficulties. Violent animated content has been specifically correlated with heightened aggression, with boys often showing higher sensitivity to violent stimuli, while girls may exhibit behavioral shifts in response to non-violent content (Saba et al., 2023). Interventions such as Cognitive Behavioral Anger-Control Training (CBACT) have shown promise in mitigating these effects, though they do not entirely eliminate the influence of violent media (Saba et al., 2023). Recent 2026 perspectives suggest that these behavioral patterns are

increasingly localized, necessitating studies in specific urban centers like Hyderabad, Sindh, where domestic media habits intersect with global digital trends (Munzer et al., 2026).

Parental Supervision and Mediation Strategies

Parental mediation is a decisive factor in mitigating digital risks. Research categorizes supervision into active and restrictive strategies, both of which are negatively correlated with digital addiction (Çalhan& Göksu, 2024). Conversely, "parental phubbing"—where caregivers prioritize smartphones over direct interaction—is associated with increased aggression in children (Elboj-Saso et al., 2024). Despite the availability of parental controls, many caregivers struggle to reconcile traditional family values with the digital culture propagated by popular YouTubers (YildizDurak, 2020). Effective mediation now requires a shift from simple restriction to "digital literacy," where parents actively engage in the content with their children to foster healthy consumption habits.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

A robust theoretical framework provides the structural and philosophical justification for a study's design. This research employs a theoretical approach, adapting Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to examine the relationship between YouTube consumption and maladaptive behaviors in children.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Originally introduced by Bandura (1977), Social Cognitive Theory moved psychological discourse away from pure behaviorism toward a focus on cognitive processes. The core of Social Cognitive Theory is Triadic Reciprocal Determinism, which posits that human functioning is the result of a continuous, three-way interaction between personal factors (, biological, and affective events (e.g., a child's age or temperament), behavioral patterns (biological, and affective events; e.g., a child's age or temperament), and environmental influences (external social and digital stimuli, e.g., YouTube content and parental mediation).Bandura (1986) emphasizes that individuals are not merely passive recipients of environmental stimuli but are "agents" who can regulate their own behavior through anticipation and self-efficacy. In the digital age, this framework has evolved; Munzer et al. (2026) argue that the "digital ecosystem" of YouTube serves as a powerful environmental determinant that reshapes a child's cognitive self-regulation and executive functioning. Using Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), this study classifies variables into environmental (screen time, YouTube content, parental supervision), individual (age, cognitive development), and behavioral (maladaptive behavior) factors. It examines how children's exposure to YouTube content, under parental monitoring, influences maladaptive behavior through observational learning.

Parental Supervision and YouTube Effects

Both theories converge on the critical role of external mediation. Gerbner (1986) noted that parental involvement significantly weakens the relationship between screen time and the cultivation of negative perceptions. Similarly, SCT suggests that parental supervision acts as a moderating factor that can disrupt the reciprocal link between digital environmental stimuli and maladaptive behavioral outputs.

This research applies these concepts to hypothesize that Parental Supervision (PS) serves as a moderating variable that significantly alters the influence of YouTube consumption on children's social and psychological development in Hyderabad, Sindh.

Based on the synthesis of Social Cognitive Theory, the following conceptual model is proposed:

Independent Variable (IV): Screen Time (ST).

Dependent Variable (DV): Maladaptive Behavior (MAB).

Independent Variable: Types of YouTube Animated Content (YT).

Independent Variable: Parental Supervision (PS)

Independent Variable: Child's Age (Constant: 2–12 years).

Constructed Research Hypotheses

Based on the synthesis of the aforementioned theories, the following hypotheses are proposed for this study:

H1: Increased YouTube screen time (high screening and low screening) significantly positively influence with the manifestation of maladaptive behaviors.

H1: ST-> MAB

H2: Proactive parental supervision mediation significantly influence the Screen time of Children spends on watching YouTube animated cartoon.

H2: PS->ST

H3: Proactive parental supervision mediation significantly influences maladaptive behavior of children.

H3: PS->MAB

H4: Younger children (ages 2–6) demonstrate higher susceptibility to maladaptive behavioral of children.

H4: Children's Age-> MAB

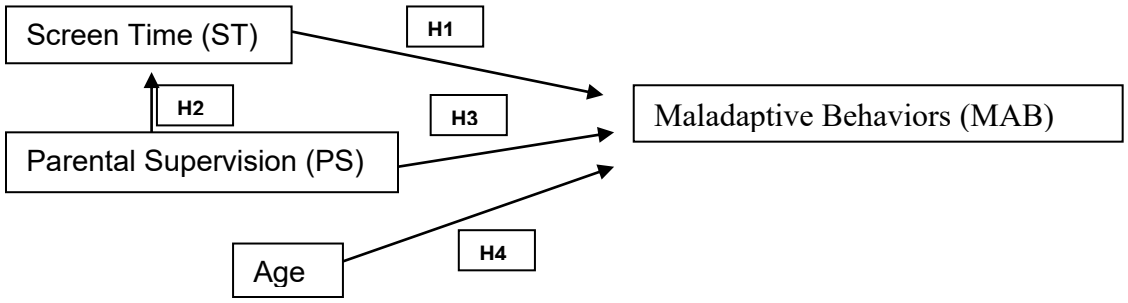

Fig 1. Constructed Model

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design using a purposive sampling method to examine the influence of animated YouTube videos on the maladaptive behavior of children aged 2 to 12 in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan. Data were collected from a diverse sample of N = 100 parents and guardians recruited through schools, community centers, and online forums. The research instrument utilized a structured survey consisting of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items to measure key variables, including screen time, types of animated content, parental supervision, and child's age, as they relate to the dependent variable of maladaptive behavior. Following a pilot study of 25 respondents to ensure instrument reliability, the primary data were analyzed via SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analyses. All procedures adhered to ethical research standards, ensuring informed consent and participant confidentiality while investigating the relationship between digital media consumption and behavioral outcomes.

Conceptual Framework of Variables

This study examines the interplay between YouTube consumption and children's behavioral outcomes. The research design identifies Maladaptive Behavior Patterns as the dependent variable (DV). The independent variables (IV) include Screen Time and Child's Age. Furthermore, Types of YouTube Animated Content and Parental Supervision are identified as moderating variables that influence the strength and direction of the relationship between YouTube exposure and behavioral manifestations.

Screen Time (Independent Variable)

Screen time is defined as the cumulative duration an individual engages with digital interfaces (e.g., smartphones, tablets, TVs) for media consumption (Santos et al., 2024).

Child's Age (Independent/Constant Variable)

The constant variable "child's age" refers to the developmental period defined by the American

Psychological Association (APA, 2024) as spanning from the end of infancy (approximately 2 years old) to the onset of puberty (around 10-12 years old). This stage is characterized by significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development and is commonly divided into three stages:

Early Childhood (2-5/6 years): A period of rapid growth in language, motor skills, and early social behaviors.

Middle Childhood (6-8/10 years): A time when children develop logical thinking, academic skills, and increased social interactions.

Late Childhood/Preadolescence (10-12 years): Marked by early puberty-related changes, growing independence, and enhanced peer relationships (APA, 2024).

Maladaptive Behavior Patterns (Dependent Variable)

Based on Gray (2013) framework, maladaptive behaviors are actions that obstruct a child's ability to adjust to or participate in daily social and environmental demands.

The following indicators are referred from the maladaptive personality traits of the DSM-5 i.e.; negative affectivity, detachment, antagonism, disinhibition, and psychoticism (First et al., 2022). In this research, the researcher used these traits as the dimension of the dependent variable of maladaptive behavior patterns. These dimensions indicate the behavior patterns of children after consuming animated YouTube content.

Negative Affectivity includes negative emotions i.e.; anxiety, depression, shame, worry, anger, or behavioral i.e.; self-harm (DSM-5-TR 2022).

Detachment refers to avoiding socio-emotional experiences, characterized by withdrawal from interpersonal interactions, intimacy avoidance, and a restricted ability to experience or express emotions, particularly a diminished capacity to find pleasure in life (hedonic capacity) (DSM-5-TR 2022).

Antagonism refers to behaviors that create conflict with others, characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, expectations of special treatment, and attention seeking (DSM-5-TR 2022).

Disinhibition refers to impulsive behavior driven by immediate thoughts, feelings, or external stimuli, without considering past experiences or future consequences. Such as impulsivity or distraction (DSM-5-TR 2022).

Psychoticism refers to behaviors and thoughts that are culturally odd, eccentric, or unusual. It includes both abnormal thought processes (e.g., distorted perception, dissociation) and content (e.g., strange beliefs or ideas). Such as bizarre behavior and saying unusual or inappropriate things (DSM-5-TR 2022).

Types of Animated YouTube Content

This refers to the thematic nature and intent of the digital content, which can vary from instructional to purely recreational (Kleftodimos, 2024).The moderating variable "types of animated YouTube content" is conceptualized as the different categories of animated videos that exist on YouTube that serve various audience needs and content objectives (Alqahtani, 2023). For example, 2D and 3D animations, motion graphics, and stop-motion etc (Kleftodimos, 2024). The goal of these animations is to entertain, inform, or educate children as primary audiences in the majority of cases. Furthermore, this content can be categorized such as educational (Kleftodimos, 2024), entertainment-focused cartoons (Pew Research Center, 2018), video-games-related content (McGrady, 2023), etc.

Contrary to this, the operational definition for "types of animated YouTube content" will be measured by categorizing YouTube videos based on their content type and purpose. These categories include Educational Animation (Kleftodimos, 2024), Videos aimed at providing educational content on topics such as science, language, or mathematics, Entertainment, and Cartoons (Pew Research Center, 2018), animated videos designed for fun and entertainment, including cartoons and story-driven content, and Gaming Animations (McGrady, 2023), animated content related to video games, including gameplay explanations and fan-based animations.

Parental Supervision (Independent Variable)

The degree of active or restrictive involvement parents exercise over their children's digital habits (Banic &Orehovacki, 2024a).“Parental supervision” is considered the moderating variable and is operationalized as strategies parents use to guide children's digital media consumption, particularly on platforms like YouTube (Banić and Orehovački, 2024b). It's a moderating variable for its controlling nature over the relationship of other variables. Furthermore, Parental supervision is classified into different levels: high supervision (e.g., strict limits on content and screen time, regular discussions, and providing general guidelines) and low supervision (e.g., minimal or no involvement in screen-related activities). (Elboj-Saso et al., 2024).

Findings

The Table 1 provides a general breakdown of the demographic items used in the survey. It has shown that the highest percentage of children (29.0%) were between the aged 2–4 years and (48%) were above seven years, with progressively fewer respondents in older age groups, demonstrating a significant focus on early and late childhood for this study. Most children were in preschool (74%), and the majority had Urdu as their mother tongue (69%) (See Table 1). Beside this, smart phone is the most frequent device used by 82% respondents. However, 42% children use smart TV, 24% Ipad/tablet and 14% computer/laptop respectively. However, entertainment cartoon has the highest selection of usage 84%, whereas educational animations and gaming animations have the lower selection (See Table 1).

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Profile (Source: Author's Data)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age2-4 years	29	29.0
5-6 years	23	23.0
above 7 years	48	48.0
Class		
KG to 3rd	74	74.0
4th to 6th	22	22.0
7th to onwards	4	4.0
Child's Mother Tongue		
Urdu	69	69.0
Sindhi	25	25.0
Others (Punjabi, Pashto)	6	6.0
Devices use		
Smartphone	82	82%
Smart TV	42	42%
Ipad/Tablet	24	24%
Computer/ Laptop	14	14%
YouTube Contents		
Educational Animation	44	44%
Entertainment Cartoon	84	84%
Gaming Animation	54	54%

Source: Author's source

To assess the internal consistency of the research instrument, Cronbach's alpha α was calculated for each of the four constructs. According to the benchmarks suggested by Hair et al. (2019), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of α.70 or higher indicates acceptable internal consistency, while values above α 0.80 are considered good.

The reliability for the dependent variable, Maladaptive Behavior, was found to be high α.805, suggesting that the seven items used are highly consistent in measuring the construct. The moderating variable, Parental Supervision, demonstrated moderate reliability α = .681, falling slightly below the preferred α 0.70 threshold but remaining within an acceptable range for exploratory social science research. However, significant reliability issues were observed in the remaining constructs. The mediating variable, YouTube Content, yielded a low coefficient α= .302. Furthermore, the independent variable, Screen time, demonstrated critically low internal consistency α 0.168. These values suggest that the items for these two constructs did not reliably measure the intended variables within the current sample (Refer Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability Analysis by Cronbach's Alpha

Constructs	Variables	Items	Cronbach's α	Author's source
Screen Time (ST)	Independent	3	>.168	(Yasin, A, 2024)
YouTube Content (YTC)	Independent	3	>.302	(Elias & Sulkin, 2017)
Maladaptive Behavior (MAB)	Dependant	7	>.805	(Saleem, 2022)
Parental Supervision (PS)	Independent	5	>.681	(Saleem, 2022)

Source: Author's source

Children's viewing patterns varied by content type. Entertainment cartoons were most frequently consumed, with 61% reporting daily viewing, indicating strong routine engagement. Educational animations showed moderate but inconsistent use, with similar proportions reporting never and sometimes viewing (23% each) and only 19% daily exposure**.** Gaming animations reflected a polarized pattern, with comparable proportions reporting never (28%) and daily use (27%). Overall, entertainment content dominates daily media habits, while educational and gaming content show less consistent engagement. (Refer Table 3)

Table 3:Frequency of types of content consumption (Source: Author's Data)

Frequency	Educational Animations (%)	Entertainment Cartoons (%)	Gaming Animations (%)
Never	23.0	5.0	28.0
Occasionally	21.0	18.0	15.0
Sometimes (once a week)	23.0	5.0	24.0
Often (2-3 days per week)	14.0	11.0	6.0
Always (Daily)	19.0	61.0	27.0

Source: Author's source

The regression results provide limited but targeted support for the proposed model. The path from screen time impact on maladaptive behaviors statistically significant ($\beta = -1.492$, $p = .005$, $R^2 = .077$), indicating that Screen Time has a meaningful negative effect on Maladaptive Behavior. Although the explained variance is modest (7.7%), the strength and significance of the coefficient justify acceptance of this hypothesis. Substantively, this suggests that

increases in Screen Time are associated with a notable reduction in Maladaptive Behavior, making Screen Time the only influential predictor in the model.

In contrast, the relationship between parental supervision on screen time is not statistically significant (β = 0.041, p = .347, R^2 = .009), leading to rejection of the hypothesis. The negligible effect size and very low explanatory power (0.9%) indicate that parental supervision does not meaningfully predict screen time. Similarly, parental supervision on Maladaptive Behavior shows no significant effect (β = −0.070, p = .762, R^2 = .001), suggesting that parental supervision has neither direct nor indirect influence on Maladaptive Behavior within this model.

Finally, children's age has also non-significant (β = −0.353, p = .552, R^2 = .004) impact on maladaptive behavior, indicating that age does not contribute to variations in Maladaptive Behavior. The very low variance explained further reinforces its lack of predictive relevance.

Overall, the findings challenge the broader explanatory power of the model, as only one hypothesized relationship is supported. The results imply that Maladaptive Behavior is primarily influenced by ST, while P and Age fail to demonstrate statistically or practically significant effects. This raises questions about the theoretical role of P and demographic factors in predicting MBP and suggests the need to reconsider model specification or include additional variables with stronger explanatory potential (Refer Table 4).

Table 4:Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	β	R^2	P	Result
H1: ST → MAB	-1.492	0.077	0.005	Accepted
H2: P S→ ST	0.041	0.009	0.347	Rejected
H3: P S→ MAB	-0.070	0.001	0.762	Rejected
H4: Age → MAB	-0.353	0.004	0.552	Rejected

The results show a significant negative relationship between screen time and maladaptive behavior (r = −.278, p = .005), indicating that higher screen time is associated with lower maladaptive behavior. In contrast, parental supervision is not significantly related to either maladaptive behavior (r = −.031, p = .762) or screen time (r = .095, p = .347). Similarly, age shows no significant association with maladaptive behavior (r = −.060, p = .552). Overall, only screen time demonstrates a meaningful relationship, while parental supervision and age do not significantly influence the outcomes. (Refer Table 5).

Table 5:Correlation between Variables

Variables	P	r
Screen time (ST) → Maladaptive Behavior (MAB)	0.005	-.278**
Parental Supervision (PS)→ Screen time (ST)	0.347	.095
Parental Supervision (PS) → Maladaptive Behavior (MAB)	0.762	-.031
Age → Maladaptive Behavior (MAB)	0.552	-.060

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Following the correlation analysis, a multiple linear regression was conducted to assess the predictive effects of screen time, parental supervision, and age on maladaptive behavior. The model demonstrates a weak overall fit. The correlation coefficient (R = .278) indicates a low association between the predictors and maladaptive behavior. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = .077) shows that the model explains only 7.7% of the variance in maladaptive behavior, while the adjusted R^2 = .048 further confirms the model's limited explanatory power

after controlling for predictors and sample size. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate (6.34)reflects moderate dispersion between observed and predicted values. Overall, the results suggest that these variables provide minimal predictive contribution to maladaptive behavior, indicating that other unexamined factors may better explain the outcome. (Refer Table 6)

Table 6:Model Summary, Predictors: (Constant)

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	. 278[a]	.077	.048	6.34215

The regression results indicate that screen time is the only significant predictor of maladaptive behavior (β = −0.278, p = .007), showing a moderate negative effect. This suggests that higher screen time is associated with lower levels of maladaptive behavior. However, this direction is theoretically unexpected and should be interpreted with caution. In contrast, parental supervision (β = −0.004, p = .964) and age (β = −0.007, p = .943) are statistically non-significant, with coefficients close to zero. This indicates that neither variable contributes meaningfully to predicting maladaptive behavior within this model. The negative effect of screen time may reflect measurement or contextual factors rather than a true protective role. For instance, screen time may include educational or structured content, which could reduce problematic behaviors. Alternatively, suppression effects or omitted variables (e.g., parenting style, socio-economic status, or content type) may distort the relationship. Given the model's overall weak explanatory power, the findings suggest that maladaptive behavior is influenced by factors beyond those included, and the observed relationship should not be generalized without further empirical validation (Refer Table 7).

Table 7:Regression Analysis

Model	Variable	B	β	t	p	Sig.
1	(Constant)	31.405	3.413		9.201	.000
	ST	-1.482	.540	-.276	-2.747	.007
	PS	-.010	.226	-.004	-.045	.964
	age	-.042	.586	-.007	-.072	.943

a. Dependent Variable: maladaptive behavior

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study examined the impact of animated YouTube videos on maladaptive behavior among children in Hyderabad, Sindh. The findings indicated that screen time is significantly associated with maladaptive behavior, although regression results suggest a strong and significant predictive effect, highlighting potentially context-dependent relationship. Younger children showed comparatively higher behavioral sensitivity, but age was not a significant predictor. Parental supervision demonstrated no direct statistical effect on either screen time or maladaptive behavior, though it may still play a contextual or indirect protective role. Among content types, entertainment cartoons appeared more strongly associated with behavioral outcomes than educational or gaming animations, emphasizing the importance of content quality in shaping child behavior. Hypothesis 1 was supported, indicating a statistically significant relationship between ST and MAB. In contrast, Hypotheses 2 , 3 , and 4 were not supported, as their results were statistically non-significant and demonstrated low explanatory power. The lack of significance may be attributed to the limited sample size, which reduces statistical power and contributes to uncertainty in the analysis.

Overall, the study highlights that children's behavioral patterns are influenced more by digital content exposure than by demographic factors or parental supervision alone. These findings align with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which explain how repeated exposure of YouTube content can shape behavioral tendencies over time. The study underscores the need for enhanced parental awareness, guided media consumption, and content regulation strategies to support healthier digital engagement among children. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs and broader contextual variables to better understand the long-term developmental effects of digital media exposure.

Limitation of the study

This study has several limitations. The sample was just 100 and restricted to children in Hyderabad. The findings of the study can not be generalized to other regions. Additionally, the focus on animated content on YouTube may not represent the effects of other media formats, such as v-logs or live-action videos. The absence of longitudinal data prevents assessment of long-term behavioral outcomes. Finally, the children's viewing patterns may affect the future applicability of the results.

Recommendations and Practical Implications

Based on the findings, it is recommended that parents actively monitor and regulate children's screen time, particularly on platforms such as YouTube, to reduce exposure to potentially harmful animated content. Content creators and platform regulators should also promote age-appropriate and educational material to support healthy cognitive and behavioral development. For practical application, educators and policymakers can use these insights to design media literacy programs that enhance children's critical viewing skills and guide parents in effective digital supervision. Additionally, future research should incorporate diverse content types and adopt longitudinal designs to better understand long-term behavioral effects in varying socio-cultural contexts.

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