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## Learning Moral Values Through Cartoons for Malaysian Preschool-aged Children

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**Abstract.** While the younger generation's access to YouTube and time spent in front of the TV have increased, research on the ability of young children to learn moral values remains lacking. Furthermore, the preconceived notion that cartoons are detrimental to moral development is inconclusive, which requires further research to be confirmed or debunked. This study, which is mixed method research, aims to identify and analyse how moral values are taught in cartoons. A total of 20 preschool children (aged five to six years old) from an elementary school in Kuala Lumpur were selected. Doraemon animated series or movies were used as the study data. Notably, Doraemon animations and movies are popular among children as they are humorous and condemn bullying. This was followed by the process of data collection that comprised three phases. Specifically, the first phase was participant observation, the second phase was questionnaires, and the third phase was the unstructured interview. A statistical programme was conducted to analyse all the quantitative data collected from the surveys. Qualitative analysis software was used to analyse and code the qualitative data collected from observations and unstructured interviews. As a result, the majority of preschool children were in the imitation phase. Therefore, they imitated the good moral values portrayed in the cartoons they watched. This study also highlighted that preschool children's viewing of cartoons is not only entertaining but also educational and teaches important key moral values. Apart from that, the children preferred to watch cartoons rather than playing outside during their free time. The families' explanations helped the preschoolers distinguish between good and bad moral values in line with Malay culture and Islamic teachings. The analysis was limited by the small sample size and geographical location of this study. Thus, it was suggested that further studies are conducted to expand the economic strata and age groups.

**Keywords:** Moral Values; Cartoons; Preschool; Children; Television; YouTube

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## 1. Introduction

In today's world, where technology has become more accessible to younger generations, children have shorter attention spans. Therefore, they are reluctant to listen to bedtime stories and prefer to watch TV or videos on YouTube. Based on the statistics on smartphone usage released by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission in 2021, 94.8% of Malaysians used smartphones in their daily lives as smartphones are affordable to all individuals regardless of income. Furthermore, young children often watch cartoons on their smartphones due to their affordability for families and compact size, which is convenient to carry at any place. The touchscreen function of smartphones encourages young children to actively interact by swiping, touching, and pressing gestures. With the new generation of computer-animated cartoons such as *Toy Story*, *Shrek*, *Kung Fu Panda*, and *Frozen*, the production of animated films has changed dramatically over the century - from traditional techniques to computer-animated techniques with computer-generated imagery (CGI). Although cartoons are produced for entertainment purposes and, to some extent, portray magical and fictional creatures and places, children enjoy watching cartoons due to the vivid and unique visuals besides the compelling stories.

Based on a previous study by Joginder Singh et al. (2021), children between the ages of three and five watch an average of 2.64 hours of television per day, which is above the amount recommended by the American Academy of Paediatrics. Essentially, children are highly sensitive to media exposure due to their lack of resilience, judgment, and other cognitive and emotional skills (Weaver et al., 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to mitigate the negative effects of media while enhancing their positive effects. Cartoons do not only serve as entertainment in young children's lives, but they also play an important role in the development of the children's aesthetic and artistic values and acquisition of the values (Acheampong, 2017). Therefore, it is important to provide children with opportunities to watch cartoons that reflect society's aesthetic and artistic values where they grow up (Balaji & Lakshmikantha, 2022). Based on Habib and Soliman's (2015) study, cartoons were found to be an important visual resource to guide children in acquiring moral values such as tolerance, respect for differences, cooperation, kindness, and honesty. In addition, teachers are able to enhance the children's teaching and learning process by explaining to them about the story plot and characters to motivate them and promote their interactions in the classroom (Kabooha, 2016). Therefore, cartoons can develop young children's cognitive skills by analyzing and evaluating cartoon characters in a democratic environment by presenting different opinions and respecting others' views.

Young children's selection of the genre of the cartoon is attributed to their age and the cartoon's special features such as attractive visual effects, a good voice, facial expressions, and the characters' feelings that pique their interest. A notable difference was present between the male and female young children in their choices of favourite characters. To illustrate, boys prefer supernatural abilities and physical appearances, such as flying skills, supernatural powers, and

magical abilities, with some of the characters bearing terrifying appearances. Meanwhile, girls idolise the characters for their beauty and fashionable behaviour. Furthermore, the status of female characters has evolved from the era of Disney cartoons such as Snow White and Cinderella to today's cartoons where the female characters are portrayed with strong abilities, skilled tasks, and idealistic love. An example is Elsa of Frozen, an explorer who strives for adventure and fights for justice. An animated hero can also be a role model for children in the long term. At the same time, an animated film may bring more harm through a character with a negative attitude, which could convey to the child a distorted image of the character's life and surroundings.

According to Sultana (2014), cartoons influence young children into watching TV more often compared to carrying out productive tasks. To obtain data, surveys, and interviews were conducted with various Bangladeshi communities. A child's ability to learn and take care of his or her mental health can be affected by excessive watching of cartoons. According to the child, the majority of parents use the television for leisure and to assist children with their homework; however, most of them are not aware of the harmful repercussions of continuous TV use. Furthermore, young children are more likely to watch TV while dining or finishing their homework, which subsequently becomes their main leisure activity. As a consequence, parents and children struggle to face future obstacles in their lives. It was also observed that although cartoons are delightful and engaging, they also have drawbacks as they cause addiction in children, which negatively impacts their social development and mental health. For this reason, all individuals, especially parents, should be notified of the critical repercussions of cartoons.

This study aims to identify and analyse the moral values that should be taught in cartoons to the audience that comprises preschool children. Accordingly, the following research questions were explored to achieve the study goal:

1. How do cartoons influence the promotion of moral values among preschool children?
2. What factors influence preschool children's attitudes toward watching Doraemon?
3. What is the perception of preschool children toward watching Doraemon?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Preschool-aged Children in Malaysia**

According to a survey conducted in 2003, a total of 490,700 children in Malaysia under the age of five were required to attend preschool. Approximately 47% of these children had access to preschool education, while the remaining 53% were unable to enroll in preschool programmes. As a result, preschool instruction became a part of the national education system as a foundation for primary education in 1996. In 2003, the preschool initiative of the Ministry of Education (MOE) was implemented in the entire nation. These preschools were built by MOE to provide access to preschool education for low-income families from suburban, rural, and remote locations. In the Malaysian context, teachers who

have received training and certification in preschool education take on the task of educating and mentoring preschool children (Mustafa & Azman, 2013). According to Malaysia's Education Plan 2013–2035, approximately 77% of students are enrolled in preschool programmes, which could be public or private.

The National Preschool Standard Curriculum (NPSC) was built on six pillars: communication, science and technology, intellectual development, attitudes and values, humanity and self-expression, and physical and aesthetic development. The NPSC was introduced as a part of the Malaysian Education Plan 2013–2025 (Ahmad et al., 2022). These six pillars are also areas that complement one another and are connected to critical, creative, and inventive thinking. The objective is to create a human capital that upholds high moral standards, is knowledgeable, engages in critical thought, and generates original and creative ideas (Rahman & Noor, 2018).

Access to free preschool education for low-income or poor families in urban areas including Kuala Lumpur has led to a preference for early childhood education, particularly the education that embraces diversity, as a bridge to the transition to elementary school. Among the various preschools, the classes under MOE do not charge for tuition; free school lunches are also offered. While many parents aim for their children to enrol on schools, their admission depends on the parents' income, which should be a maximum of RM1,000 per month (Rahmatullah et al., 2021). In most cases, parents from this income group have several jobs, leading to insufficient time to take care of their children's needs at home. As a result, their children spend more time watching television programmes, especially cartoons, compared to other leisure activities (Raj et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study was conducted on cartoons, which play an important role among preschool children, including the values and behaviours portrayed through them. Notably, identifying these values is important to create value for children's education. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the development of moral values through cartoons for preschool-aged children in Malaysia.

## **2.2 Preschool-aged Children and Character Development**

Children between the ages of four and six who attend preschool are known as preschoolers. Preschool education is a crucial stage where these children develop cognitive, psychomotor, and emotional skills, moral values, and character. They begin to acquire knowledge, skills, and values by imitating the behaviours they observe (Haryono, 2020). Furthermore, character education is a process of character formation within children, which is influenced by genetic factors and the environment surrounding them. The goal of character education is to assist in the development of children's personality, allowing them to become a complete person. In children's cognitive development, which begins between the ages of 1 and 5, a process known as imitation takes place (Hasanah & Much, 2018). At these ages, children find it easy to imitate what they see and hear. Therefore, the parents' wisdom in selecting the programmes that educate

their children is important; what they see could have a positive impact on the children.

Children who are exposed to moral values from an early age are able to easily control their behaviour when they reach adulthood due to the values they have pursued. At this point, television, smartphones, tablets, and mass media introduce children to the world of cartoons. Provided that children are highly influenced by their environment and the media they are exposed to, cartoons often shape their understanding of core moral values (Trota et al., 2022). Additionally, their imitation of their character and identification of the cartoon hero as a role model could either have positive or negative effects on them (Ivrendi & Ozdemir, 2010).

Several previous studies employed different methods and dimensions to investigate the benefits of incorporating the components of noble values in cartoons (Jaafar & Sahil, 2018; Rahim et al., 2018; Bakla, 2019). Most of the studies concluded that cartoons can be a useful medium to teach adolescents social and cultural values and promote positive learning outcomes. For example, Rahim et al. (2018) examined the incorporation of values and culture into Malay folklore cartoons, focusing on the values in the Malaysian National Philosophy of Education (1996). As a result, it was found that values and culture were significant in cartoons in the Malaysian context.

### **2.3 The Role of Cartoons in Young Children**

For a long time, cartoons have been a popular form of entertainment for young children, stimulating their imaginations with colourful characters and engaging stories. In recent years, researchers and educators have recognised the potential of cartoons to contribute to the development of moral values in children's daily lives. Accordingly, this literature review aims to examine the ability of cartoon viewing to shape young children's moral values by examining the effects of watching cartoons on empathy, moral reasoning, prosocial behaviour, and character development. Through the analysis of recent studies, this review aims to provide an up-to-date understanding of the role of cartoons in promoting young children's moral development.

Cartoons create a unique platform for young children to develop empathy and perspective-taking. Research has demonstrated that exposure to cartoon characters with diverse backgrounds and experiences can promote children's understanding and appreciation of different perspectives (İlhan & Sacide, 2017). In addition, emotionally compelling stories and believable characters in cartoons are able to elicit empathetic responses and help children recognise and understand other individuals' feelings and experiences (de Leeuw & van der Laan, 2018). Overall, this strengthened empathy can contribute to the development of moral values, such as kindness, compassion, and tolerance in daily life.

Cartoons have the potential to shape young children's prosocial behaviour by presenting positive role models and promoting prosocial values. Studies have

shown that exposure to cartoon characters who exhibit helpful, kind, and cooperative behaviours can also influence children's attitudes and actions. The positive portrayals of prosocial behaviour in cartoons can serve as role models for young viewers, encouraging them to imitate and engage in similar helpful behaviours in their everyday lives. In addition, cartoons can reinforce moral values by teaching positive moral lessons and depicting the consequences of negative actions (Zhang et al, 2021).

Cartoons contribute to character development by teaching young children moral values and virtues. Through storytelling and character arcs, positive traits can be emphasised, such as honesty, courage, responsibility, and perseverance. Based on research, exposure to morally rich narratives in cartoons can shape children's understanding of character strengths and virtues, providing them with a framework for ethical behaviour and moral choices in their daily lives (Astuti et al., 2019)

The role of parental mediation is critical in maximising the positive effects of cartoons on young children's moral development. To illustrate, parents who explain to their children the moral aspects of cartoons would communicate positive values and build the children's understanding of ethical dilemmas. Subsequently, the moral lessons they learn from these shows can be reinforced. Active shared viewing and dialogue between parents and children offer opportunities for children to reflect on the moral messages conveyed in cartoons and apply them to real-life situations (Meng et al, 2020).

Overall, it is suggested from the literature that watching cartoons can play an important role in the development of young children's moral values. Cartoons have the potential to promote empathy, moral reasoning, prosocial behaviour, and character development. Children will also be able to learn different perspectives, perceive moral dilemmas, gain positive role models, and learn ethical lessons (Attard & Cremona, 2022).

#### **2.4 The Disadvantages of Cartoons for Young Children**

Despite the many benefits seen in cartoons, recent research also highlighted the potential drawbacks of excessive and inappropriate cartoon consumption. Thus, this literature review aims to examine the negative aspects of cartoon consumption in young children, focusing on its effects on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural development. Taking recent studies into account, this review aims to provide an up-to-date understanding of the disadvantages of excessive cartoon consumption.

Excessive and uncontrolled consumption of cartoons can impair the cognitive development of young children. Research has shown that prolonged exposure to fast-paced cartoons with rapid scene changes and dialogues can impair their attention span and concentration (Praveen & Srinivasan, 2022). Furthermore, excessive screen time limits children's opportunities for real-world exploration, imaginative play, and problem-solving activities that are crucial for the development of critical thinking and creativity. Furthermore, while cartoons often depict social interactions, they can also have negative effects on young

children's social and emotional development. To elaborate, studies have highlighted that children who spend excessive time watching cartoons have issues with their social skills and difficulties in forming real-life relationships. In addition, exposure to unrealistic and exaggerated portrayals of emotion in cartoons can distort children's understanding of appropriate emotional responses in real-life situations, leading to difficulties in emotion regulation and the development of empathy (Kirsh, 2011).

Excessive consumption of certain types of cartoons has been linked to negative behavioural outcomes in young children. To illustrate, a study illustrated an association of aggressive behaviour, increased impulsivity, and reduced prosocial behaviour with viewing violence or aggressiveness in cartoons (Dimitri et al., 2007). In addition, cartoons that promote materialism, gender stereotypes, or unhealthy eating habits can negatively influence children's behaviour and attitudes. This condition can result in consumerism and poor lifestyle choices. Aside from excessive cartoon consumption, extended sedentary activities lead to physical health problems in young children. Studies demonstrated the relationship between increased screen time and a higher risk of childhood obesity, inadequate physical activity, and disrupted sleep patterns. Besides, prolonged exposure to screens, which is also attributed to viewing cartoons, can strain children's eyes and cause vision problems (Jones et al, 2010)

Notably, the negative effects of cartoon viewing could be mitigated through parental engagement and appropriate content selection. Parental guidance, media literacy, and active co-viewing can reduce the potential drawbacks of cartoon viewing and promote critical thinking skills among children. In addition, the context in which children view cartoons, such as the presence of conversations and interactions with caregivers, could bring significant effects on children's developmental outcomes (Shanthipriya & Prabha, 2017).

While cartoons may bring entertainment and educational value to young children, it is important to recognise the potential harms of excessive and inappropriate cartoon consumption. These harms include adverse effects on children's cognitive development, social and emotional skills, behaviour, and physical health. Nonetheless, these risks could be mitigated through the attention paid by caregivers to screen time and content selection, parental involvement, and advocacy of a balanced media environment that supports children's overall development. In this case, further research is required to examine the specific factors that influence the negative effects of cartoons and provide evidence-based guidelines for responsible media consumption among young children.

## **2.5 The Influence of Japanese Cartoons on Young Children**

Japanese animated cartoons, commonly referred to as *anime*, have gained immense popularity worldwide, captivating the hearts and minds of young children. With its unique storytelling style, engaging characters, and rich stories, anime has become an important part of children's media consumption. Therefore, the literature review discusses the influence of Japanese animated

cartoons on the development of moral values among young children. By analysing the recent studies on this matter, this study aims to provide an up-to-date understanding of the effects of Japanese animated cartoons on children's moral and character development, empathy, cultural values, and moral dilemmas.

Japanese animated cartoons offer young viewers the opportunity to experience a different cultural context, which promotes the development of cultural values and awareness. In most cases, *anime* reflects Japanese cultural norms, traditions, and values, such as respect for elders, perseverance, and honour. Research suggests that exposure to Japanese cartoons can broaden children's understanding of other cultural perspectives and promote tolerance, respect, and curiosity about other cultures (Yamamura, 2014). Ultimately, this cultural awareness can instil the moral values related to inclusion and appreciation of diversity. Furthermore, *anime* is known for its emotional stories that can build empathy in young viewers. It also mostly explores complex emotions, moral dilemmas, and character development, allowing children to connect with the characters on an emotional level (Matsumoto et al., 2002). In relation to this, research highlights that emotional attachment to *anime* characters can foster empathy, compassion, and understanding of other children's experiences (Hu, 2010). The sympathetic and multidimensional characters in Japanese cartoons could be the role models that inspire children to demonstrate kindness, empathy, and moral behaviour in their own lives.

Japanese animated cartoons often depict moral dilemmas and ethical complexities, which challenge young viewers to think about the right and wrong in different situations. *Anime* narratives frequently explore the themes of friendship, loyalty, sacrifice, and justice, encouraging children to reflect on their own moral values and decision-making processes (Abdul Razak & Ibnu, 2022). In this case, research suggests that exposure to morally challenging scenarios in Japanese cartoons can stimulate children's moral reasoning skills and promote critical thinking in ethical decision-making (Lu, 2008). It is indicated from these statements that children can develop a deeper understanding of moral concepts and engage in thoughtful moral reasoning through *anime*. Apart from that, Japanese animated cartoons emphasise character development and growth, demonstrating the personal changes faced by the protagonists and exhibiting moral virtues. *Anime* narratives mostly feature the characters overcoming challenges, facing their weaknesses, and striving for personal improvement (Mahaseth, 2018). Addressing this aspect, studies have highlighted that engagement with these character arcs in *anime* can encourage young viewers to reflect on their own character strengths and virtues. This action promotes their personal growth and the development of positive moral values (Condry, 2013). Overall, these narratives become exemplary for children, encouraging them to adopt positive traits such as resilience, determination, and integrity in their daily lives.

Notably, Japanese cartoons play an important role in the moral development of young children. *Anime* teaches various cultural values, promotes empathy and



emotional bonding, presents moral dilemmas that require ethical consideration, and emphasises character development and growth. Through these mechanisms, Japanese animated cartoons are able to influence the development of moral values in young viewers. However, the role of parental involvement and mediation is critical to children's understanding, contextualisation of content, and promotion of meaningful discussions. In this case, further research is suggested to examine specific aspects of Japanese animated cartoons and their influence on children's moral values to provide valuable insights into parents, educators, and media professionals.

### 3. Methodology

Data collection was conducted in this study to identify and analyse the effects of watching cartoons on the construction of moral values among preschool children. The main steps of this research process are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

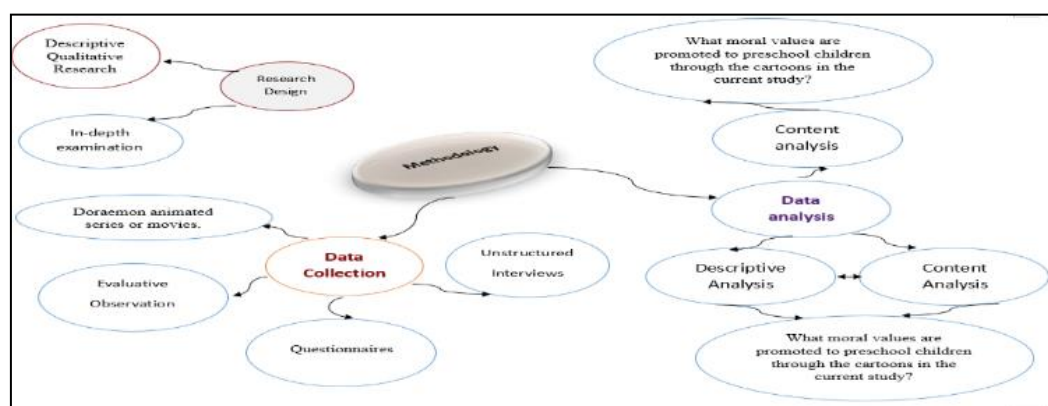


Figure 1: Flow Chart of Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The mixed methods approach was applied in this study to identify and analyse the moral values influencing young children, which presents several reasons and advantages. By combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic and capture the breadth and depth of the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Specifically, several reasons for using the mixed methods approach in this study are as follows:

- i) **Enhanced Understanding:** Moral values are complex and multi-layered constructs that require a holistic understanding. Qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, allow researchers to explore the nuanced perspectives, experiences, and attitudes of young children in the researcher's own words. These qualitative data provide thorough descriptions and insights into the subjective meaning and importance of moral values for children.
- ii) **Generalizability:** Quantitative methods such as surveys or questionnaires provide researchers with the opportunity to collect data from a sample of participants. Through statistical analysis, researchers are able to examine

patterns, trends, and relationships among variables, which allows the generalization of the research findings to a broader population of young children. Ultimately, the validity and reliability of the results would be strengthened.

iii) Triangulation: Mixed methods allow for triangulation, which denotes the comparison between the results from different data sources and methods. Triangulation increases the robustness and credibility of research by confirming or validating the results from multiple perspectives. It helps ensure that the conclusions drawn from the study are comprehensive and well-supported.

iv) Complementary strengths: Qualitative and quantitative methods contain complementary strengths. Specifically, qualitative methods are specialised in capturing the depth, richness, and context of children's attitudes and perceptions about moral values. On the other hand, quantitative methods offer the ability to quantify and measure the prevalence and importance of moral values in the sample. Combining these two methods allows researchers to capitalise on these strengths and gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

v) Overcoming limitations: The use of the mixed methods approach helps overcome the limitations associated with the use of a single method. For example, the exclusive use of qualitative methods could lead to biased interpretations due to the subjective nature of data collection and analysis. On the other hand, the exclusive use of quantitative methods may cause important nuances and contextual information to be overlooked. Nonetheless, these limitations can be mitigated with the combination of both methods, allowing for a more balanced and comprehensive analysis.

Overall, the use of the mixed methods approach to identify and analyse the moral values influencing young children offers a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the topic. It also allows researchers to capture subjective experiences and broader patterns, which contributes to the validity, reliability, and generalisability of the findings.

### **3.2 Sample**

A total of 20 preschool children (aged five to six years old) from an elementary school in Kuala Lumpur were randomly selected for this study. An online application was submitted to the Ministry of Education to request permission for studying preschoolers. Subsequently, permission was gained according to the Ministry of Education's norms and regulations. This was followed by an application to the State Board of Education for authorisation to conduct the study in the school under their supervision. Subsequently, all approval letters from the Ministry of Education and the State Board of Education were sent to the principal of the selected school for further processing. The process of requesting and approving the study took almost a month. Then, an enumerator was appointed to conduct the study. The enumerator is a preschool teacher who

has obtained a Bachelor's degree in preschool education and is highly experienced in her profession.

### 3.2.1 Samples Demographic

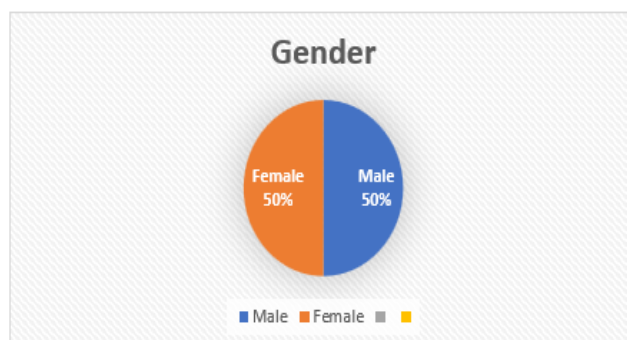


Figure 2: Gender

As seen in Figure 2, 50% of the samples were male and 50% of the samples were female. Therefore, the percentages of male and female students were the same.

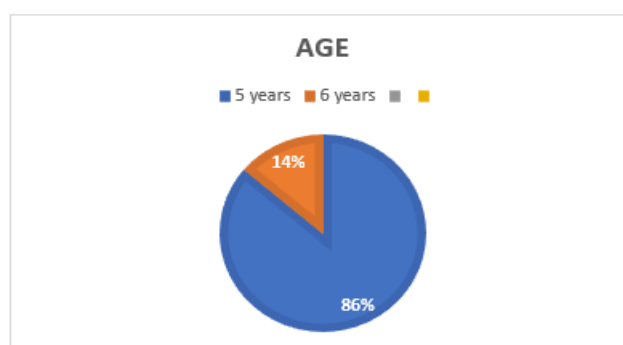


Figure 3: Age

As seen in Figure 3, 86% of the samples were six years old, while 14% of the samples were five years old. Therefore, the six-year-old children were the majority of the samples. They were also in their transition years before entering the first grade of elementary school at the age of seven.

### 3.3 Data

The Doraemon animated series or movies was the cartoon selected as the research data. It is one of the most popular Japanese cartoons among Malaysian children. The Malay dubbed version of the *anime* was aired on RTM1 from 1992 to 2002, followed by NTV7 in Malaysia from 2003 to mid/late 2019. This *anime* tells about Doraemon, a fictional robot cat from the future who helps a young schoolboy named Nobita in his daily struggles and conflicts. Doraemon is an anthropomorphic robotic cat from the 22<sup>nd</sup> century that is sent back to the present (before the emergence of technological gadgets). Each situation commonly leads to Doraemon having to retrieve a futuristic device from his stomach. The device is eventually misused by Nobita or other people, creating moral lessons at the end of the story.

### 3.4 Data Collection

The data collection process took almost a month. In this process, an enumerator was employed to conduct the study. The enumerator is a preschool teacher who has obtained a Bachelor's degree in preschool education and is highly experienced in her profession as a preschool teacher. A day or two was spent breaking the ice with the preschoolers, building their familiarity with the enumerator. Provided that the survey officer was aware of the difficulties to obtain data from preschoolers, she was patient and used a variety of techniques during the process. Although it was a simple task, the survey officer applied her experience to convince the preschoolers to cooperate in the activities aimed at having the preschoolers express themselves during the observation, answering the questionnaires, and the unstructured interview.

Three steps are present for data collection. Specifically, the first step is participant observation, the second step is questionnaires, and the last step is an unstructured interview. In the first step, preschool children were asked to recall a Doraemon animated series or movie they had seen in the previous one to two years. They were allowed to select any episodes or movies they had previously watched. Subsequently, the enumerator sat down with each of the preschool children, having them write down the names of the characters who they had seen in the Doraemon animated series or movies. The children were also asked to write down the moral values of each character they had named. After the moral values were listed, they were asked on how did they recognise the moral values in each episode of the animated series.

In the second step, preschool children were asked questions by the enumerator based on the questionnaires designed by the researcher on Google Forms. After an extensive literature review, the survey instrument (questionnaire) was designed. Three main types of response formats were used in the questionnaire:

- 1) Closed-ended questions - Dichotomous questions (with two answer choices, e.g., 'yes' and 'no,' and multiple-choice or multichotomous questions to ensure that all possible answers were offered to the samples);
- 2) Open-ended questions
- 3) Sum Rating Scale - A four-point Likert scale (from 1 = Strongly Agree to 4 = Strongly Disagree ) to indicate the respondent's level of agreement with each statement. The higher the score, the more important the variables or constructs are as the evaluation criteria.

The questions were designed in a format that expanded response options, allowing for accurate responses and efficient completion by samples. In addition, checkboxes were used throughout the questionnaire to facilitate the completion and increase response rates (Johnson & Christensen 2017). The questionnaire was divided into four sections, which were presented in the following order:

- 1) Section A: Demographic information.

2) Section B: Attitudes towards watching cartoons. Samples were asked to indicate the time they spend watching television, YouTube, and the Doraemon animated series or movies. Then, they were asked on which characters they liked to watch the most.

3) Section C: Samples were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement about the various factors that influenced their attitude towards watching the Doraemon animated series or movies. The ratings were made on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

4) Section D: Samples were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement about the various factors influencing their preference for the characters and plot when watching the Doraemon animated series or movies. The statements were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

In the third step of the unstructured interview, samples were asked about their perceptions and feelings after watching the Doraemon animated series or movies. A total of 20 open-ended questions were presented on their perceptions and feelings about the moral values portrayed by the characters in the series or movies. Samples' answers were subsequently recorded and written down after the survey completion.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected from participants' observations were coded, sorted, and organised for analysis. Observational data were coded and sorted by the names of the characters seen by the students in the Doraemon animated series or movies in the previous one or two years. Following that, the enumerator listed the moral values of each character and compared them to the moral values during each episode of Doraemon. A comprehensive coding system was developed to identify the instances where the characters exhibited moral values. This was followed by sorting and organisation of data based on the characters' actions, dialogues, and behaviours that conveyed specific moral values. The moral values were subsequently divided into two categories: good and bad moral values. The list of good moral values was organised based on the characters in the Doraemon series or movies. Meanwhile, another table listed the reasons why the sample rejected the bad moral values of the characters in the animated series.

Statistical analysis of the questionnaire data offered insights into the children's viewing habits, various factors that influenced their attitudes towards watching Doraemon, and the factors influencing their preference for the characters and plot. Through the use of statistical software, the patterns, trends, and relationships among variables were identified, which could present insights into the influence of cartoons on young children. By examining the viewing habits and perceived attitudes, this analysis would facilitate the understanding of the role of cartoons in the lives of young children and their potential impact. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were calculated to provide an overview of the participants' viewing habits, various factors

influencing their attitudes toward watching Doraemon, and the factors influencing their preference for the characters and plot.






Finally, data from the unstructured interviews were recorded using an IC recorder and a video recorder. The recorded interviews were transcribed to extract additional information that otherwise could not be obtained from the questionnaires. The interview data, which included the sample responses, were analysed using qualitative analysis software to record the themes for content analysis. Content analysis was applied to determine the subjects' perceptions and feelings after watching Doraemon. This analysis was also conducted to gain insight into the subjects' attitudes towards good and bad moral values.

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1 How do cartoons influence the promotion of moral values among preschool children?

In this study, the characters in Doraemon were analysed to determine the moral values taught to preschool children. In today's technologically advanced age, an external medium plays a major role in character formation, which is the television. Considering that this study primarily focused on the constructive and destructive psychological parameters that are formed in childhood when the substance of character is highly malleable, one remarkable medium that immediately gains attention as the stimulant of the utmost importance is animated television series. It is important to understand how children acquire the skills that build their understanding of television, given the high percentage of children who watch cartoons. In this case, the children's reason for watching a particular programme and overlooking others is the primary concern. In this research, it was found that children watched Doraemon with enthusiasm, which was attributed to several reasons. The reasons were determined after the analysis of the observation where children opened their hearts to tell the enumerator about the moral values portrayed by their favourite animated series. Accordingly, the information in the following table presents information about the impressions that the various characters in Doraemon left in the minds of the children.

Table 1: Characters and their Moral Values

Character		Brief Description	Moral Value Portrayed
DORAEMON		Nobita's best friend is in the form of a 22 <sup>nd</sup> -century cat robot. He has many magic tools in a magic pouch in his belly.	- Like helping Nobita and other people in trouble. - Good character - Use his gadget for good work.
NOBITA		He wears glasses, a red or yellow polo shirt with a white collar, blue or black shorts, white socks, and light blue shoes.	- Honesty - Never give up. - Foolishness - Laziness
SHIZUKA		She is Nobita's best friend and her great love. A smart, kind, and pretty girl. She is often represented by the color pink and wears a pink shirt and skirt	- Like helping Nobita. - Good personality. - Hardworking
TAKESHI "GIAN"		He is a strong and quick-tempered local tyrant. He is known for his large stature and means and aggressive behavior.	- Aggressive - Bully - Hot-tempered - Dominating
SUNEO		He is a rich kid who loves to flaunt his material wealth in front of everyone, especially Nobita.	- Like to show off. - Like to tell lies - Proud.

It could be indicated from the information that children enjoy good moral values, such as helping, good character, honesty, persistence, good personality, and hardworking, as shown by their favourite cartoon characters. Prosocial behaviour was one of the most important traits admired by the children and acquired by them based on their maturity level. Furthermore, prosocial behaviour can be broadly defined as any voluntary behaviour that benefits another person. The relationship between cartoon series and its viewers is content; children are able to achieve maximum positivism through television only when they watch shows with positive content. They also have the ability to identify the best gadgets. Additionally, the ability to remember the functions of these gadgets is an acquired learning process, which is slightly more pronounced among boys. In relation to this, the magical gadgets brought by Doraemon to solve any problems incite their fascination.

The enumerator asked the children to identify the bad moral values in each episode of the animated series Doraemon. The majority of the children did not value bad moral values, such as stupidity, laziness, aggression, bullying, hot-tempered, dominance, boasting, lying, and pride. This was followed by them writing down the reasons why they did not appreciate the bad moral values portrayed by the characters. Accordingly, the following information presents the details written by the students.

**Table 2: The Reasons Why Children Reject Bad Moral Values**

The reasons written by the samples
1. My mother always tells me while watching Doraemon.
2. My mother usually explains them to me.
3. It looks very bad like Gian bullying Nobita.
4. Allah does not like bullying people.
5. I learn from my mother about them.
6. My grandmother and mother advise me to avoid bad moral values.
7. I do not want lazy like Nobita.
8. I do not be proud of my friends.
9. I do not like to show off my things.
10. Be humble and good to your friends.

Based on the above results, the data analysis indicated that compared to the fathers, mothers reacted more actively to children when they were watching cartoons. Therefore, fathers should not be excessively occupied with work to the point of neglecting communication with their children or pushing the task of educating their children to the mothers. Moreover, when children watched cartoons together with their mothers, they would show different reactions; this experience was cited as evidence. Parents can learn better ways of organising the cartoons that are appropriate for children and ways of watching the movies with them. It is also recommended that they accompany children when they watch cartoons at home.

In a family, parents not only teach children good morals, but they also set an example or become role models for them. Teaching moral development is important in families to ensure that children practise good ethics, manners, and

the moral principles taught by their parents. Moral development should begin from childhood to be firmly instilled within the children.

#### 4.2 What factors influence preschool children's attitudes towards watching Doraemon?

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were calculated to provide an overview of the participants' viewing habits, various factors influencing their attitudes towards watching Doraemon, and the factors influencing their preference for the characters and plot when watching the series.

##### 4.2.1 Data Analysis of Samples' Viewing Habits

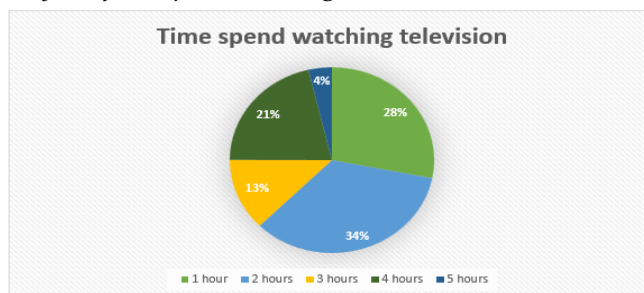


Figure 4: How much time do you spend watching television?

As seen in Figure 4, 28% of children watched television for one hour, 34% of children watched television for approximately two hours, and 13% of children watched television for three hours. This was followed by 21% of children who watched television for four hours and 4% of children who watched television for five hours. Overall, these children were moderate television watchers. Data analysis demonstrated that a quarter of the sample spent long hours watching television in total. This condition was attributed to the children originating from low-income families in Kuala Lumpur. Parents of this income group often have multiple jobs and insufficient time to attend to their children's needs. As a result, their children spend more time watching television programmes, especially cartoons, compared to participating in other recreational activities.

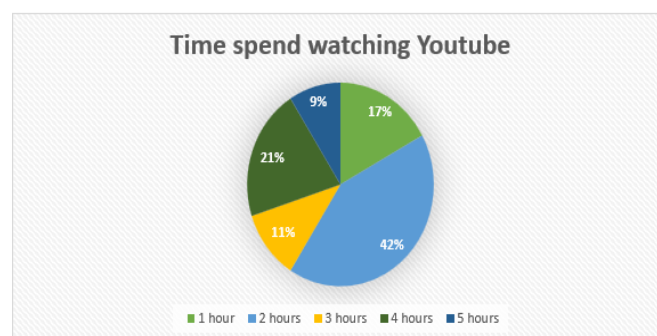
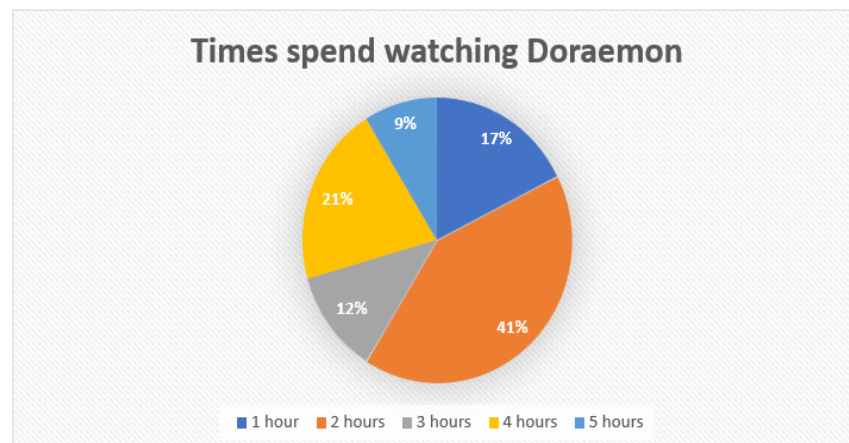


Figure 5: How much time do you spend watching YouTube?

Figure 5 shows that 28% of children watched YouTube videos for one hour, 34% of children watched YouTube videos for approximately two hours, and 13% of children watched YouTube videos for three hours. Overall, they were moderate



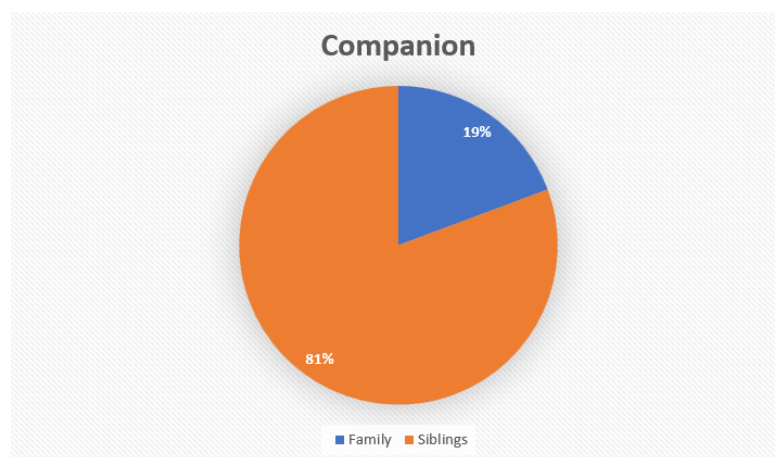
YouTube video watchers. On the other hand, 21% of them watched YouTube videos for four hours, while the other 4% watched YouTube for five hours, making them heavy video watchers overall. Children spend time watching YouTube videos as YouTube allows users to watch any contents they like. Despite the various choices of channels on TV, the content of these channels is curated and more limited compared to the billions of videos available on YouTube. Besides, YouTube users are able to watch videos at any place and time as long as they have an Internet connection.



**Figure 6: How much time do you spend watching Doraemon?**

As seen in Figure 6, 17% of children watched Doraemon for one hour, 41% of children watched Doraemon for approximately two hours, and 12% of them watched it for three hours. Overall, they were moderate television viewers. As for 21% of children who watched Doraemon for four hours and 9% of children who watched it for five hours, they were classified as hardcore fans of Doraemon.

It was found that a quarter of the sample liked to watch Doraemon due to the helpful personality of the character Nobita. Nobita is a boy who faces various problems at school; he is lazy at home and always bullied by Gian. Doraemon has gadgets that Nobita can use to help him at any place and time. The situations Nobita finds himself in are similar to the experiences of the samples at school and home. Therefore, they were inspired and fascinated by the intelligent and emotional personality of Doraemon who offers solutions and ways to help Nobita who constantly faces troubles. Since children find Doraemon entertaining and amusing, they can hardly stop laughing when they watch the Doraemon series. The series also becomes their escape into the fantasy world away from the daily stress and problems that they face in the real world.



**Figure 7: Who is accompanying you in watching Doraemon?**

As seen in Figure 7, more than three-quarters of the sample watched Doraemon while having their siblings' company. To illustrate, the sample used the same television or device to watch Doraemon at home or outside the home. The decision to watch a particular episode of Doraemon was also attributed to siblings as they also have access to the television and the device. It could be seen that less than two-fifths of the sample watched Doraemon with their family, especially their parents. Overall, the sample originated from low-income or poor families in urban areas, with their parents having to work long hours to support their families.

#### *4.2.2 Data Analysis of Various Factors that Influence Their Attitudes towards Watching Doraemon*

The purpose of the second part of the analysis of the questionnaire is to obtain more factual information and insights to assess the sample's level of agreement on various factors influencing their attitudes towards watching the Doraemon animated series or movies in Part C. The results are illustrated in the table 3 below to demonstrate the level of agreement on various factors influencing their attitude towards watching Doraemon and their preference for the series characters and plot.

Descriptive analysis was conducted on the samples' agreement on the different factors influencing their attitude towards watching the Doraemon animated series or movies. As a result, it was found that the good moral values portrayed by Doraemon and other characters strongly influenced their choice of responses. In fact, Doraemon was loved by the samples due to the helpful personality of Nobita. Nobita is a boy who faces various problems at school; he is lazy at home and always bullied by Gian. Doraemon has gadgets that Nobita can use to help him at any place and time. The situations Nobita finds himself in are similar to the experiences of the samples at school and home. Therefore, they were inspired and fascinated by the intelligent and emotional personality of Doraemon who offers solutions and ways to help Nobita who constantly faces troubles.

**Table 3: Positive attitudes toward watching Doraemon**

Questions	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree(%)
Good characters are my idol.	67.7	32.3	0	0
Good character is an idol of my personality.	70.6	29.4	0	0
Good character should be lived in my daily life.	82.4	17.7	0	0
Good character should be lived among friends at school.	73.5	26.5	0	0
Good character makes me a role model at school.	76.5	23.5	0	0
Good character shapes my personality.	87.3	12.7	0	0
I love it when good characters win against bad characters.	90.8	9.2	0	0
Bullying is not a good character.	100	0	0	0
Helping friends and valuing them is a good character.	93.4	6.6	0	0

Table 3 illustrates the children's positive attitudes toward Doraemon's reputation. Overall, most samples agreed that good character traits should be revered by young children as they set a good example for others at school. Good traits such as honesty, perseverance, a good personality, and diligence should be cultivated in these children throughout their preschool years. This condition is attributed to the fact that oral values can be absorbed into these children more easily when they are young compared to their teenage years. They also agreed that good character traits should be practised among friends, such as helping and appreciating others at school. All samples were of the opinion that bullying is not a good example to be set at schools. It was also added that having a positive attitude towards watching Doraemon can develop good moral values within themselves as Doraemon represents a good character who helps others who are in trouble and advises Nobita to be diligent to achieve good results in school. Apart from that, they celebrated when good wins against evil; therefore, they disliked Gian who likes to bully Nobita.

#### 4.2.3 Data Analysis of Factors that Influence Their Preference for the Characters and Plot when Watching Doraemon

**Table 4: Factors that influence the liking of the character and plot of Doraemon**

Questions	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree(%)
The storyline and plot are amusing and funny.	76.5	23.5	0	0
Portrayed moral values.	92.3	7.7	0	0
The story is about children's life.	100	0	0	0
The story teaches us to be good and helpful to others.	84.3	15.7	0	0
The story shows us how to solve a lot of problems.	79.2	20.8	0	0
Doraemon is fun and funny.	100	0	0	0
The Doraemon story is futuristic.	90	10	0	0
Doraemon is clever and has many gadgets.	100	0	0	0
The Doraemon story teaches us not to bully and be bad to others.	100	0	0	0

Table 4 illustrates the factors influencing the children's preference for the characters and plot of Doraemon. As a result, most participants agreed that the plot of the Doraemon series and movies is amusing and funny. It also teaches moral values, which is a good method of developing good character in students. Essentially, the main message in Doraemon is that one should not bully others and instead help those who are being bullied. Interestingly, it was found from the data analysis that Doraemon is based on real-life children's daily lives, which builds a sense of closeness between the samples and the story and plot of Doraemon. Through the series, they were able to know the methods of solving problems they commonly face at home and school. Moreover, the character Doraemon is smart, funny, and possesses many gadgets that he can use to solve others' problems. As a story, Doraemon is futuristic and allows the samples to travel and think beyond their imagination.

The samples regarded the factors influencing the character and plot of Doraemon as important in their decision to watch this series. This result is attributed to the fact that young children prefer watching interesting cartoons that make them laugh. Besides, the futuristic plot of Doraemon becomes an incentive for young children to watch the Doraemon series and movies. This is followed by the gadgets and brilliant ideas used by Doraemon, which attract young children to watch Doraemon. While bullying is a significant issue among children, the Doraemon series has helped educate young children to avoid this behaviour.

#### 4.3 What is the Perception of Preschool Children towards Watching Doraemon?

Content analysis was employed to determine the samples' perceptions and feelings after watching Doraemon animated series or movies. Interview data

were analysed using qualitative analysis software, followed by the classification of the samples' answers into two main categories:

(i) Perceptions after watching the Doraemon series

(ii) Feelings after watching the Doraemon series

**Table 2: Perceptions and feelings after watching the Doraemon animated series or movies**

Participants	Perceptions and feelings after watching Doraemon	
	Perception	Feeling
S 2	The good values shown in the Doraemon are good examples to follow.	I feel bad being rude to my friends.
S 7	Bullying other people is not good.	I don't like to watch violent cartoons.
S 12	Being lazy in school is not a good example.	I feel sad watching children being bullied.
S 17	Helping others is a good moral value.	I don't like the bad values practised in school.
S20	Be good to your friends.	I don't like children being beaten by others.

Most of the responses presented by the samples in the unstructured interviews indicated the samples' perceptions and feelings after watching the Doraemon cartoon series and movies. According to the samples, the good values portrayed in the cartoons are good examples to follow as the plot is based on children's daily lives. It was also highlighted by the samples that bullying and laziness are not good practices or examples at schools. Moreover, they wished to help others in school and show good behaviour to them. It could be seen from the results that the samples were positive about the good moral values shown in Doraemon and believed that bullying and laziness are not one of those moral values.

The samples' feelings after watching Doraemon were considerably remarkable considering their young age. To illustrate, they felt bad about being rude to their friends due to their belief that this behaviour is not a good moral value portrayed in the Doraemon cartoon series. They also did not prefer watching violent cartoons due to the depiction of aggressive behaviour in them. According to the samples, watching children being bullied and beaten whether in cartoons or real life made them feel bad. They added that bad values should not be taught in school. Overall, the results demonstrated that good moral values portrayed in cartoons could influence the samples' feelings when being frequently and repeatedly witnessed.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the first research questions indicated that the samples promoted good moral values, such as helping, good character, honesty, perseverance, good personality, and diligence portrayed by their favourite cartoon character in the Doraemon series. However, they rejected bad moral values portrayed by the antagonists, such as stupidity, laziness, aggression, bullying, irascibility, dominance, boasting, lying, and pride. These findings are in line with studies by

Astuti et al. (2019) and Zhang et al. (2021), who argued that narratives and character arcs in cartoons with positive moral values can influence children's ethical and moral choices in their daily lives. Moreover, preschool children go through an imitation process in their cognitive development, causing them to easily imitate what they see and hear (Hasanah & Much, 2018). Therefore, wisdom among parents is crucial in selecting the programmes educating the children to ensure that what they see can bring a positive impact on them. Apart from that, the samples rejected bad values as they had discussed the content of the cartoon with their mothers or grandmothers at home. In this case, the parents' guidance and discussion on the moral content of the cartoon and the moral values shown by their children had a significant impact on character development (Meng et al., 2022; Shantapriya & Prabha, 2017).

Based on the results of the samples' viewing habits, most of the samples watched an average of one to three hours of television or used YouTube channels daily. These results were in line with Rideout's (2016) study, which highlighted that children spend an average of two hours and 26 minutes per day watching TV, DVDs, and videos from other sources (e.g., YouTube). They enjoy watching Doraemon animated series or movies as the series is entertaining and amusing. For this reason, children can hardly stop laughing when they watch the Doraemon series. (Marshall, 2019). This series acts as their escape into the fantasy world away from daily stress and problems that they face in the real world.

The results on the factors influencing the attitudes of the samples who watch cartoons were mainly related to the good moral values portrayed by Doraemon. Nonetheless, other characters also had a strong influence on their choice of responses. Essentially, Japanese animated films commonly depict moral dilemmas and ethical complexities, which require young viewers to think about the right and wrong in various situations. Furthermore, *anime* narratives often explore the themes of friendship, loyalty, sacrifice, and justice, encouraging children to reflect on their own moral values and decision-making processes (Abdul Razak & Ibnu, 2022). Based on the results on the influence of liking the character and plot of Doraemon, most participants agreed that the plot of this series is amusing and funny. This result was in line with previous studies, which demonstrated that exposure to these character arcs in Japanese animated films could encourage young viewers to reflect on their own character strengths and virtues. Subsequently, this aspect promotes personal growth and the development of positive moral values (Condry, 2013). In addition, exposure to moral decision-making scenarios in cartoons can stimulate children's thinking about the right and wrong, fairness, and ethical considerations (Attard & Cremona, 2022). Thus, it is suggested that children's exposure to morally challenging situations in cartoons can promote moral reasoning and their ability to make principled decisions in real-world contexts (de Leeuw & van der Laan, 2018).

It was indicated from the samples' perceptions and feelings after watching Doraemon that the good values portrayed in the cartoons are good examples to

follow as the series plot is based on children's daily lives. They also emphasised that bullying and laziness are not good practices or examples at schools. However, these findings were not in line with the research findings on aggressive behaviour, increased impulsivity, and decreased prosocial behaviour upon watching violent or aggressive cartoons (Dimitri et al., 2007).

Overall, it could be concluded that the cartoons viewed by preschool children can be entertaining and educational at the same time. These cartoons can subsequently open up new worlds for youngsters and instil an abundance of values and lessons within them regarding the heritage and culture of the country. In relation to this, there is a stronger need to support the holistic development of children as good citizens.

## 6. Limitations and Further Study

Based on the analysis, limitations were present in the sample size and location of the current study. Therefore, it is suggested that this study is further strengthened and extended based on various economic strata, which include different ages ranging from pre-adolescents and teenagers. A detailed study may be conducted through a compare and contrast between several preschool children under various age groups using the in-depth, triangulation method.

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