**The effects of family channels on YouTube**

YouTube has become one of the most popular social media sites for young kids to consume today, but it has also become a huge market for kid content creators. Young kids can find entertainment from others their age in the form of family channels or made for kids content. These two forms of YouTube channels have become immensely popular over the last couple of years. In 2018 the highest paid YouTuber was a seven-year-old kid named Ryan, popular for his toy reviews.[1]

Family channels and other channels with kids as part of the spotlight, main content revolves around:

* Daily life video logs (vlogs)
* Pulling pranks
* Playing with/unboxing toys

This content tends to pull in a younger audience, and is usually why YouTube takes special care in the ads that can run before a video and the comments posted under it.

These channels are primarily run by parents editing and making the business deals with sponsors behind the scenes, but the content would not be the same without the pint size stars. This content also pulls great criticism, whether it be what’s going on behind the scenes or who is consuming the content.

**The Stars of the Videos**

The biggest criticism that family channels can get is that their children did not sign up for this job and that these children are working children. Many critics point to the relations of child acting. They argue that though these channels can be fun for the children, but the fun is producing a profit that the child should be entitled to. In 1939 the Coogan Account became law that 15% of the money made by a child actor must be set aside in an account for the child to access later in life when they enter adulthood.[1] This law however does not extend to media child stars, a bill was proposed in 2018 for this, but by the time it became a law it no longer reflected its starting goal.

Another complaint of these channels is that they can be affecting the children’s mental health. As previously mentioned, pranks are a huge topic on these family channels. Parents will sometimes cause a mess and then proceed to scold the child for the mess. After tears are shed, the parents come around to saying it was a prank all along, but the trust with that child is shattered.[2] Seven children, once featured on a family channel that their adopted mother made, recalled their mother being displeased if their participation was not satisfactory. They were taken out of school to focus more time on the channel and were abused further. [1]

Other instances are children being placed in situations they do not understand, like [2]:

* Two children from different family channels having play dates in the vlogs, but the thumbnails of the videos hinting at a relationship of boyfriend and girlfriend between the children.
* An eleven-year-old having to wear a pregnant belly bump for a day (even to school) to “understand what being a woman is like.”
* A parent encouraging two siblings to beat on their younger sibling with that sibling’s favorite toys, prompting the young child to say she wanted to die.

This family content also takes another dark turn, with much of the young children showing up on vulgar/sexual websites. YouTube has tried to regulate this from happening, but with these parents offering their children to the internet anything can happen.

**Children Watching These Channels**

The young audience watching family channels seem to react the same way they would to watching children programming on television. They want to imitate what they see. In a study, almost half of the kids interviewed were likely to imitate the pranks they see on a family channel.[3] This could be dangerous with pranks like the instance above of siblings beating their other sibling as a prank.

About one-third of the children interviewed are likely to use words that they hear on these channels. Though YouTube has tight regulations on what is allowed in their family-friendly content, inappropriate topics, or words that children do not understand could slip through.

On television channels like PBS, which are made for kids ads or sponsorships are not included in their programs. Some kids content on YouTube are allowed to monetize ads before, during, and after their videos, and are allowed sponsorships. Some sponsorships are of other phone apps, where kids may need to pay money for power ups or be exposed to vulgar ads on those apps. Kids consuming family channel sponsorships may not be aware of the exploitation of alluring ads.

Both the kids in front of the camera of family channel/made for kids content and those watching the content need protection. The children of these channels need to be able to consent to filming and be able to receive the profits of their work. Kids consuming the content need to be aware of the dangers of imitating what they see and the exploitation of advertising.

**References**

[1] The adverse effects of family vlogging on children by Nisha Talukdar. <https://www.ijrar.org/papers/IJRAR2001526.pdf>

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