

PARENTS' VIEWS ON FORMS OF TRANSMITTING FAIRY TALES TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract

The oral form is the earliest form of storytelling. Later, with the rise of interest in fairy tales and the publication of fairy tale books, some of them began to be transmitted to children through reading. Recently, many fairy tales have been screened, thus increasing the possibility of their audiovisual experience. The goal of this research is to identify differences in the form in which fairy tales are transmitted by parents to children. The research sample consisted of 57 parents of preschool children, divided into two groups: parents aged up to 35 years and parents aged over 35 years. This division provided us with answers to the research question: Is there a difference in the form of transmitting fairy tales between parents aged up to 35 years and parents over 35 years old? The research results show that there is a significant difference in the form of transmitting fairy tales depending on the age of the parents when the fairy tales are told, $p=.025$, and when they are read $p=.011$, while there is no significant difference, $p=.715$, when fairy tales are watched on smart devices. Parents reported that their children watch fairy tales on smart devices, but they think the greatest educational value is oral storytelling.

Keywords: reading, storytelling, smart devices

1. Introduction

We believe that man, even in ancient times, sets goals, which he tried to achieve at all costs. After achieving the goals, his self-confidence was strengthened, encouraging him to work even harder. Each experience and discovery enabled the expansion of the horizon of knowledge, given that many of the experiences were inherited from ancestors. Thus, knowledge of nature and the world was gradually expanded and passed down from generation to generation. One of his human goals has been to achieve a more comfortable and prosperous life, not only for himself/ but also for other members of the district where he lived. In this way the first human communities were born, for which the history of art proves that people have always tried to decorate the tools and places of residence, and even embellished their experiences through words. Fully aware that drawings, oral inventions, and ornaments did not bring them any benefit in meeting their daily needs, they continued to create them anyway (Xhambazi, 2016, p. 19). The flow of time and the expansion of human communities enabled the amplification of experiences and knowledge. The inability to communicate between people hindered the dissemination of knowledge and experiences, and therefore overall development was slow. Many generations lived and acted similarly to their ancestors. Discoveries had to wait as local findings over a long time. In terms of educating children, people have always been aware that folklore would enrich the soul and emotional world of children, thus achieving the highest level of education, so at an early age, fairy tales and legends about their ancestors' bravery were told. In this way, the moral, aesthetic, and working values were inherited, and the preparation of the young population for life and work was done. Fairy tales are one of the oldest and most widespread forms of oral creativity among all nations. They reflect people's ancient life, inter-social and inter-class relations, views, and worldviews in general. Many of the tales have common features for different nations, and special features for a certain nation, as through them specific features of national

character are reflected. In terms of content, fairy tales are of many types: tales of heroes, ordinary tales of life, tales about animals, etc. From another point of view, there are satirical (humorous), novelistic, fantastic, and fabled tales. In satirical tales almost all nations have mocked, struck, and unmasked the absolutism of regimes, describing the rulers as stupid and wicked, officials as sold-out, the rich as arrogant and greedy, and merchants as liars. Wonderful, supernatural elements occupy the main place in fantastic fairy tales. Almost all the tales have been created in the past and therefore carried vain beliefs and prejudices. In addition to these negative features, wisdom and justice remain permanent cognitive, educational, and artistic values.

Fairy tales are an ancient tradition and a vital part of all cultures. Man has always expressed desire, will, and commitment to telling stories. This action continues to be dominant, arousing curiosity and desire to hear them from children. Although a tale has been told several times and the same memorized by the child, it still arouses interest. Children often intervene in the storytelling by asking various questions about the events. It happens that the child himself adds or removes parts of the story, which he finds as redundant. What remains unchanged is the beginning with “Once upon a time...”, and the conclusion: “and they lived happily ever after.”

The same tale is structured in different forms by different persons. With the birth of writing through the written tale, the same objectives are achieved as well, only the dynamics used change. A story can be told many times with beautification and adornment. Corden (2000) believes that “narrative helps to make clear distinctions between spoken and written language” (p.147), how by saying and retelling to each other, children begin to understand how language works. In written tales, it is important to use not only simple and understandable language, but also grammatically and syntactically correct. And this is the most influential part on which the supporters of written tales rely. They believe that consistency is one of the benefits of the book and the written form of fairy tales. The book enables occasional browsing and more detailed research of text and photographs, an action that is not enabled by oral transmission. In printed form, we have the final versions of the tale, in which the writer has undoubtedly worked several times to arrive at a well-crafted version.

With the publication of the first collections of fairy tales, it was proved that the value of reading fairy tales can not be denied, especially at the time when children begin to learn to read and write. Phinn (2004) emphasizes that access to wonders, imaginative, and well-structured stories are essential for children who are learning to read. Books with good pictures are invaluable not only in understanding the text but also in fostering interaction with the text and developing further love for literature in general. Poulson (2003) argues that teachers who have knowledge of and attach importance to children's literature have greater effects on gaining students' attention and on their student's reading development.

Before technological advancement, various media such as newspapers, magazines, video games, movies, and in particular television, offered a form of unequal socialization because the opportunities for children from different countries and cultures were limited in terms of interaction. “Technological inventions, in particular, enabled the fairy tale to expand in various cultural domains, even on the Internet. Like the whale, the fairy tale adapted itself and was transformed by both common nonliterate people and upper-class literate people from a simple, brief tale with vital information” (Zipes, 2012, p. 43). The development of computers enabled the unification of almost all media, among which television was more successful in maintaining interest. It continues to satisfy social feelings to some degree, while not enabling children the ability to socialize to function effectively with people. This is because children on average watch television 3 to 4 hours a day, and the remaining time does not allow them to socialize, interact and play with other children. According to Wright (2001), even babies watch television for an average of an hour and a half a day, from the time they are born until they are 2 years old. The way and time of watching TV programs largely depend on the interest and pre-knowledge of the parents about the impact of television on the social development of the child. Some parents have more and some less control or allow their children to watch television programs. Some children themselves keep the TV remote control and constantly spin different programs. Television is the media that most resisted technological development, but continues to be less effective in interaction, except during games. Many fairy tales have been transformed into children's movies, like cartoons. The impossibility of interacting, asking additional questions, or the ready presentation of visual effects itself disables the development of critical

thinking and imagination.

2. Method

The issue of storytelling has always been an important topic. With the development of society in general, fairy tales have also changed, among others in the form of transmission. On this issue we conducted this research with 57 random participants in the survey, of which 28 were aged up to 35 years and 29 were over 35 years, parents of children three to seven years old. The questionnaire comprised eight questions with a consistency coefficient $\alpha = .78$ (Cronbach's alpha). The research aimed to define the differences in the form of transmitting fairy tales according to parents' age, which we investigated through the question: Is there a difference in parents' views on forms of transmitting fairy tales? We assumed that there are differences between parents in their views on the forms of transmitting fairy tales, therefore we raised three hypotheses:

H1. Older parents are more likely to narrate stories to their children than younger parents.

H2. Older parents are more likely to read fairy tales to their children from books than younger parents.

H3. Older parents' children watch significantly more fairy tales on TV, PC, and smartphone compared to younger parents' children.

Statistical differences between parents according to age were tested using a t-test.

3. Results

Through the first question, we investigated how often parents tell tales to their children. We present the results from this question in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of storytelling

		Often (every day)	Sometimes (two to three times a week)	Never	Total
Age	Up to 35 years	9	20	0	29
	Over 35 years	3	23	2	28
Total		12	43	2	57

Most parents, regardless of age, reported telling their children fairytales sometimes or two to three times a week. A total of 43 parents or about 75% of respondents answered that they sometimes tell their children fairy tales, and only two parents, or 3.5% stated that they never tell their children fairy tales.

Reading fairy tales has been and remains part of family tradition. Parents read stories to children, especially before bedtime. With the second question, we asked the parents how often they read fairy tales to their children. In that question, parents reported the following in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of reading fairy tales to children

		Often (every day)	Sometimes (two to three times a week)	Never	Total
Age	Up to 35 years	6	21	2	29
	Over 35 years	1	20	7	28
Total		7	41	9	57

In this case, we can see that nine respondents, or about 16% of parents stated that they never read fairy tales to their children, 41 respondents or 72% sometimes read to them and seven respondents or about 12% read fairy tales to them every day. There is a more pronounced difference based on age in the first and third option, younger parents prefer to read fairy tales to their children more often, while older parents read fewer fairy tales

to their children. New technologies are part of every family, along with the internet and numerous TV channels. This phenomenon enables at any time, everything for everyone. Now, the first things that the child is familiar with are the various technological devices, the operation of which, children assimilate easily. Of the many devices that children use, we asked parents to indicate how often their children watch fairy tales on television, computers, or other technology.

Table 3. Frequency of watching fairy tales on TV, PC, and smartphone

		Often (every day)	Sometimes (two to three times a week)	Never	Total
Age	Up to 35 years	14	14	1	29
	Over 35 years	12	15	1	28
Total		26	29	2	57

In Table 3 we have the data obtained about watching fairies on smart devices. Here it is worth noting that 26 parents or about 46% of respondents stated that their children watch fairy tales every day, 29 parents or 51% answered that their children watch several times a week, and only two parents or 3.5% of respondents stated that their children never watch fairy tales on screen. The results show little difference regarding watching fairy tales by children, depending on the age of the parents, while the number of parents who said that their children watch fairy tales every day in the new media is considerable.

As shown in Table 4, older parents (over 35 years old) ($M=1.96$, $SD=.429$) are more likely to narrate stories to their children than parents up to 35 years old ($M=1.69$, $SD=.471$). Older parents, also, are more likely to read fairy tales to their children from books ($M=2.21$, $SD=.499$) than younger parents ($M=1.86$, $SD=.516$). Children of parents over 35 years old watch slightly more fairy tales on TV, PC, and smartphone ($M=1.61$, $SD=.567$) compared to children of parents up to 35 ($M=1.55$, $SD=.572$).

Table 4. Descriptive parameters of fairy tale transmission forms.

Dependent var.	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
You narrate your child the story in the form of a fairy tale	Up to 35 years	29	1,69	,471	,087
	Over 35 years old	28	1,96	,429	,081
You read to your child fairy tales from books.	Up to 35 years	29	1,86	,516	,096
	Over 35 years old	28	2,21	,499	,094
Your child watches fairy tales on TV, PC, or smartphone.	Up to 35 years	29	1,55	,572	,106
	Over 35 years old	28	1,61	,567	,107

These results seem to go in favor of confirming the research hypotheses. To test the hypotheses, an Independent Samples T Test was performed (Table 5).

Table 5. Independent Samples Test

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
You narrate your child the story in the form of a fairy tale	-2.300	55	.025	-.275	.119	-.514	-.035
You read to your child fairy tales from books.	-2.620	55	.011	-.352	.134	-.622	-.083
Your child watches fairy tales on TV, PC, or smartphone.	-.367	55	.715	-.055	.151	-.358	.247

The results of the t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the parents according to age, in terms of narrating stories in the form of a fairy tale ($t=-2.300$, $p<.05$) and reading fairy tales from books ($t=-2.620$, $p<.05$). This means that hypothesis H1: Older parents are more likely to narrate stories to their children than younger parents and hypothesis H2: Older parents are more likely to read fairy tales to their children from books than younger parents, are accepted. In terms of watching fairy tales on TV, PC, and smartphone, the test results did not show a statistically significant difference between the parents according to their age ($t=-.367$, $p>.05$). This means that the hypothesis H3: Older parents' children watch significantly more fairy tales on TV, PC and smartphone compared to younger parents' children, is rejected. The results also show that the most common forms of transmission of fairy tales are realized through technological devices.

An important issue when transmitting fairy tales is the conversation after the end of the tale, especially commenting on the message of the tale. Regarding this issue, respondents reported the following:

Table 6. After finishing the fairy tale (told, read, or watched), do you talk about the message of that fairy tale?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Often	26	45,6	45,6	45,6
	Sometimes	27	47,4	47,4	93,0
	Never	4	7,0	7,0	100,0
	Total	57	100,0	100,0	

In the table above, we see that 97% of respondents talk to their children about the message of the fairy tale, while 7% do not comment on the event or the message that comes from it. On this issue, different authors have different opinions as to the reasoning of the conversation about the tales heard or watched. Where everyone agrees is the young age of the children, which means that critical thinking in young children is not well-built, so the need to talk about the message of the story is not necessary.

The questionnaire included questions on children's preferences, i.e., which form they prefer the most. Results from this question are provided in Table 7.

Table 7. The child likes the most when the fairy tale is

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	narrated	33	57,9	57,9	57,9
	read	5	8,8	8,8	66,7
	watched on tv	19	33,3	33,3	100,0
	Total	57	100,0	100,0	

The results show that the majority of parents reported that their children prefer when the story is narrated (58%), followed by watched on TV (33%) and about 9% said that children like fairy tales to be read to them. Children's desires for fairy tales have been permanent, they listen to fairy tales with a lot of attention, so the desire to talk about them is permanent. It happens that children, while listening to the story, interrupt the narrator or the reader, to ask additional questions about a dilemma or ambiguity, while watching on TV, the possibility of interaction is smaller. The child, in most cases, watches the tale alone and has no opportunity to talk about the event. For these reasons, we asked respondents to comment on communicating with children while listening to or watching fairy tales.

Table 8. The child asks more questions (asks to discuss the event) when the story is

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	narrated	36	63,2	63,2	63,2
	read	11	19,3	19,3	82,5
	watched on tv	10	17,5	17,5	100,0
	Total	57	100,0	100,0	

In this case, it is noticed that the majority of respondents, or 63% said that children mostly ask questions when the story is narrated. About 19% reported that the child wants to discuss the fairy tale's subject when it is read to him, and about 17% said that the child wants to be discussed it after watching the fairy tale on TV. The t-test results showed that there is no statistically significant difference in the views of parents by age on this question ($t = -.940, p > .05$).

The questionnaire's last two questions investigated parents' opinions on the educational value of fairy tales (Table 9 and Table 10).

Table 9. The tale has greater educational value

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Narrated	34	59,6	59,6	59,6
	Read	21	36,8	36,8	96,5
	Watched on TV	2	3,5	3,5	100,0
	Total	57	100,0	100,0	

In Table 9, it can be seen that 60% of respondents think that the educational value of fairy tales is greater when it is narrated, about 4% think that fairy tales have greater educational value watched on TV, and 37% believe that the educational value of the tale is greater when it is read to children. According to Mello (2001), fairy tales can also be used as an effort to hone emotions, foster the imagination and increase the critical power of children. In general, fairy tales carry a positive and educative mission. Regarding the importance of the educational value of fairy tales, we found the following results.

Table 10. The educational value of fairy tales is

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	irreplaceable	32	56,1	56,1
	important, but not necessary	25	43,9	100,0
	Total	57	100,0	100,0

The majority of respondents think that fairy tales' educational value is irreplaceable. Thus stated 56% of respondents, while for about 44% of respondents the educational value of fairy tales is important but not necessary. Fairy tales are believed to have an influential role in children's education since they expose a primitive way of thinking which is very close to the way of thinking children have (Hohr, 2000; Singhal, 2013).

4. Discussion and conclusion

Fairy tales are the earliest part of oral creativity and part of the folklore of all nations. In fairy tales, people have described various social phenomena not only as they have been, but also as they should be. In the contents of fairy tales, the evils of certain human categories have been mocked, particularly those in power and rulers. Positive qualities have been upheld, often describing even unusual events with unusual characters. Like such, fairy tales have been inherited generation after generation. This research investigated the forms of their transmission to children aged 3 to 7 years. The results of this research show that the most common form of transmitting fairy tales is realized through watching fairy tales on smart devices. Teepe, Molenaar, and Verhoeven (2017) found that "technology-enhanced storytelling significantly improved children's productive vocabulary knowledge" (p. 10). About 46% of parents reported that their children watch fairy tales every day, and about 75% of parents said that they tell their children fairy tales two or three times a week. In line with this, Hoff (2006) states that the more time parents spent on activities with their child, the more interaction is taking place between them, and the more opportunities the child experiences to learn new word meanings and to enlarge existing word knowledge. The study found that older parents (over 35 years old) tell and read stories to their children more often than younger parents (up to 35 years old). The t-test results showed a statistically significant difference between the parents according to age, in terms of telling stories in the form of a fairy tale ($t=-2.300$, $p<.05$) and reading fairy tales from books ($t=-2.620$, $p<.05$). In terms of watching fairy tales on TV, PC, and smartphone, there is no statistically significant difference between parents according to their age ($t=-.367$, $p>.05$). Parents believe that fairy tales have a higher educational value when narrated because children while listening to the narrated tale show more interest, wanting to continue the conversation about the tale. According to the research results, it is worth emphasizing that fairy tales continue to be an integral part of children's development, currently being transmitted to a considerable extent in all three forms, with a tendency to reinforce the viewing of fairy tales through new media. Although respondents' opinions on the educational values of the tales narrated are dominant, they correspond to common opinions about watching fairy tales on screen, an inevitable phenomenon of the future.

Nevertheless, this research has some limitations that should be noticed. Firstly, although the results of the questionnaire presented a significant understanding of the forms of transmitting fairy tales to preschool children, including other methods such as interviews or focus groups would help to achieve a comprehensive evaluation. Secondly, the participants only involved 57 parents, thus, having more participants may present more evidence on the forms of transmitting fairy tales to preschool children. Finally, the research is limited to parents of preschool children, therefore it should be extended to parents of primary school children. However, these limitations lead to several directions for future research. For example, future research could examine the teachers' perceptions of forms of transmitting fairy tales to students. In addition, it is necessary to explore what factors, such as the institutional, social, or parents' or teachers' factors, may exert influence on forms of transmitting fairy tales to children.

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