

تأثير أدب الاطفال على الصحة النفسية للاطفال:

دراسة مقارنة بين قصص الخيال الكلاسيكية وافلام ديزني

The Influence of Children's literature on Children's
Psychology: A Comparative Study between The
Classic Fairytales and Disney Movies

(PhD)

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المخلص

على مر القرون أثرت كتب الأطفال في تكوين هوية الأطفال على مستويات مختلفة، سواء كانت حكايات خرافية وحكايات شعبية، وكتب مصورة ورسوم متحركة من ديزني. ولهذا وفقاً لهذا السياق، يعد علم نفس الطفل أحد فروع علم النفس العديدة التي تتعامل مع كيفية نموهم عقلياً وعاطفياً واجتماعياً. وبقدر ما تحتل الطفولة دوراً مهماً في مجرى الحياة فلا عجب ان هذا الموضوع يعد موضوعاً مهماً في علم النفس وعلم الاجتماع والأدب وأفلام ديزني. ان هذه الدراسة تتطرق الى أن تجليات القصص الخيالية الكلاسيكية والقصص الأخرى المستمدة من أدب الأطفال مفيدة بشكل كبير في تحديد كيفية ارتباط الأطفال بالأخلاق بالإضافة إلى المحيط الاجتماعي والثقافي. اذ انها تشرح بالتفصيل التأثيرات التي أحدثتها أدب الأطفال وأفلام ديزني على طريقة تفكير الأطفال وتعلمهم وتطورهم وتسعى ايضاً إلى تحديد ما إذا كانت قراءة ومشاهدة القصص الخيالية لديها القدرة على تغيير مواقف الأطفال تجاه أنواع مختلفة من الناس. كذلك تهدف الدراسة إلى الإجابة على السؤال التالي هل تقديم الحكاية الخرافية يؤدي إلى تجربة ذات مغزى وهل هذه التجربة مفيدة للأطفال كي يتعلموها ام لا.

Abstract

Throughout centuries, the children's books have influenced the identity creation of children in various levels, in the form of fairy tales, folk tales, picture books, Disney cartoons, and movies. According to this context, child psychology is one among many branches of psychology that deals with how children grow up mentally, emotionally, and socially. As childhood occupies a crucial role in the course of the rest of life, it is little wonder why this topic has become such an important one within psychology, sociology, literature, and Disney movies. The study argues that the manifestation of classic fairytales and other stories derived from children literature are significantly beneficial in identifying how children relate to ethics as well as social and cultural surroundings. It elaborates on the effects engendered by children's literature and Disney movies upon the way children think, learn and develop. This study seeks to determine if reading and watching a fairy tales have the potential to alter the attitudes of children toward different types of people. Besides, it aims to answer whether fairy tales are presented in such a way that is conducive to a meaningful experience, and whether this experience is useful for children to learn or not .



Introduction

"Once upon a time" is a phrase familiar to children all over the world as the beginning of a fairy tale where Kings, farmers or orphaned children are having an adventure in a magical world of wonders. However, fairy tales are more than simple stories told to entertain children. Marie-Louise von Franz suggests that "fairy tales are mostly human in their structure" and "in every kind of tales you can study the basic structures of human behavior". Perhaps this universal human connection is why classic tales of princes, princesses, witches and wolves in distant and ancient lands are as appealing to children today as they were a century ago. Austrian child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim finds folk fairy tales valuable when it comes to raising children. In his book *The Uses of Magic* (1989), he explains that parents today are oriented toward modern technology and see children as well. Their interest is in stories and films. Thus, visual and reading literature is one of the greatest external influences on a child's psyche: it is not only possible to teach children behind the walls of school or class, but also to teach them principles, values and culture from within their homes through movies. This study will try to compare some of the Grimm's' classic fairy tales with Disney movies and how they affect children in general .

Children's literature

The definition of "children's literature" is at the core of its endeavor: it is a classification of literature whose existence depends on the supposed relationships with its readership: children. This is as a purposefully and explicitly connected relationship between writers and the reading public: children. Here lies its purposeful importance, is it written by children or for children? What's the purpose ?

The purpose is to define these books and what are the best for children, even if it is not clear which books are intended for children. Therefore, children's literature is considered as everything that is in the interest and benefit of children. In particular, motivational content that touches the emotional feelings and moral values of each child .

The stages of development of children's literature are different. In the last five hundred years, children's books fall into a small or almost non-existent way, except for educational disciplines such as behavior and school education. Factors for the emergence of children's literature as a result of children's admiration for adult books, as well as religion are important factors in the development of literary printing to raise children on moral factors by supporting religious principles until this development continued gradually to the arrival of modern technology and its transformation into audio and visual recordings in proportion to the social,



educational, and especially economic aspects. Topics varied widely until the titles became taken for granted so it represented concerns and fears for the standards of content. Where each country has its traditional group, including the explanation of natural phenomena and legends for the hero, charismatic characters, supernatural powers, and myths (Townsend 1996).

The Impact of Children's Literature

Reading literature is not only important to succeed in school or business setting, but it is valuable for other reasons as well. Donna Norton (2010) defined the value of literature for young people in her book *Through the Eyes of a Child*. She explains that children's literature is significant because it provides students with the appreciation of their cultural legacy; it benefits students improve intelligence and emotional creativeness; includes the growth and progress of student personality and social skills; besides essential literature and topics are handed from one generation to the next.

The first value to consider is that children's literature offers a prospect to react to literature and develop one's own attitudes on the topic. This reinforces deeper thinking about literature. Students can acquire assessing and analyzing literature, and whoever is reading non-word books such as *A Ball for Daisy* (Raschka, 2011), will be able to examine the illustrations and develop their dialogue for the story. This strengthens the ability to form views for themselves and to express themselves through language in summarizing the plot of a book without words.

Second, children's literature affords a way for students to study their cultural heritage and the cultures of others. Children must absorb these standards because "the development of positive attitudes towards our culture and others' cultures is essential for social and personal development" (Norton, 2010: P. 3) .

Third, children's literature benefits students to improve emotional intelligence. Stories have the prospective to stimulate emotional and moral development. However, it covers "many moments of crisis, when characters make moral decisions and consider the reasons for their decisions", an important skill for children to see as a model (2010: P. 34). Children's literature encourages students to consider more deeply about their feelings.

Children's literature also encourages creativity. Being able to understand others' perspectives and being unselfish are important skills that grownups must foster in children, as Norton says that "acceptable relationships require an understanding of other people's feelings and



perspectives" (p. 27). Children's literature can promote social development by encouraging students to accept others and their differences.

Finally, children's literature is valuable because it is an eternal tradition, one in which "books are the principal means of passing on our literary heritage from generation to generation" (p. 3).

Grimm's brothers: Background to Grimm's Fairy Tales

A fairy tale, a wondrous tale or a magical tale is considered an example of European folklore, taking the form of a short story. It is characterized by mythical and imaginary entities such as dragons, fairies, goblins, mermaids, witches, or talking animals and others. It often talks about magic and fantasy. In addition, it is known in the past orally until it is graded in written form and then drawn into audio and visual as in modern technology.

Grimm's Fairy Tales was written in the early nineteenth century. In 1806, French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte formed the Rhine Confederation, arousing the awakening of German nationalism, and a large number of intellectuals joined. It was against this background that the Brothers Grimm began to research folk literature and folk songs, and collected fairy tales and stories that had spread widely among German folk. The Brothers Grimm published the first edition of Grimm's Fairy Tales, also known as Children and Family Fairy Tales. (Chen and Wang, 2019: p.63-67)

Fairy tales were well-known and in different ways reliant on their subjects in society. They were read orally in the courts for entertainment and social communication. Their stories were formed like plays, books, pamphlets, and essays by the end of the 19th century. With the advent of cartoons and comics, tales were transmitted through radio, cinema, and advertising, and fairy tales became a major part of the media in the early 20th century (Chen and Wang, 2019).

The Effect of Classic fairy tales: Grimm's brothers

Fairy tales are more than simple stories to entertain children or to calm them to sleep at night. Rather, they awaken fear and excitement in children of all ages for generations. If a child feels insecure and suspicious, he or she can find comfort by reading the stories of those who suffer the worst. It is necessary to draw attention to fairy tales, how they affect children's psychology over the centuries and how they have shaped behavior and mentality of children in our societies.

What motivates children is that fairy tales have a happy ending. The characters of the tales win overall odds despite the separation of the parents. As in the story of Hansel and Gretel, Snow White, Cinderella, the



Red Riding Hood, and others, the child reassured, entertained and is motivated to be hopeful and optimistic. (Jack, 2006)

Fairytales also encourages children to be self-reliant, regardless of the barriers and obstacles they may face. We also see Gretel's bravery when she pushed the witch to the oven and saved her brother Hansel before the witch cooked him and made him lunch for her in the tale of Hansel and Gretel. One can see Hansel is a responsible person. He never leaves his sister alone in the woods; he takes care always of her, "Hansel and Gretel sat by the fire. When midday came each one ate his little piece of bread... after the full moon had come up, Hansel took his little sister by the hand." (Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, 1857: p. 23).

Moreover, fairytales can cultivating the human instinct for good and try to employ it with interesting characters such as Snow White, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel. As the character of the beast in the tale of Beauty and the Beast, we see the embodiment of noble morals and love clear in the character of the beast despite its frightening shape and suspicious body. (Jack, 2006)

Reading fairy tales gives the child space to express his ideas, expand his imagination towards events and characterize the characters, and these fantasies are reflected on the general behavior and it can develop creative intelligence. As we can see the description of Cinderella is not detailed in Grimm's fairy tales. So, the child imagines that the princess can be exactly like her with curly brown hair and brown skin, and this enhances confidence and positive spirit. "It is our firm intention," Jacob Grimm wrote, "that the book be regarded as an educational book" and that adults would read the tales to their children. Jacob warned, however, that adults should not read "too much at once until the children could understand... but give them little by little another morsel of this sweet food." (Peppard, Paths: pp. 40-41).

Nevertheless, the principle of "good always rewarded and evil punished" at each end despite barriers and obstructions has been adapted. In the tale of Cinderella, where the birds flew down and picked up the eyes of her sisters. They remain blind all their lives because of their bad treatment of Cinderella. As well as the end of the "Beauty" sisters in the tale of Beauty and the Beast, when the fairy godmother turned them into statues in the castle garden because of their jealousy and hatred.

Furthermore, adaption of topics that touch deeply on the child's feelings thus expands the child's consideration of what he or she may face in real life (e.g., problems of separation, anxiety or fear of growing up, etc.) However, despite the motivational messages that Grimm's tales offer, their general character is harsh and sometimes destroy some children's thoughts



on how to manage or reconcile what they think with what they do. However, what is interesting in Grimm's tales is the embodiment of the role of fathers or parental figures in the form of villains in an exaggerated manner, which provokes real confusing relationships that lead to stress and fears for children and parents alike. Consequently, it makes children in a position of mistrust of parents or in doubt and raises their fears towards parents.

“The oedipal problems – source of the story’s conflict – are left to our imagination” (Bettelheim 201). According to Bettelheim and from the researcher's perspective, the family situation is stable with the mother's existence, but after she dies, the conflict begins in almost every fairy tale of Grimm’s. The father exists but his role is weak under the influence of the stepmother. He sees only one face of the stepmother directed toward his desires, that representing the neglect and carelessness toward children, so he is the cause of their unhappiness and suffering.

In the description of Grimm's fictional tales, male characters are brave and smart while female characters are kind and weak. These characteristics are one reason for gender differences in the child's personality development. We see the child wanting to become a hero or prince and to gain a position or wealth. A girl dreams of becoming a beautiful princess and wishes for a prince to save her from her weakness and difficulties (Bruno and Gao,1991). Furthermore, concentration and exaggeration on sensitive topics for the child’s mentality leads to raising the negative effects on the psyche and behavior of the child in the early stages and clearly in Grimes’ fairy tales:

- 1.Terror: We see bloody or magical horror as one of the most obvious themes. In the Cinderella tale, we see scenes of sisters' toes or heels cut off as well as their eyes gouged out at the end of the story, which accustoms the child to the bloody scenes and destroys feelings of innocence and humanity.
- 2.Cruelty and Injustice: Scenes of injustice and cruelty are countless in tales as a symbol and are portrayed frighteningly and painfully. We see it in Snow White and The Sleeping Princess and most Grimes tales.
- 3.The sexual aspect, such as in "Red Riding Hood" and "Sleeping Princess", raises the awareness of children in different societies to arouse sexual and physical instincts too early and erases a large part of their innocence. (Jack,2006)
- 4.The bloody and dark elements in the classic tale themes of the Gimm's Brothers can affect a child's attitude. It may cause the child to become more



aggressive, or become familiar with, or act upon, blood, murder, and violence, and it could grow the seed of evil within the child.

Grimm's good child educational messages were always wrapped under the cover we mentioned above, not directly addressed, and if so, not all of them. According to a double-account analysis of the use of words directly or indirectly associated with violence by the researcher Díaz (2010) of eight tales from 209, the Grimm's Tales collection does not fit the scale of values we want to inculcate in children according to the society we live in today, based on the proportion of words associated with violence as shown below:

	Cut	Blood	Dead
Grimm's tales	63.1%	62.5%	100%
BNC	6%	18%	12%
Cobuild Concordancer	0%	12%	22%

Table (1) shows a Comparison among British National Corpus, Cobuild Concordancer and Grimm's corpora. (Díaz, 2010: p.143)

Disney Movies

The scientific, technological, and educational development of humankind has led to an increase in the knowledge and information produced in many languages. The importance of studying child-oriented films and their language calls for children's literature because its speech is aimed at the child as a watcher or a reader.

"It can therefore be an umbrella concept for children's jingles, songs, poetry and folk tales, comic books, radio plays, drawings, and comics. Furthermore, as noted above, there is a strong argument for including audiovisual and multimedia texts in children's literature in contemporary society." (O'Connell, 2003: p. 107)

Moreover, Walter Elias "Walt Disney" (1901-1966), was an American cartoonist, producer, director, and screenwriter. A cultural icon in the field of animation, he and his brother Roy O. Disney founded the Walt Disney Children's Entertainment Company as an icon of Hollywood entrepreneurship. It is now the largest media and entertainment company in the world .



The Effect of Disney Movies on Children

Children's literature is a measure of principles and concerns about children and childhood. Over the centuries, children's books have influenced the formation of children's identity at various levels, in the form of fairy tales, folk tales, picture books, Disney cartoons, and films. A modern child spends more time in interactive learning. Disney films and animations have greatly influenced both children and adults as a source of great entertainment.

James J (2003) advocates the importance of visual media in advancing literacy through video games. He notes the role of visual media in teaching problem-solving skills. He advocates how this type of learning makes children empathize with others by shaping and gaining new perspectives to create a character by active and critical thinking. Advances in technology and the Internet enable visual literacy through video presentations such as YouTube. The twentieth century has seen rapid development and growth in technology and the amount of time a child spends in visual media has increased which has helped Spreading knowledge among children and encourages cartoons and animation movies. The depiction of Disney characters is interesting and comfortable in terms of drawings and colors, which adds a feeling of safety and fun to the child while he watches the movie.

However, Disney movies develops the mental abilities of the child such as realization, imagination, and distinguish between different cultures principles borrowed from movies, as well as the linguistic outcome. Also, children direct experience of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, and "Increasing the child's linguistic wealth directly proportional to his cultural and scientific achievement."(Al Kilani,1991) Moreover, Disney animation movies play an important role in raising the child and providing him with advanced cognitive skills. Researchers believe that "presenting audio-visual information together to the child leads to raising the level of retention with the educational subject, it reaches 50%, and maybe more... The child touches the TV through his three senses, touch, sight and hearing..." (Al Rimawi,1998). Meaning that their memorization of half of what they watched will have an effective impact on the general behavior and creative ability and enhance social skills.

Hence, not only did Disney have a monopoly on their movies in Europe but they also presented the cultures of different countries. It has a charming effect on children, recognizing new principles as well as accepting social differences. We can see that in many movies like (Coco, Spanish), (Mulan, Chinese), (Aladin, Arabian), (Brave, Scottish), (Belle and the Beast, French), (Loca, Italian).



In his early days, Disney focused on distinguishing women as a weak element as England identified, "watching stereotypes or equal images of gender roles will influence children's ideas about gender"(England,2011), but this view soon changed with the release of several movies showing the image of the woman as a confident, responsible and leading figure, such as Mulan and Merida, and Moana.

Besides, Disney focuses on highly positive topics, which provides a lot of experiences for children, emphasizing the principles of goodness, courage, kindness and forgiveness. The change in character formation gives an impression of acceptance and self-love, besides to insisting on making decisions and taking responsibility (Padam,2018).

Disney movies are away from the themes of fear, horror, and bloody dark scenes, if they exist, their effect is negligible due to the lack of emphasis on such scenes, in addition to drawing and colors charmingly and appealingly that takes the child to a world full of vitality and optimism." Disney movies contain important lessons about life" (Ward, 1996, 2002) and" abundant depictions of altruistic behaviors" (Padilla Walker, 2013).

Conclusion

Emphasis on fairy tales is imperative. Children are very affected by all things imaginative because they provoke fear and anxiety as well as strong emotion, especially the struggle over family relationships and deprivation. Copies express exaggeration and focus on themes that are not directly in the child's best interests, often with the message being subtle and indirect and difficult for the child to perceive at an early age. Themes of terror, injustice, bloodshed, and cruelty are so dependent on the child's psyche that they cannot be forgotten or entertain. After the development of children's literature, it is not only limited to read literature, but also becomes audible and visible, and this is what we are seeing now in cartoons and animation. And my example is Disney movies. Over the last decade, the Disney group has become the biggest influence on the child's psychology, especially on his enjoyment and his admiration for the colors, music, and themes of each story. The thematic variety of Disney films has opened the horizons of children to new imaginations and stimulated them with seeds of social and creative intelligence. Especially issues of self-confidence, responsibility, courage, and others. Now it is kids trying to write a story or draw a character, not just watching a movie.



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