



Fairy Tale Therapy as a Method of Psychosocial Support: An Empirical Study among Parents

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Abstract

The use of fairy tale therapy as a form of psychosocial support has gained increasing attention in recent years due to its potential to enhance emotional resilience, empathy, and communication within families. Rooted in both psychological theory and narrative practice, fairy tale therapy utilizes the symbolic and metaphorical structure of stories to help individuals, especially children and their parents, process emotions, resolve internal conflicts, and develop adaptive coping strategies. This study explores the application of fairy tale therapy as a method for psychosocial support in the context of parenthood, focusing on parents' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward this creative therapeutic approach.

The research was conducted through an empirical survey among parents. The questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative elements, aiming to assess parents' understanding of fairy tale therapy, their openness to non-traditional therapeutic methods, and the perceived impact of storytelling on family dynamics and emotional communication. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and interpreted in relation to contemporary psychological frameworks that emphasize the importance of narrative-based interventions in family support.

Preliminary results indicate that the majority of parents recognize storytelling as a valuable resource for emotional bonding and moral development. However, a significant proportion are unaware of the structured therapeutic potential of fairy tale methods. The findings highlight the need for greater awareness and professional training in the field of fairy tale therapy as part of broader psychosocial support programs for families.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on narrative and creative therapies by emphasizing the practical implications of fairy tale therapy.

Keywords: *Fairy tale therapy, psychosocial support, parents, narrative therapy, emotional development, family communication*

1. Introduction

An extremely important topic in recent years has been mental health and emotional well-being in children. Today's children are under enormous pressure – school, extracurricular activities, social media... All of this creates stress. We need to find effective mechanisms and techniques to support child development. I have found that fairy tale therapy works incredibly well with children – they open up in a way that I rarely see with other methods. Old fairy tales turn out to be perfect for modern psychology – who would have thought? [1,4,8,13].

Many parents consider fairy tales to be mere entertainment, but this is far from the truth. Through them, children learn about different models of behavior, cultural specifics, value attitudes, and discover ways to cope with difficulties. The symbols and metaphors in fairy tales allow children to recognize their own emotions and experiences in a safe environment and in an understandable and accessible way. It is on this basis that fairy tale therapy creates a space in which children can freely express their fears, anxieties, and desires, identify with the characters, and explore their emotions through the story [2,5,6,10].

I notice that more and more colleagues are writing about fairy tale therapy – clearly, the method really works, as evidenced by the fact that more and more specialists (educators, psychologists, speech therapists, librarians) are actively using elements of fairy tale therapy in their work [3,7,9,11]. Fairy tales are a universal way of working with children of all age groups and from different cultural and social backgrounds, as they support not only their mental but also their emotional development [12].

2. Methodology



The study discusses how parents see fairy tale therapy as a psychosocial support method that can help children. We were curious about parents' real opinions on fairy tale therapy - whether they see it as something that could genuinely help their kids develop emotionally and socially. The subject of research is parental attitudes towards fairy tale therapy and the content of research is parental perception and support of their children in such activities. We created this online survey and put it out there for any interested parents. We asked about how much they already knew about fairy tale therapy, the advantages and disadvantages of the therapy, the themes that the person preferred, and the expectations of the individual towards the therapy being professionally facilitated. There were 1,500 parents who participated in the survey and their children were between 3 and 12 years old. The Bulgarian parents who responded gave us some really interesting perspectives.

3. Analysis of the Results Obtained

The results of the study conducted by my team show that the main group of respondents are women (85.2%), while men account for only 14.8%. This is consistent with the usual patterns found in studies related to parenting and education, where mothers are more likely to engage with issues related to the upbringing, education, and emotional well-being of children.

More than half of the respondents are aged 31–40 (52%), followed by parents aged 41–50 (30%). The proportion of parents aged 20, 30, and over 51 is 13% and less than 5%, respectively. This pattern is consistent with the overall demographic structure of parents of preschool and primary school children. Sixty percent of respondents are familiar with the term "fairy tale therapy," which indicates a moderate level of public recognition (Fig. 1). On the one hand, this may be due to the fact that parents have become familiar with the term in the educational environment, through discussions in the media, or through conversations with professionals in the fields of psychology, pedagogy, or library science. On the other hand, 36% of parents say that the term is new to them, which is another indication that more needs to be done to make the concept of fairy tale therapy as a well-organized psychosocial intervention more accessible and visible.

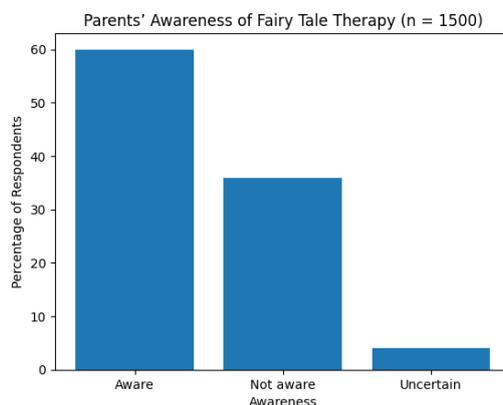


Fig 1. Parents' awareness of fairy tale therapy (n = 1500).

According to respondents who are familiar with the possibilities of fairy tale therapy, they most often described it as a practice involving storytelling or reading for a supportive or developmental purpose. This aids children's emotional development, helps them cope with situations that arise, and stimulates their social skills. Some of the respondents believe that fairy tale therapy is entirely related to art therapy.

The majority of parents (86%) believe that literature significantly supports children's emotional development (Fig. 2). This result reinforces the perception of fairy tales as culturally embedded tools for emotional learning and supports their inclusion in psychosocial support practices.

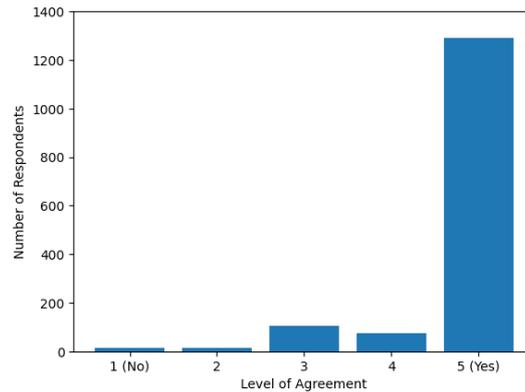


Fig. 2. Parents' responses regarding the role of literature in children's emotional development (n = 1500).

These results support the thesis that fairy tales are deeply rooted cultural tools for emotional support and development. 49% of respondents use fairy tales to help their children cope with various emotions - fear, sadness, anger, shame, anxiety, etc. 31% of parents sometimes use fairy tales to help their children cope with their emotions. Only 6% say they never use fairy tales for this purpose (Fig. 3). There is a natural tendency among parents to use storytelling informally, along with a need for clearer professional guidance.

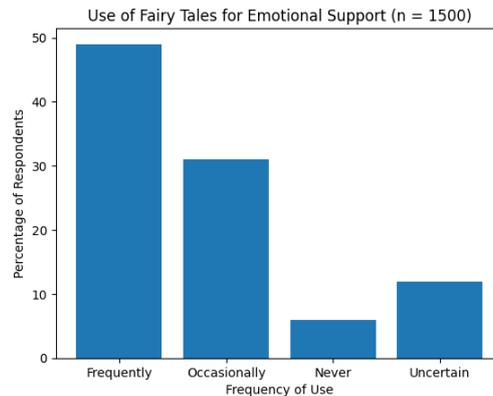


Fig. 3. Use of Fairy Tales for Emotional Support (n = 1500)

Among the main challenges mentioned by parents are uncertainty about how to use books as a therapeutic tool (29%), and 20% find it difficult to choose appropriate literature for specific emotional needs. Some parents also share that their children show no interest in reading (9%) and lack of time (9%) (Fig. 4). It is important to note that 26% of respondents do not encounter any difficulties, which shows that reading is already integrated into the emotional support practices of some families.

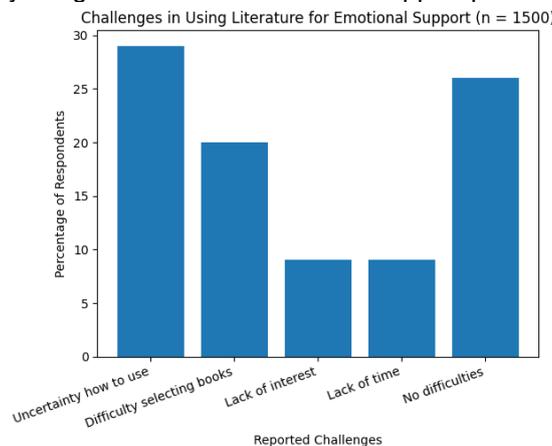


Fig. 4. Challenges in Using Literature for Emotional Support (n = 1500)



83% of respondents share their positive attitude towards the possibility of using fairy tale therapy in various public institutions (kindergartens, schools, libraries). For 9% of respondents, it is necessary to ensure that specialists are well qualified and that programs are well structured.

More than half of parents (60%) prefer group fairy tale therapy sessions because this creates opportunities for interaction between children (Fig. 5).

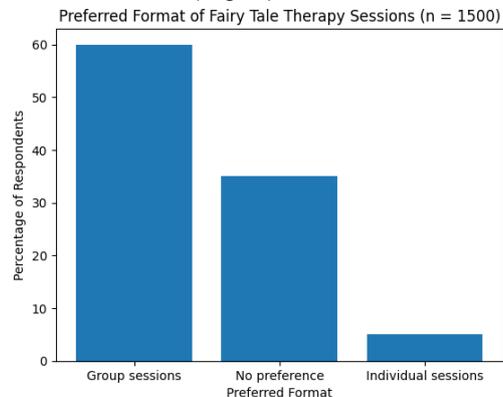


Fig. 5. Parents' preferred format of fairy tale therapy sessions (n = 1500).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

According to the results of the study, parents express positive attitudes towards fairy tale therapy. The results of the study conducted in Bulgaria are consistent with international studies that reveal the effectiveness of fairy tales as a therapeutic tool for emotional regulation, social learning, and resilience in children, while emphasizing the importance of structured implementation and qualified professional facilitation to ensure sustainable results.

For parents, storytelling is not only a means of emotional regulation, but also a way to encourage creativity, social skills, and flexible thinking.

Based on the results, several recommendations can be made. First, active efforts should be made to promote and raise awareness among parents and professionals through seminars, information campaigns, and introductory training in libraries, kindergartens, and schools. The second important thing is to create storytelling therapy programs that address key issues identified by parents, including fears, anxiety, social relationships, adapting to change, and creativity. In Bulgaria, there is still a lack of systematic training in fairy tale therapy to prepare various types of specialists to integrate competencies from child psychology, education, and therapeutic methods based on storytelling.

Future studies are planned to expand the sample, include mixed research methods, and reflect the perspectives of children and professionals in order to strengthen the evidence base. Overall, the study contributes to the development of storytelling therapy as a culturally grounded and contemporary approach to psychosocial support for children and families.

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