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Problems of the Family Depicted in Contemporary Animated Movies

Problemy rodzinne zobrazowane we współczesnych bajkach animowanych

KEYWORDS

family, family problems, family changes, animated fairy tales, animated movies

ABSTRACT

For years, animated fairy tales have allowed children to experience extraordinary adventures with their favourite characters. They shape a worldview, making it possible for children to identify with characters who, like them, experience happy and difficult moments. The fairy tales do not shy away from depicting the difficulties of everyday life, especially those arising within the fundamental social group that is the family. This article presents the results of a study that aimed to identify and characterise family problems depicted in contemporary animated fairy tales. The research was conducted by means of a collective study of individual cases using the technique of document analysis. A detailed analysis of 20 animated fairy tales reveals a family space entangled in a variety of difficulties that result, among other things, from inadequate communication between family members. Parents portrayed in animated works are struggling with professional problems and also make many upbringing mistakes of being over-protective and demanding of their child. The lack of acceptance of the young person, his or her passions and dreams, generates frequent conflict situations in families. Family problems portrayed in fairy tales for the youngest largely reflect the everyday life of modern families. The difficulties are presented in a simplified manner, adapted to the capabilities of young viewers, who, in the course of the plot, have the opportunity to identify with the characters experiencing the same problems.

SŁOWA KLUCZE

rodzina, problemy
rodzinne,
przemiany rodziny,
bajki animowane,
film animowany

ABSTRAKT

Bajki animowane od lat pozwalają przeżywać najmłodszym niezwykłe przygody ze swoimi ulubionymi bohaterami. Kształtują światopogląd, pozwalając dzieciom utożsamiać się z postaciami, które tak jak one doświadczają zarówno radosnych, jak i trudnych wydarzeń. Bajki nie unikają przedstawiania trudności życia codziennego, zwłaszcza pojawiających się w obrębie fundamentalnej grupy społecznej, jaką jest rodzina. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje wyniki badań, których celem było rozpoznanie i scharakteryzowanie problemów rodzinnych obrazowanych we współczesnych bajkach animowanych. Zastosowano metodę zbiorowego studium indywidualnych przypadków przy wykorzystaniu techniki analizy dokumentów. Szczegółowa analiza 20 bajek animowanych ukazuje przestrzeń rodzinną uwikłaną w różnorodne trudności, które wynikają między innymi z nieprawidłowej komunikacji między członkami rodziny. Rodzice obrazowani w bajkach animowanych borykają się z problemami zawodowymi, a także popełniają wiele błędów wychowawczych, polegających na nadmiernym chronieniu dziecka i przesadnych wymaganiach mu stawianych. Brak akceptacji młodego człowieka, jego pasji, marzeń generuje częste występowanie sytuacji konfliktowych w rodzinach. Problemy rodzinne ukazywane w bajkach animowanych dla najmłodszych w znaczącym stopniu odzwierciedlają życiową codzienność współczesnych rodzin. Trudności prezentowane są w sposób uproszczony, dostosowany do możliwości młodych odbiorców, którzy w trakcie toczącej się akcji mają możliwość identyfikacji z bohaterami przeżywającymi podobne problemy.

Introduction

The family is the most important upbringing and socialisation environment in which a young person not only grows up, but also acquires competences necessary for adult life and learns the rules of functioning in the social world. Parents, as the first educators, apply various forms and methods in the upbringing and assistance of their child, as a result of which identity is created while fulfilling specific tasks and playing their individual social roles (cf. Adamski, 2002; Cęcelek, 2005; Bajkowski, 2018).

However, there has been a significant increase in the difficulties faced by the modern family in their everyday life. The variety of problems experienced by this basic social group is related, among other things, to the natural consequences of external factors such as economic and social uncertainty. Families are deviating from once commonly held traditions, ceasing to fulfil their basic functions, and changing the roles they play, as a result of which they often lose authority among the youngest (Szluz, 2017, p. 7; Kulczycki, 2017, p. 11).

The modern world is saturated with the influence of the mass media in its broadest sense, which affect humans from all sides. Parents preoccupied with their own responsibilities, trying to meet the challenges posed by the consumer world, often treat the mass media as an "electronic nanny" (Stawecka, 2017, p. 208). One of the means of upbringing, used within the framework of various educational methods, are fairy tales, enabling, in the case of the younger generation, to explore a world in which heroes are an inspiration or even an authority. Fairy tales, as short, abstract stories, show created characters, as well as objects that are personified and anthropomorphised. They are literary works that introduce the child into a fantastic world while maintaining a reference to the real life. In a subtle way, they convey moral cues that tell the difference between right and wrong. They teach children to dream and imagine unusual, interesting stories, but they also help them to overcome their weaknesses and difficulties, as well as relieve the feeling of loneliness in certain situations experienced by the heroes of their favourite fairy tales (cf. Ługowska, 1988; Handford & Karolak, 2007; Bajorek, 2012; Wasilewska, 2012).

An animated fairy tale, also known as an animated film or film fairy tale, is characterised by a combination of elements taken from the traditional literary fairy tale, as well as a fable, i. e. a genre that introduces magical, supernatural, fantastic elements, imbued with symbolic characters. In an animated fairy tale, anything can happen; thanks to audiovisual effects, no laws of nature, time, space or the physical properties of objects have to be complied with. Together with the protagonist, the viewer experiences extremely colourful and fascinating adventures via the screen. Thanks to this, the educational value of fairy tales can be seen, carrying a positive impact in their message, which, among other things, makes it possible to address difficult topics and interpret difficulties occurring in the child's immediate environment (cf. Dyka, 1999; Marczak, 2012; Sikora, 2013; Kruk, 2015).

The aim of this article is to identify and characterise the family problems that are portrayed in contemporary animated fairy tales. It seems important to analyse the portrayal of family problems in contemporary animated fairy tales, as they condition the way children perceive family problems. Moreover, they enable the youngest children to identify with the animated characters and the difficult situations they experience, the emotions associated with them, and how to deal with them. A detailed analysis of twenty animated fairy tales aimed at the youngest shows that they significantly reflect the problems that modern families face in their everyday lives.

Family Problems in the Literature of the Subject

The transformations in family systems, as well as the accumulating problems related to various crises arising in the world, interpenetrate and combine with one another (Adventure, 2017, p. 7). The current situation in the world and its constant transformations highlighted at every level of life create a new image not only of the individual, but also of the social groups in which he/she functions. The diversity of influences has a positive impact on the individual, as it creates a wide range of opportunities for self-fulfilment, but it also contributes to the growing difficulties resulting from confusion and inability to adapt to the constantly changing contemporary world and the prevailing living conditions (Krawczyk-Blicharska, 2017, p. 173).

The functioning of the family has undergone a major transformation over recent times as a result of changes in the socio-cultural world. As a consequence, the family is also, in a way, obliged to follow the values cultivated in society. Widespread consumerism and the need for professional success in the broadest sense, not only lead to a weakening of family relationships, but also contribute to an overall crisis of the institution of the family. As a result, for the society the interest of the family is no longer so important, as it subjugates the primary social group, seeking, above all, to fulfill public demands that improve its functioning (Dobrołowicz, 2017, pp. 19–20).

These changes are contributing to the creation of a new role for parents in the upbringing process. They used to be an authority who was a role model in terms of standards of behaviour and the transmission of universal values based, among other things, on love. The problem affecting families in this respect is, among other things, the influence of the mass media, which often promote inappropriate content that also affects the quality of family relationships (Frączek, 2010, p. 55). Moreover, the mass media contribute significantly to the reduction of time devoted to each other, as the Internet, offering an alternative, virtual lifestyle, has become a space for the establishment of relationships enabling the exchange of personal experiences. Contemporary families, immersed in an unreal world, facing an excess of responsibilities as well as social pressure to develop their professional qualifications, live in a world that lacks time for what builds family relationships (Garbulińska-Charchut, 2019, p. 23).

The current transformation of family ties due to external and internal factors affects the child in the first place. The low intensity of contact with the parents has an impact on the child's sense of loneliness, as well as the associated experiencing of the difficulties of everyday life. The lack of adequate emotional bonds, inadequate expectations, a deficit of a sense of security, and intra-family quarrels, not only contribute to an increased experience of emptiness, but also send a signal to the youngest that they are unnecessary and do not deserve parental love (Kowalewska et al., 2013, p. 100).

The inability to dialogue and the use of inadequate communication between family members contributes to conflict situations. They lead to disturbances in family relationships, emotional injuries and, as a consequence, even family breakdown. One of the sources of conflict may be parental difficulties in terms of inappropriate attitudes and actions towards children, e. g. lack of acceptance, as well as parenting mistakes: excessive restrictions, demands, protection, as well as freedom (Krok, 2007, p. 119, 122). Disturbed relationships with parents, feelings of rejection and non-acceptance contribute to children displaying an anxious, sometimes hostile attitude, and this, in turn, often influences negative attitudes towards school. Children do not care about achieving good results; they have impaired concentration; they display an indifferent attitude towards school; and they are unable to form appropriate social relationships (Cudak, 2012, p. 35).

The variety of contemporary transformations of the family as a social group determines the emergence of various problems and situations that are difficult for human functioning. They affect all members of the family, especially the youngest, who, living in a world saturated with stimuli coming from every direction, see their reality that does not always guarantee a sense of security and stability.

Research Methodology

The subject of the research, the results of which are presented in this article, was family problems depicted in contemporary animated fairy tales. The main research problem is contained in the question: What is the image of family problems depicted in contemporary animated fairy tales?

The accompanying specific issues included:

1. Are (and what) family problems (are) depicted in contemporary animated movies for children?
2. How are family problems portrayed in contemporary animated fairy tales?
3. What family problems are not depicted in contemporary animated fairy tales?

The aim of the research was to identify and characterise the problems depicted in contemporary animated fairy tales that occur in families. The research was conducted using the method of a collective individual case study (Stake, 2009) and the technique of document analysis (Lobocki, 2006). An original disposition sheet was created to analyse the image of the family in contemporary animated fairy tales. It identified questions through the prism of which the family problems under study were recognised.

Due to the specific nature of the research, the selection of the research sample consisted of a combination of purposive and random sampling, i. e. it was expressed

in the selection of the highest rated productions from the "Animation" category on the portal Filmweb. pl, created in the years 2010–2022, in which the family was presented as the main or secondary theme. While selecting the animated movies, an attempt was made to take into account the various kinds of families. Twenty animated fairy tales were then selected from a selection of fifty-one that received a rating of more than 6. 0 and were mainly produced by Pixar Animation Studio, Walt Disney Pictures, DreamWorks Animation, Onyx Films, Warner Bros Animation, Universal Picture and Netflix Animation.

The animated fairy tales that have been analysed in terms of problems occurring in families are: "Despicable Me", "Brave", "Inside Out", "The Little Prince", "Zootropolis", "Moana", "Storks", "Coco", "The Boss Baby", "Incredibles 2", "Abominable", "Klaus", "Onward", "Over the Moon", "Luca", "Encanto", "Ron's Gone Wrong", "Wish Dragon", "The Mitchells vs. the Machines", "Turning Red".

Research Results

Animated fairy tales examined from the point of view of family problems clearly highlight a range of problems which were analysed from the perspective of three main issues. The first of these concerned the types of family problems depicted in contemporary animated fairy tales, the second covered the way in which they are depicted, while the last referred to the difficulties that creators do not depict in animated fairy tales for the youngest.

The research process used analysis questions related to three categories of problems that were identified in the animated fairy tales studied. The first of these included family problems resulting from difficulties experienced by individual family members, and their occurrence in the animated fairy tales was presented in Table 1. These included the following: illness of family members (5 fairy tales), addiction (9 fairy tales), work problems (12 fairy tales), school problems (6 fairy tales) and problems of family members in relationships with people outside the family (13 fairy tales).

Table 1. Family Problems Resulting From Difficulties Experienced by Individual Family Members

	Illnesses of family members	Addictions of family members	Professional problems	School problems	Problems of family members in relationships with people outside the family
"Despicable Me"		X	X		X
"The Brave"		X			X
"Inside Out"			X	X	
"The Little Prince"		X	X		X
"Zootropolis"			X		
"Moana"	X		X		
"Storks"		X	X		
"Coco"	X	X			X
"The Boss Baby"		X	X		X
"Incredibles 2"		X	X		X
"Abominable"					X
"Klaus"		X	X		X
"Onward"	X			X	
"Over the Moon"	X				X
"Luca"					X
"Encanto"			X		
"Ron's Gone Wrong"	X	X	X	X	X
"Wish Dragon"			X	X	
"The Mitchells vs. the Machines"				X	X
"Turning Red"				X	X

Source: the author's own study.

Contemporary animated fairy tales primarily highlight the parents' occupational difficulties, which result in the occurrence of other problems within the family. The preoccupation with employment is marked by attributes of addiction, as a result of which children begin to face their own childhood difficulties without parental support. As far as the problems of the young protagonists are concerned, one can distinguish, first and foremost, the problems at school, as well as in relationships with peers. In addition, in some of the events of the ongoing plot, it is possible to notice a superficially presented illness or death of a family member, which the young protagonist tries to cope with in various ways.

Another issue concerned internal family problems, which were considered from the perspective of issues such as material problems (1 fairy tale), conflicts between family members (18 fairy tales), violence in the family (12 fairy tales), lack of time to interact and spend time together (12 fairy tales). The occurrence of problems in individual animated fairy tales is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Internal Family Problems

	Financial problems	Conflicts between family members	Domestic violence	Lack of time to interact and spend time together
"Despicable Me"		X	X	X
"The Brave"		X	X	X
"Inside Out"		X		X
"The Little Prince"		X	X	X
"Zootropolis"				
"Moana"		X	X	
"Storks"			X	X
"Coco"		X	X	
"The Boss Baby"		X	X	X
"Incredibles 2"		X		X
"Abominable"		X		X
"Klaus"		X	X	X

	Financial problems	Conflicts between family members	Domestic violence	Lack of time to interact and spend time together
"Onward"		X		
"Over the Moon"		X		
"Luca"		X	X	
"Encanto"		X	X	
"Ron's Gone Wrong"		X		X
"Wish Dragon"	X	X		X
"The Mitchells vs. the Machines"		X	X	X
"Turning Red"		X	X	

Source: the author's own work.

The above issues are presented in different ways in animated fairy tales, although many of them are similar in nature to problems found in real families. The family problems depicted in contemporary animated fairy tales mainly concern conflicts between the child and parent(s), and the lack of time for interaction. In many cases, this flows directly from the professional responsibilities of parents who forget about their own child and his/her hierarchy of needs. There is also psychological and verbal abuse, as well as elements of emotional neglect. A detailed discussion of the problems occurring in this category will be presented later in this article.

The last type of problems that have been analysed in contemporary animated fairy tales are problems with upbringing. The category of these problems is extensive and appears most frequently in contemporary animated movies for children. It includes five main problems.

The first one includes inappropriate attitudes of parents towards their children (18 movies), which most often take the form of disapproval, excessive demands and trying to overprotect the child. The next one includes parenting errors (20 movies) in which parents most often restrict the child, using an inappropriate parenting style and often ignoring the child's real needs and difficulties. The third one includes the instrumental treatment of the child (9 movies), which is a way of satisfying the needs of family members (mainly the parents). The penultimate problems is related to parents being

inappropriate role models (12 fairy tales) due to their promoting e. g. inappropriate values. The last problem, not present in the animated fairy tales, was dysfunctional child behaviour and parents' lack of competence in responding to it. The occurrence of problems in individual animated fairy tales is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Upbringing Problems

	Inappropriate attitudes of parents towards their children	Parenting errors	Instrumental treatment of the child	Parents – inappropriate role models	Dysfunctional child behaviour
"Despicable Me"	X	X	X	X	
"The Brave"	X	X	X	X	
"Inside Out"		X			
"The Little Prince"	X	X	X	X	
"Zootropolis"	X	X	X		
"Moana"	X	X	X	X	
"Storks"	X	X		X	
"Coco"	X	X	X	X	
"The Boss Baby"		X		X	
"Incredibles 2"	X	X			
"Abominable"	X	X			
"Klaus"	X	X	X	X	
"Onward"	X	X			
"Over the Moon"	X	X			
"Luca"	X	X	X	X	
"Encanto"	X	X		X	
"Ron's Gone Wrong"	X	X			
"Wish Dragon"	X	X			

	Inappropriate attitudes of parents towards their children	Parenting errors	Instrumental treatment of the child	Parents – inappropriate role models	Dysfunctional child behaviour
"The Mitchells vs. the Machines"	X	X		X	
"Turning Red"	X	X	X	X	

Source: the author's own work.

The next research question concerned how family problems are portrayed in contemporary animated fairy tales. It is worth starting from the fact that an animated fairy tale, with its colourful, often exaggerated imagery, shows, in a short period of time, a variety of plots that both entertain and move not only the youngest viewers. In them, viewers can find a world full of fantastic characters experiencing amazing adventures interwoven with threads of everyday, real life, in which everyone can find themselves. There are many happy and uplifting moments in animated fairy tales, as well as those marked by the difficulties and suffering of individual characters. Most importantly, it is the family problems that start the scenario of an animated fairy tale and around which the whole plot is built.

We meet a young protagonist who, confronted with a specific problem, usually originating from his family, tries to solve it himself/herself using their internal resources. In the 20 animated fairy tales analysed, two main patterns of action can be noticed which the children's animated characters follow. Regardless of the main problem that appears at the beginning of the story, the young person attempts to repair the family, i. e. to reunite it. Such a situation can be seen at the very beginning of 9 of the 20 movies analysed. In 11 of the remaining ones, the child uses a slightly different strategy: he/she tries to cut themselves off from their family, often escaping into hobbies, responsibilities, loneliness, peer relationships; and then, as a result of experiencing an incredible adventure, he/she begins to see the value of his/her imperfect family. It is noteworthy that, whatever the strategy, the juvenile protagonist feels an obligation to be, as it were, the "glue" which will put together an unhappy, often malfunctioning family that faces various problems.

In each of the 20 movies analysed, elements of everyone's everyday life can be found. The problem that dominates them is the parents' occupational difficulties. The authors of the fairy tales start from them to show the parents' behaviour, which, as the plot unfolds, begins to take the form of work addiction. Despite the absence

of obvious financial difficulties, the parents spend a great deal of time working, and during their leisure time (possibly intended for the child) they are on the phone, for example, dealing with additional work-related matters. Family life is subordinated to the parents' work, which visibly affects the child and gives him or her the feeling that he or she is not important enough to be able to spend more time with the parents.

The preoccupation with work determines further complications, as it often prevents the parents from seeing the real difficulties of their own children, who, moved to the background, are emotionally and socially neglected and feel a growing emptiness manifesting itself in various ways. With little or no parental contact, the young protagonists are unable to cope with the problems concerning their relationships, school and strong emotions that accompany such situation.

Animated fairy tales show quite superficially how the emotions of the young characters and their parents are dealt with. They are not portrayed correctly and there is a lack of conversation about what is difficult and painful. This is also confirmed by the children's lonely experience of deep, embittered and incomprehensible bereavement or the illness of a family member. The filmmakers treat such traumatic events in a very cursory manner, failing to analyse the problem, and they show this element in two ways in only five of the animated movies analysed in this research.

The first way concerns a reminiscence in which the young protagonist recalls with longing and despondency an already deceased loved one from the time of her illness. The second way involves the very rapid, gentle passing away of an ailing character, who was only shown sporadically during the course of the ongoing plot, in the better moments of the illness. By reliving painful events and memories, the youngest characters cope with them using the methods that are not revealed. Hence, they often try to move into a world of their own fantasy or imagination in order to deal with strong emotions themselves.

The young characters portrayed by the creators of fairy tales experience a wide variety of concerns in which they cannot always count on the help of their family members. They constantly try to prove their worth in the eyes of their parents by various childish means, in order to earn their love and unconditional acceptance. However, understanding that such action does not bring the desired results, they often choose to emotionally cut off from family members and, in the most difficult cases, to run away from home. Moreover, the parents are often not quick to notice such a crisis situation because they have no time for their own child with whom their relationship is superficial and based on an unwillingness to understand. This, in turn, creates the space for increasingly frequent conflict situations between them.

The misunderstandings depicted throughout the fairy tale occur particularly frequently and are usually oppressive to the juvenile protagonist, who, while trying to discover himself/herself, their path in life, and shape their own identity, encounters

a negative reaction: the disapproval of their parents. In attempting to influence their child, they often pursue their own ambitious plans for his/her life. Overprotecting children and demanding too much of them results in restricting their self-expression and making it impossible for them to develop their true passions. Instead of discovering themselves, the children conform to their parents' rules and plans. The parents are often unable to accept their child's desires and dreams, and they protect them in a very restrictive and overwhelming way, making many demands on them to grow up faster and give up exploring the world on their own. They interpret every objection and attempt by a young animated character to become themselves as an attack, while the child characters feel that they do not deserve to be recognised, noticed, accepted or loved.

Parents often ignore the needs and difficulties of their own children and can inhibit their natural curiosity and spontaneity in life. In many animated fairy tales, the young protagonist is treated in an instrumental way, being only a way to satisfy the needs and desires of their parents or other family members. By failing to communicate properly with their children, parents are an inappropriate role model: they require an unthinking imitation of themselves, using manipulation and strict rules, or inducing feelings of guilt in their young protagonists.

In animated fairy tales, the use of physical violence by the parents is not shown, but verbal and psychological violence is used to force children to meet the parents' demands. This most often takes the form of violating the personal dignity of the young person. The parents impose their own opinions, criticise, control and – forcing children to obedience – try to subjugate them. The young protagonists are sometimes humiliated and ashamed, and the parents, in an attempt to 'protect' the child from the outside world, are unaware of the harm being done to the child, as a result of which the children lose confidence in themselves and their abilities. This also highlights the growing problem of emotional neglect, where children's needs are not properly recognised and met.

The characteristics of the family problems described in the animated fairy tales, despite their vastness and complexity, are in most cases only the background. Only in a few animated fairy tales is their very existence the main plot of the story. The family problems depicted in certain parts and scattered over the course of the entire fairy tale, provide the viewer with the opportunity to try and piece together the individual elements themselves. The problems faced by the main character and his family are transformed into a holistic picture, which, despite the realistic elements, is usually presented in a simplified manner and adapted to the age of the potential audience. When young people watch cartoons, they are most likely to notice family difficulties the cause of which is an inappropriate parental attitude that creates a sense of loneliness and inability to cope with demands in the children's animated characters.

Unaware parents burdening minors with their problems fail to notice their emotions and difficulties, as a result of which the children try to repair the whole family system on their own.

In addition to the strategies that children use, adults in almost all animated fairy tales are also noteworthy for not initially noticing both the problems and their impact on the breakdown of the family. Only when confronted with specific actions by the youngest do they begin to notice when and what mistakes they have made, which allows them to address the problem while reconciling with their own child.

The final focus of the analysis was on family problems which are not depicted by the authors of contemporary animated fairy tales. Despite the variety of difficulties of family life depicted in animated fairy tales for the youngest, viewers will not notice a few of such problems. Based on the analysis of the above 20 fairy tales, it is possible to identify the lack of four important problems of family life in animated movies.

The viewer of such fairy tales will not notice families' financial problems resulting in the lack of money for basic human needs. Only in one animated fairy tale, "The Wish Dragon", can viewers see elements indicating more difficult material conditions of a single-parent family consisting of a mother and son living in one room and using a curtain to separate their personal space. Their conversations are at times characterised by sadness, anger at the heavy workload and the impossibility of securing a better life. Despite such modest living conditions, no direct references to a lack of financial resources can be found. On this basis, it can be deduced that most of the families depicted in the animated cartoons are at least in the middle class.

The animated cartoons also show behaviours indicative of the growing phenomenon of workaholism among parents. Work addiction highlights the complex issue of parents' entanglement in work responsibilities that disorganise family functioning. Despite this, animated fairy tales do not feature other more popular behavioural addictions such as alcoholism, smoking or drug addiction. Animated fairy tales do not touch on these characteristic destructive difficulties of family members in their messages.

Recalling previous findings from the analysis concerning animated fairy tales, behaviours falling into the category of psychological and verbal violence are evident in them. On the basis of the Report of the Children's Ombudsman (Jarosz & Nowak, 2012), which describes the identified forms of violence, it can be pointed out that there is no physical violence involving direct violation of the physical body of family members in animated movies. Nor will the viewer see most varieties of neglect and negligent treatment of the child in the physical, medical, abandonment, educational, and upbringing spheres. In animated fairy tales – as indicated above – only emotional neglect is visible in terms of necessary support in difficult situations, as well as lack of interest in the child's needs.

The final problem that does not appear in contemporary animated fairy tales is the child's dysfunctional behaviour towards other people or family members[1]. Children do not show dysfunctional behaviour, such as physical attacking (hitting, tugging, etc.) or emotional attacking (shouting, anger, etc.). Children's emotions, which can be considered more difficult to tame for themselves, are most often portrayed in animated cartoons as an inability to cope with parental expectations and perfectionism. The young protagonists, who do not have the full range of coping skills and lack the support of family members, somehow manage their emotions. Hence, they often isolate themselves from their parents, siblings and relatives; they try to individually suppress their emotions; they escape into their own imagination or passion; and they find support in some other people.

Conclusions

In answering the main question formulated regarding the depiction of family problems presented in contemporary animated fairy tales, it can be said that such problems are presented in a very diverse way. However, they significantly explain the difficulties that everyone – both younger and older viewers – can experience in their daily lives. The fairy tales focus on showing the impact of the difficulties experienced by individual members, which affect the whole family, creating a variety of problem situations that they have to deal with individually or as a social group.

The reflection of specific family problems through animated fairy tales, despite the wide range of all the incorrect elements, is most often only a background for the action taking place. Animated fairy tales present problems in a way that is relatively tailored to the needs and abilities of young people. It is important to note that problematic situations among family members are mainly determined by the parents' occupational difficulties. As a result of their depiction, a wide range of family dysfunctions are highlighted. These mostly revolve around a lack of communication skills and spending little time together, which contributes to the frequent occurrence of conflict situations.

The creators of animated fairy tales introduce the audience to family problems by showing the dysfunction of adult family members, while, at the same time, portraying a young protagonist who acts as the glue that tries to repair the dysfunctional family. The parent's insufficient upbringing skills trigger in the young characters the courage to use strategies to deal with situations that are often beyond their childlike abilities.

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1   In the process of analysing the above problem, the article *Emotional Behavioural Dysfunctions in Children from Full and Divorced Families* was used (Cudak, 2013).

Animated fairy tales aimed at the youngest viewers deal with difficult themes that can be seen reflected in their real life. The family problems depicted in animated movies take on a real form, although they are only the backdrop to the colourful, carefree adventures of the protagonist. They are, however, a suitable platform for tackling difficult topics, which the child observes not only on screen, but in their own everyday family life. By reflecting identical problems, the children are able to identify with the characters of their favourite animations, which gives them the feeling that their difficulties and emotions are shared by others. This, in turn, influences their acceptance, as well as shapes their ability to implement the coping methods they have recognised. The depiction of problems also provides an opportunity for adults to reflect on their own way of functioning in family relationships, and to look at ways of supporting the youngest in their childlike perception of the family reality.

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