

## The Values in Literary Children's Books at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Level\*

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### Abstract

Families, educational institutions and any kind of educational materials share important duties in raising individuals who adopt and practice national and universal values. One of these educational materials undoubtedly are children's books which have literary quality. The topics, characters and messages in children's book are of critical importance with regard to raising individuals who adopt the values reflected in the goals of the Turkish National Education system. In this sense, the aim of this study is to describe the personal and social values dealt with in primary 2<sup>nd</sup> grade children's books. The study made use of the document analysis method which is one of the qualitative research models. The study population included literary children's books of primary school 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reading level. The study sample consisted of totally 155 children's books which were being sold in bookstores in the city center where the study was conducted. All of the books were in Turkish while some of them were by Turkish writers and were written by foreign authors and translated into Turkish. These books were selected randomly. A "Values Check List" was developed by the researcher and used as the data collection instrument of the study. The study results show that 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students mostly liked the children's books which included the personal values such as "love, goodness, courage, responsibility, respect, animal love and diligence," and social values such as "friendship, helpfulness, the unity of family, cooperation and fellowship." The least or never included personal values in the children's books were "fairness, fidelity, humbleness, prudence, religiousness and cleanliness while the least mentioned social values were "peace and patriotism."

**Keywords:** Value, values education, children's books, primary school

### 1. Introduction

Children's literature is composed of "children" and "literature" variables, but it is a completely different artistic structure (Gülyüz, 2003). Children's literature covers all the oral and written pieces which meet the needs of 2-14 year-old children and which are prepared in accordance with the imagination, emotion and thoughts of the children in this age group (Tür and Turla, 1999). Children's literature can be defined as "literature which is designed to contribute to improving children's growth and development, imagination, emotion, thought, sensitivity, joy and having fun while learning," (Şirin, 2007).

Temizyürek (2003, p. 161) describes children's literature and its written and oral pieces "...as appealing to a fantasy world of children, possessing superior quality, aesthetic dimension and rich vocabulary, contributing to improving mother tongue and psycho-social development, reflecting national and universal values." To Sever (2007), children's literature is a life phase which starts with childhood and covers adolescence, which enriches this span with emotions and thoughts through lingual and visual stimuli in parallel with children's language development and comprehension levels, and it is the general definition of the pieces which possess the mentioned characteristics. Children's books portray various characters through the power of drawings and language. Characters and fictions based on interrelations among them, provide children with unique experiences related to recognizing humanity, nature and life. In this sense, the essential goal of children's literature is to ensure the existence of the curious and intellectual literates who are able to think, question, associate, search and criticize (Kutlu, 2011).

Value means "...all material and nonmaterial social, cultural, economic and scientific values of a nation," (Turkish Language Association, TLA, 2017). Values are common thoughts about what is right and wrong, and they influence people's behaviors (Carr & Skinner 2009; Halstead & Taylor 2000; Kornblum 1994; Özgüven, 1994).

Values are acknowledged as right and necessary by the majority of a social group or society so as to establish and maintain its existence, unity and functioning, and they can be defined as generalized basic moral principals or beliefs reflecting the common feelings, thoughts, goals and benefits (Kızılçelik & Erjem, 1994). Theodorson & Theodorson (1979, p. 455) defined value as "abstract and generalized behavior principals which provide a basic standard in assessing and judging the significance of social notions, subjective actions and goals, and which are founded through strong emotional bonds among the members of a group." Value can also be defined as "all beliefs related to events, goals and situations in a society," (Gari, Mylonas, Karagianni, 2005). Psychologists appraise value as "belief" (Güngör, 1993, p.18).

According to which values children should be raised is a crucial issue that is to be considered by both families, schools and other social institutions (Dilmaç, 2002, p.3). The goal of the education system is to raise

individuals who adapt to any improvements and changes observed during the globalization, and “who respect national values and do not have any difficulty in adopting these values” (Kan, 2009, p. 896).

Values are of vital importance in that they guide agents’ behaviors and bring meaning to their lives. They ensure harmony and unity among the members of a society. That members of a society internalize the social values and establish positive relationships is quite important for the future of that society. One of the basic conditions of realizing the aims of the Turkish National Education system is to raise such individuals who can adopt Turkish values. Thus, both families and educational institutions undertake substantial tasks to raise such individuals (Akyol, 2012).

One of the basic conditions of realizing the aims of Turkish National Education system is to raise individuals who adopt Turkish values. Families, educational institutions and materials share substantial tasks to raise these individuals. One of these educational materials is children’s books. The topics, characters and messages in them are of important and critical significance in this sense.

Quite a number of studies have been conducted about education and values, especially concerning the necessity and importance of delivering values training at primary grade (Albayrak, 2015; Akyol, 2012; Dilmaç, 2007; Ekiz & Akyıldız, 2011; Fidan 2013; Gömleksiz & Cüro, 2011); Gündoğdu & Bay, 2011; Katılmış 2010; Uygun, 2013; Uysal, 2008; Yeşilyurt & Kurt, 2012). However, the number of studies examining the contents of these books in terms of the values in them which can be used in the values trainings, can expand children’s experiences and enrich their personal, social, cultural and aesthetic worlds through rich stimulus and can provide them with role model experiences is quite limited. Upon recognizing the necessity in the field, the aim of the study is to describe the personal and social values dealt within the primary grade 2<sup>nd</sup> grade children’s books.

Within this general aim, the answers to the following sub goals were sought:

- Which personal values do 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level children’s books include?
- Which social values do 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level children’s books include?

## 2. Method

The study made use of document analysis technique which is one of the qualitative research methods. One of the essential information sources in qualitative researches is documents (Crewell, 2012, p.223). The document analysis stands for the analysis of the written materials containing information about the target notion/s (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008, p. 187). In this study, the contents of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade children’s books were examined in order to detect the personal and social values within them.

### 2.1. Population and Sample

The study population covers 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level children’s books. The sample was consisted of 155 randomly chosen 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level children’s books which were written by Turkish and foreign authors and which were being sold in different bookstores in the city center where the study was conducted. The books were generally written in 18-22 type size and about 32 pages, and 30% of the papers were designed with colorful illustrations while 70% was in written form.

### 2.2. Data Collection Instruments

The study data was collected through document analysis. Involving the analysis of written materials of target notions, the document analysis technique can “...not only be used as the only data collection instrument in a qualitative research, but can also be combined with other qualitative data collection tools,” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p.187). The study data was collected with the “Value Identification Form” which was developed by the researcher, and it aimed to identify the personal and social values in the examined children’s books.

The personal values were limited to “*affection, goodness, courage, responsibility, respect, animal love, diligence, self sacrifice, indulgence, mercy, honesty, truthfulness, cooperation, reliance, humbleness, heroism, kindness, hospitality, loyalty, generosity, fairness, fidelity, modesty, frugality, religiousness and cleanliness.*” And social values were limited to “*friendship, helpfulness, unity of family, sharing, cooperation, fellowship, obeying the rules, freedom, being scientific, nature love, peace and patriotism.*”

The values were categorized in two groups, *personal* and *social*, based on experts’ opinions. With this aim, 5 different classroom teachers and 3 lecturers at Turkish Education, Primary School Teaching Department were asked about their opinions regarding the classifications of the values. Then, the common decisions were applied to the study, the values were categorized accordingly.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The study data was analyzed with content analysis. The content analysis method can be defined as a systematic and repetitive technique in which a context’s words can be summarized with smaller content categories based on specific encodings (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2008, p.263).

### 3. Findings

Table 1: The Range of Children's books Based on Publishers

Publishers	n	%
Alfabe	45	29,03
Aydede	20	12,9
5 Renk	20	12,9
Pofuduk	20	12,9
Berkay	10	6,46
Duru	10	6,46
Limon	10	6,46
Özyürek	10	6,46
Erdem	6	3,87
Sev	4	2,59
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100,00</b>

As shown in Table 1, 29,03 % of the examined children's books belong to Alfabe Publishing; 12,9 % to Aydede, 5 Renk and Pofuduk Publishing; 6,46 % to Berkay, Duru, Limon and Özyürek Publishing; 3,87% Erdem Publishing and 2,59% to Sev Publishing.

Table 2. The Distributions of the Values in the Primary Grade 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Children's Books

Values	F	%
Personal Values	656	61,31
Social Values	414	38,69
<b>Total</b>	<b>1070</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen in Table 2, there were totally 1,070 values in the examined 155 books. Among them, 61.31% was personal value while 38.9% was social value.

Table 3. The Distributions of the Personal Values in the Children's Books

Order No	Personal Values	F	%
1	Affection	86	13,11
2	Goodness	54	8,23
3	Courage	42	6,40
4	Responsibility	42	6,40
5	Respect	42	6,40
6	Animal Love	42	6,40
7	Diligence	42	6,40
8	Self sacrifice	36	5,49
9	Indulgence	35	5,34
10	Mercy	29	4,42
11	Honesty	26	3,96
12	Truthfulness	24	3,66
13	Cooperation	21	3,20
14	Reliance	19	2,90
15	Humbleness	19	2,90
16	Heroism	16	2,44
17	Kindness	14	2,13
18	Hospitality	13	1,98
19	Loyalty	12	1,83
20	Generosity	11	1,68
21	Fairness	9	1,37
22	Fidelity	9	1,37
23	Modestness	7	1,07
24	Frugality	4	0,61
25	Religiousness	2	0,30
26	Cleanliness	0	0,0
<b>Total</b>		<b>656</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Reviewing the findings in Table 3 related to the personal values in the examined books, we can see that the most frequent value was love (86 times). And goodness (54 times), courage, responsibility, respect, animal love and diligence (42 times), sacrifice (36 times), indulgence (35 times), mercy (29 times) values followed it, respectively. The least common values were found to be religiousness (2 times) and prudence (4 times). Also, cleanness values was found to be never dealt with in the examined books.

Table 4. The Distributions of the Social Values in the Children's Books

Order No	Social Values	f	%
1	Friendship	61	14,73
3	Helpfulness	55	13,29
5	Unity of Family	53	12,80
6	Sharing	51	12,32
2	Collaborate	49	11,85
4	Fellowship	41	9,90
7	Obeying the Rules	32	7,73
9	Freedom	23	5,55
8	Being Scientific	18	4,35
10	Nature Love	16	3,86
11	Peace	11	2,66
12	Patriotism	4	0,97
<b>Total</b>		<b>414</b>	<b>100,0</b>

The finding related to the examined 155 books and the social values in them are presented in Table 4. Hence, it can be concluded that 14.73% of them were about friendship; 13.29% was about helpfulness, 12.80% was about the unity of family and 11.85% was about sharing values. In this category, the least dealt with values were found to be patriotism (0.97%) and peace (2.66%).

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

Within the scope of the study, 155 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level children's books were examined in terms of the social and personal values in them. The study results are presented below:

The most common values in the examined books were "love, goodness, courage, responsibility, respect, animal love and diligence." On the other side, the least common values in the books were "fairness, fidelity, humbleness, prudence and religiousness" and it was pointed out that "cleanness" values was never been dealt in these books.

Additionally, the most common social values were "friendship, helpfulness, the unity of family, cooperation and fellowship." The least dealt with values in this category were "peace and patriotism".

In the literature, there are several studies indicating that the values of "love", "diligence" and "animal love" were the most dealt topics in both course books and in the books with literary quality (Aktan & Padem, 2013; Aral, 2008; Ekinci Çelikpazu & Aktaş, 2011; Erdal, 2009; Padem & Aktan, 2014; Şen, 2008). Again, in a study by Aktan and Padem (2013), "cleanness" value was emphasized to be dealt least in the books, which is a parallel finding with the current study.

Şen (2008) stated that one of the least dealt with values in Turkish course books was "peace". However, Aktan, Padem (2013) pointed out that "peace" was among the most common values in the books. In parallel with Aral' findings (2008), "cleanness" value was never included into the Turkish course books. Similarly, a number of studies showed that "patriotism" value was rarely included in the course books (Aktan & Padem 2013; Court & Rosental, 2007; Padem & Aktan, 2014; Tosunoğlu & Kayadibi, 2006; Zhang & Morrison, 2010).

In the light of the study findings, the following implications can be made:

- The distribution of the values checked in the books was found not to be homogenous. However, children should be provided with various environments and experiences through pieces about different topics. Thus, that several values are dealt with many times while some others are not mentioned in children's books is a matter that must not be neglected.
- Although the books were said to be designed for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students, the visual contents of the books were not adequate, and only 30% of the papers were separated by visual materials or illustrations. The fact that visual materials facilitate the understanding at this level, can be taken into consideration, and the visual contents of the books can be enriched.
- A more comprehensive studies can be conducted so that all the participants of the educational process are included so as to determine which values can be taught to children at which class level.

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#### Notes

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