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## Reflection of Down Syndrome Children on Cartoons: Cases of 'My Brother Ozi' and 'Punky'

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**Abstract:** In several shows prepared for children and adults in the media, the representation of "individuals with special needs" can ensure that other members of the society empathize with disability and the characteristics of disabled people, and make it easier that prejudices are replaced by social acceptance through gaining information. Finding a place frequently used in children's literature, children's reality satisfies the curiosity and experience-gaining demands of children about the cases they encounter for the first time using various examples, and helps them internalize the information and experience they gain. Children's shows and cartoons have an effective power in influencing the viewpoint of children as target group for disabled people within the framework of "children's reality" by means of the representation of children with special needs who are socially disadvantaged. In this context, the purpose of this study is to evaluate and examine in terms of various factors the social representation style of main characters with Down Syndrome represented in "My Brother Ozi" and "Punky" cartoons broadcasted on local children television channels and internet sites where cartoons for children can be found. 51 episodes of both cartoons (26 and 25) were viewed in the framework of the study and findings were analyzed using "document analysis" method which is a qualitative research method.

**Keywords:** Down Syndrome, children's reality, perception, social representation, cartoon.

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### Introduction

The social acceptance of individuals with special needs and their participation in educational environments has undergone significant changes over the years. The most striking effects of these changes have been observed in educational environments. Students with special needs have been provided inclusive education environments designed on the basis of equal opportunities together with their peers instead of separate schools over the years (Amor et al., 2019; Fedulova et al., 2019; Kozleski, 2020). These students are categorized into different groups according to their level of being affected by disabilities. Children with Down syndrome, who are seen to be willing to interact with their peers, with similar facial types and their tendency to socialize, represent one of these groups with special needs (Chapman & Hesketh, 2000; Haase, 2020).

Down syndrome, which is characterized by dysmorphic facial features and distinct special phenotype, was first identified medically by J. Langdon Down in 1866. Thanks to the developing medical and technological possibilities, it is seen that Down Syndrome, which can be detected from the prenatal period and whose prevalence can increase in parallel with the maternal age, is encountered at a rate of 1/700 today (Alp, 2007; Shaw et al., 2021; Yaman & Şahin, 2018). This chromosome anomaly, which is caused by trisomy in the 21st chromosome and accompanied by various similar deficiencies such as mental and cognitive retardation, language development disorders, and cardiac problems (Acarlar, 2006; Alp et al., 2007; Chapman & Hesketh, 2000; Çengelci, 2009; Gören, 2015; Haase, 2020; Kurada et al., 2017), is the most common genetically based syndrome.

The representation of individuals with special needs through mass media is a very effective power factor in the familiarization of society with these individuals and the transformation of the social perception towards disabled people. Broadcasts that affect the opinions and attitudes of target audiences include cartoons, children's movies and shows, and media studies fictionalized with television programs and films for adults. The way individuals with special

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needs are represented in the media through television shapes the social perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of the audience about disability in different ways. For this reason, the social identity of the character with special needs to be reflected to the audience through the media should emphasize the remarkable strengths of the character instead of his/her inadequacies. In addition, it should be in a form that encourages the idea that existing differences will not prevent social and communal integration (Bradley, 2013; Katkić & Salaj, 2010; Saltes, 2010; Zielińska-Król & Gorbaniuk, 2016). In this way, it will be easier for other individuals to understand the world of people with special needs in an empathetic way and to overcome possible prejudices about them.

Various attitudes that are developed through social values, life experiences and cultural transfers affect the perspective of adults on facts. Unlike adults, perspective and attitudes of children towards situations they encounter for the first time about which they have no experience are shaped by the "children's reality" that they develop without prejudice, with a sense of curiosity and understanding. In this respect, most researchers agree that television programs and cartoons appealing to children shape children's reality (Büyükbaykal, 2007; Dilidüzgün, 2018; Fırat, 2019; Guru & Raslana, 2013; Pehlivan, 2019; Yetim & Sarıçam, 2016). According to Saunders (2004), in order to prevent negative attitudes towards disability in the process of integrating students with special needs into the education system in the preschool period and to develop mutual love and understanding between children, teachers should benefit from children's media and literature in addition to cooperation with experts.

From this point of view, it would not be a mistake to think that the representation of characters belonging to disadvantaged groups in children's shows and cartoons can be an active factor in shaping the way children view and perceive disabled people in an unprejudiced manner. Normally developing individuals can develop positive attitudes and behaviors towards individuals with special needs with the help of books representing people with special needs (Maich & Belcher, 2012 as cited in Kaymaz, 2017, p. 2). In addition, according to Prater and Dyches, these books help individuals who show normal development in understanding the emotions of their peers who seem different at first glance (Prater & Dyches, as cited in Kaymaz, 2017). In his master's thesis titled "Representation of the Disabled in Turkish Children's Literature" (1969-2009), the author expressed the following with a similar statement: "The disabled are most hurt in their circle of friends, and they are generally supported by the family and school circles. The difficulty of reaching the inner world of the disabled person in the examined works and the fact that only three works had self-narrator reveals how the disabled person is positioned as an outsider."

Children develop transformations of emotions, perceptions and attitudes about their disabled peers, especially by means of scenarios about characters with special needs reflected in children's books, shows and cartoons. Yılmaz and Erem (2018) state that young children are more likely to adopt and accept the information they obtain through television shows without question. Based on this idea, it is seen that it is important to use the power of children's literature and children's shows correctly in order to increase their effect on creating positive attitudes and perceptions in terms of representation of disability.

### Method

This study deals with the reflection styles, character features, and peculiarities as regards the language and social developments of main characters with Down Syndrome who are represented in the cartoons "My Brother Ozi" and "Punky" which are broadcasted on local children's television channels and internet sites where children's cartoons can be found, and provides a comparative examination on the basis of the places where main characters live, their family structures and intra-family relations, attitudes of their parents, their school environments, and relations. The study employed "document analysis" method which is a qualitative research method. In the document analysis method, the analysis of the materials containing information about the phenomenon or facts to be investigated is performed. In this method, the researcher can obtain the required data by analyzing documents without the need for observation or interviews (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

#### *Collection and Analysis of Data*

General theoretical framework of the study was formed after literature review, and the cartoons were determined which were chosen as subject of the research. In accordance with the method used in the selection of cartoons, all cartoons broadcasted in Turkish were searched from both children's channels and Turkish cartoon websites ([www.trtcocuk.net.tr](http://www.trtcocuk.net.tr), [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), [www.cizgifilmizlet.com](http://www.cizgifilmizlet.com)), and those with a main character from the same special needs group were identified. Among these cartoons, the ones titled "My Brother Ozi" and "Punky", whose main characters are 5 years old and have Down syndrome, were selected for use in the study.

In this context, "Punky" was chosen, whose main character is a 5-year-old girl with Down Syndrome, is of Irish origin and is dubbed in Turkish, and consists of episodes that last 7 minutes each. In the research, a total of 26 episodes of Punky, which is a two-season cartoon, were examined in terms of determined goals. Another cartoon included in this research, "My Brother Ozi", is a Turkish-made cartoon whose main character is a 5-year-old boy with Down syndrome. Each episode of my brother Ozi takes approximately 11 minutes. Twenty-five episodes of the two-season cartoon were analyzed in terms of the determined goals.

Analysis of qualitative data in the study was conducted through content analysis which is a method that enables the gathering of similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes, and helps to interpret them in an understandable way. Qualitative research data are analyzed in four stages (coding data, finding themes, organizing codes and themes, and defining findings) (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

In the study, 51 episodes (26 and 25) of both cartoons in total were watched, then the behavior/case samples in the watched episodes were displayed and coded, and finally, based on these codes, the representation of characters with Down Syndrome (with special needs) were evaluated first within themselves and then in a comparative manner.

For the reliability of the study, the data were coded separately by two special education field experts independently. Then, the reliability between coders was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (2015) reliability formula "reliability = consensus / consensus + disagreement" and the reliability percentage of the study was determined as 94 percent.

### Findings

Character features, reflections on language and social development features, locations of the main characters, family structure and intra-family relationships, attitudes of parents, school environment and features of the characters, which are reflected in 51 episodes of both cartoons watched, are presented in two columns in the following tables, and in this way, it was aimed to clearly see the similarities and differences in both cartoons. Analyzes of the cartoons conducted in terms of target categories are expressed separately in the tables and thus it is aimed to provide an objective presentation.

*Table 1. Personality features and description of the main characters*

<b>My Brother Ozi</b>	<b>Punky</b>
He has an interrogative, willing to learn, and talkative structure. He often dreams. His speech is semi-understandable in the episodes of the first season and does not follow grammar rules. However, in the second season, his speech becomes more understandable. His speaking voice is a little muffled than usual.	She is energetic, talkative, helpful, and curious, loves dancing and has an independent nature. She hugs and cuddles when she makes a mistake or hurts the other person. She apologizes when she is wrong. Her speech is normal and understandable.

As can be understood from Table 1, it is seen that the main character representations with Down Syndrome presented in both cartoons are not different from the social development characteristics of individuals with Down Syndrome specified in the literature, and the characters are reflected as loving, curious and cheerful persons. Despite the calm and positive character of Ozi, Punky differed from Ozi with her empathic and creative character. It is observed that the biggest similarity between Ozi's and Punky's representations is that both characters are talkative, social and eager. On the other hand, it is observed that Ozi danced throughout the series, showed empathy and benevolence, but could not decide independently on the action to be taken, and small mistakes he committed were tolerated by his family, while Punky was represented as a character who could perform actions more independently.

*Table 2. Language and social development characteristics of the main characters*

<b>My Brother Ozi</b>	<b>Punky</b>
Ozi is portrayed as a cheerful, calm, curious and positive child.	Punky is portrayed as a cheerful, mature, empathetic, curious and creative child.

When Table 2 is examined, it is observed that the Ozi character is willing to learn, questioning and talkative, and likes to dream. On the other hand, the Punky character is depicted as a talkative character. Apart from that, Punky represents a character that is energetic, helpful, and curious, who loves to dance, apologizes for mistakes and tries to make amends.

It was observed that the voice of the character of Ozi was muffled and his speed of speech was slow. In the first season he spoke in a semi-understandable way with inverted sentences that did not conform to the grammatical structure of Turkish, but this situation improved in the second season. On the other hand, it was seen that the speech of the Punky character was fluent and understandable, and her speech speed was normal.

Table 3. Description of social life of the main characters

<b>My Brother Ozi</b>	<b>Punky</b>
He does not have much of a social life. He usually spends his time at home with his family. He spends time with his sister most often. School is added to his social life routines when he attends school in the second season. There are no other people visiting his house.	Punky's social life is a little different. She also usually spends time at home (but she also goes to the park, pharmacy, father's house and school). Her friends from school, her brother's friend and her mother's and grandmother's friends often come to her house.
His pet is a dog named Pamuk. When he goes out to the garden, he plays with Pamuk (running, catching a stick or ball, etc.).	Her pet is a dog named Rufus. Rufus sleeps with them in their home, even in a basket in Punky's room. Punky often plays with Rufus (playing house, dancing, dressing up, etc.). Punky walks the dog, washes him, plays with him in the garden.

When Table 3 is analyzed, it is seen that Ozi spent his social life mostly at home. He did physical activities with his mother in the sports equipment in their garden. He spent most of his time at home with his older sister. He started school in the second season and the phenomenon of "school" was added to their social life. In the cartoon, which generally reflects Ozi's home life, Ozi and his family did not have any visitors and they did not visit anyone. Ozi also played various games with his pet, a dog named Pamuk, in their garden.

It is seen that Punky, the main character of the other cartoon, also spent most of her time at home, but her social life was represented in a slightly different manner than Ozi's. Although rarely, Punky is portrayed in different social settings like park, pharmacy store, his father's house, shopping mall, restaurant/café, and school. Guests came to Punky's house (schoolmates, friends of her brother, friends of her mother and grandmother etc.). Punky interacted and communicated with incoming guests and her social life was diversified in every episode with these guests. Punky also has a pet. He is a dog named Rufus, who lies in a basket in Punky's room, and wanders in every corner of the house. Punky is very fond of Rufus, walks him in the park, and washes him, often plays garden games like house, dancing and dressing up.

Table 4. Places where main characters live

<b>My brother Ozi</b>	<b>Punky</b>
The first season takes place only at home and in the garden. The school is added to these scenes in the second season. When he starts school, he goes to the swimming pool.	House, garden, school, park, pharmacy store, shopping mall, and restaurant are among the places. Her father's house was also added in the second season.
There are exercise equipments, a swing and a slide in the garden of his house.	Her garden is a normal house garden. There are no equipments.

In both cartoons, it is seen that indoor spaces are at the forefront and they are designed as places where children spend their daily lives.

Table 5. Family structure and intra-family relationships of the main characters

<b>My Brother Ozi</b>	<b>Punky</b>
Ozi lives with his mother, father, sister and grandfather. When evaluated in terms of relationships within the family, the family is in a happy nature. Father is working, mother is a housewife. In the first season, Ozi does not attend school and spends the day doing exercises with his mother and with the dog. When his older sister comes from school, she takes care of Ozi. She is very patient and understanding towards Ozi. The grandfather is retired. Occasionally he plays games with Ozi and gives advice.	Punky is the child of a divorced family. She lives with her mother, grandmother and brother. In season two, her father is added in the cartoon, but they don't live in the same place. When relationships within the family are evaluated, it is seen that the family has a happy but difficult life. The mother is working. The grandmother is retired and old. Grandmother, who is a grumpy and selfish woman, sometimes causes problems because of her attitude. Since the mother is a single parent, she is tired of responsibilities but she is still a happy character. Punky's older brother goes to school, does not enter Punky's room without her request, and prefers to stay in his room when he is at home. He takes care of her whenever she asks for. He is patient and understanding.
Pictures of Ozi and his sister and the whole family (including the dog) are hung in different rooms of the house, such as the living room, kitchen and	There are no family pictures in the rooms of the house such as the living room and bedroom. There are only pictures of

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 bedroom.

 children in the kitchen.
 

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Ozi, who is depicted in a nuclear family structure, lives with his mother, father, sister and grandfather. Representing a happy family structure, Ozi's family relationships are happy and balanced. His mother is a housewife, his father is working, his older sister is a student, and his grandfather is retired. Individual pictures of Ozi and his sister and pictures of the whole family (including the dog) can be seen in different rooms of the house such as the living room, kitchen and bedroom. In the first season, he spends time at home with his mother and dog and plays games with his sister after she comes home from school. His sister displays a very patient, caring, instructive and understanding attitude towards Ozi. Throughout the series, Ozi and his mother and sister are often in interaction. While interacting with his father and grandfather, his father also displays a patient and instructive approach towards Ozi, and his grandfather occasionally plays with him and gives advices.

Punky, the main character of the Punky cartoon, is the child of a divorced family who lives with her mother, grandmother and brother. Punky's father is not represented in the first season, but is included in the event patterns in the second season of the series. When evaluated in terms of family relationships, it is seen that she has a happy but difficult life. It is observed that the mother who works as a single parent is tired due to her responsibilities but is happy, and loves her family. Her brother, who is a student, takes interest in her with patience. He is mostly understanding towards Punky's requests, and seems to prefer to spend his free time in his room. The grandmother, an old, grumpy and selfish woman who lives with them in their house, is retired. Grandmother usually doesn't play games with Punky. It is seen that the grandmother, the eldest of the family represented in the Punky cartoon, often exhibits a selfish and sarcastic attitude and it is seen that Punky has to act in a tolerant and mature manner like a "normally developing" child towards her grandmother's attitude.

*Table 6. Parenting styles of the families of main characters*

<b>My brother Ozi</b>	<b>Punky</b>
<p>Ozi's family is in the style of protective parents against their children.</p> <p>No work is expected or requested from Ozi. When Ozi wants something that is not possible at that time (e.g., he wants to become a pilot and get on a plane), the family immediately tries to make a setup that will satisfy his desire and play it with him.</p> <p>Their attitude towards Ozi is soft and benevolent.</p>	<p>Punky is the child of a divorced family. The mother's attitude is exemplary in terms of adapting to independent life and discipline.</p> <p>Occasionally her mother and grandmother ask Punky for help (work) with issues such as water, blankets, and tidying up, and Punky does it affectionately.</p> <p>When Punky insists on something that is not possible (e.g., she wants a pony), she tries to be appeased by explaining why she cannot have it, and Punky stops insisting.</p> <p>Their attitudes towards Punky are clear and precise.</p>

As can be seen in Table 6, the parenting style of Ozi's family is reflected as "protective parenting style". Parallel to this structure, it is seen that family members never ask Ozi to perform any task, try to design a setup for even his most impossible requests that he voices with excitement so as not to upset him, ignore small mistakes he makes/says and focus on making him happy; it is also seen that their attitude is soft and didactic.

The parenting style in Punky, on the other hand, is an example of "Democratic Parenting Style" as they encourage Punky to adapt to independent life and develop self-discipline. It was detected that there is distribution of tasks in the family; her grandmother asks for help from Punky in such chores as bringing water and blanket, tidying up, and washing the dog that got dirty, thus giving her various tasks and responsibilities. Punky performs all of these tasks affectionately. Their attitude towards Punky is compassionate and understanding, with clear boundaries and certainty. In circumstances where Punky insists on something that is not likely, she is spoken to by making eye contact and in a calm tone of voice, and she is told by implying the cause-effect relationship why what she wants could not be realized, so Punky stops insisting.

In My Brother Ozi, it is seen that the family of Ozi, the main character with Down syndrome, always exhibits an anxious and overprotective attitude in the face of the special needs of the child, trying to fulfill the child's wishes instantly and to make him happy under all circumstances. It is observed that the family adjusts the living conditions according to the child; therefore the child fails to decide on an action independently.

In Punky, unlike the other cartoon, it is seen that family members act without giving priority to the special needs of the child. It is seen that all members of the household give Punky tasks that she can fulfill, support her in a way that encourages her to act independently, and show an approach that serves to enable her to learn to take responsibility for her actions independently.

Table 7. The school environment and relationships of the main characters

My brother Ozi	Punky
<p>Ozi goes to the school in their district where his sister goes, too. He travels to the school with his father and sister. He receives education in an inclusive class. His class teacher is a helpful and genial woman who shows interest in Ozi.</p> <p>Depicted as a lonely and an uneasy child in the first episode, Ozi begins to spend time with Musti in the following days. Ozi sits at a desk which is in up front but far from the teacher (every student sits at single desks) and in the desk next to him sits Musti, who is also a child with Down Syndrome.</p> <p>At classroom scenes Ozi is always depicted as lonely. In only one episode he goes to the swimming pool of the school.</p> <p>Ozi's interactions with other children in the classroom, games they play together, Ozi spending time in the garden, or his branch lessons are not reflected. Attitudes of his other friends towards Ozi are not also described.</p> <p>Ozi does not see his friend Musti outside school. He has no friends visiting him at his house.</p>	<p>Punky attends the same school with her brother. She is taken to school by her mother. On her way back, she is brought home by her mother, father or friend's mother in some episodes. Co-teaching is conducted at her school. There is both a classroom teacher and a special education teacher. Both are interested in and compassionate towards Punky.</p> <p>There are 4 people at a desk in the form of a group of students in the classroom. The other children with her are normally developing children. Punky is depicted in a school setting in the park or in the drawing room.</p> <p>Punky's best friend is a normally developing girl. She plays interactive games with other children in the classroom. They have adopted Punky. One of the children says that she is different because she has Down Syndrome and usually asks her not to take part in the actions. But in the episode, Punky is defended especially by the girl who is her best friend, and eventually the other child finds that despite the differences, Punky can do the things that they do. Punky's schoolmate sometimes comes to her house after school (dress party, dancing, bread making, imagination game... etc).</p> <p>They play games, but Punky doesn't go to her house.</p>

As can be seen in Table 7, Ozi, the main character with Down syndrome in the cartoon of My Brother Ozi, receives inclusive education in the primary school where his sister also goes. Ozi is always portrayed in the classroom during class sessions. Ozi sits at a desk in up front in the classroom but far from the teacher. In one episode, Ozi was portrayed as a lonely and anxious child, and Musti, who also has Down syndrome, joined him. Ozi made a friend with Musti. Although Ozi and Musti became friends, it is seen that they only spent time in the classroom, Ozi did not see Musti outside of school and they did not go to each other's house.

Only in one episode of the cartoon, Ozi took a swimming class in the school's swimming pool. The classroom teacher was caring and smiling, but it cannot be said that Ozi interacted with his classmates in this episode. In the said episode, the attitudes of other friends towards Ozi were not specified.

Punky, another cartoon character, attends the same school with her brother. In the school that Punky attends, inclusive education is carried out with a "co-teaching" approach. The classroom teacher and special education teacher are caring and compassionate towards Punky.

Punky's classmates are normally developing children. Punky's best friend is a normally developed girl student. Her friend sometimes comes to her house after school, but there are no scenes that show Punky going to her house. Punky is depicted in the school setting in the park and in the drawing room. Punky plays games with other children at school (swinging, dodge ball...). They have adopted her.

Although in both cartoons the characters continue inclusive education, it does not go unnoticed that there are significant differences in the characters' classroom settings and the way inclusive education is applied. Accordingly, Ozi establishes a close friendship with a student with Down syndrome, like him, in his classroom. It is not seen that children with normal development in the classroom establish any friendship with Ozi. At the same time, Ozi's teacher tries to manage the whole class on her own and without the support of a special education teacher. On the other hand, in the first episodes reflecting the life of the child in school in the cartoon named Punky, although she was found "different" by some of her peers with normal development, thanks to the positive effects of friendship of Punky's best friend, another normally developing student, and interaction with her in the classroom, it is reflected that all of her peers in the classroom later focused on their similarities rather than their differences with Punky and extended their social acceptance. At the same time, it is seen that in the classroom Punky studies, there is a special education teacher besides the classroom teacher, and these two teachers create a highly efficient class environment for all students in the classroom through "co-teaching models".

### Discussion

In the representation of the characters in the cartoons, it is important to reflect scenarios involving different emotional states in different episodes in order to improve the empathy skills of the targeted children and to help their disabled

peers feel better. In both cartoons discussed in the study, the main characters with Down syndrome were represented as mature, calm and understanding. Representation of characters as mature and calm can create the perception among young children who constitute the audience that they do not experience other emotional states. Therefore, adding scenes in which the main characters are sad, angry, hurt, stubborn and happy will help children, the target group of the cartoon, to have a better grasp of the emotions of the disabled child.

As a matter of fact, Şahin (2014) states in his study that character images in illustrated children's books are extremely important in the development of children's perceptions and emotion transformations as follows: "Illustrations play a pioneering role for the expression of feelings and opinions that the author cannot verbally convey." Illustrations are the elements that push the boundaries of children's universe of emotion and opinion.

Another finding obtained in the study is that the inclusion of scenes in cartoons in which the disabled child lives his/her daily life and performs self-care activities, as well as independent thinking and finding solutions, helps normally developing children to identify and empathize with the main character more. In the literature, it is stated that preschool children identify with the characters in the video-media programs they watch and books they read, and produce solutions to the situations they encounter in daily life and exhibit similar behaviors by empathizing (Barr & Hayne, 1999; Singer, 1999; Yılmaz & Destegüloğlu, 2019). For example, Barr and Hayne (1999), as a result of their research with preschool children, emphasize that the subjects directly model the behaviors in the cartoons presented to them and adapt them to real life. In addition, Yılmaz & Destegüloğlu, in their research titled "Violence reflected in children's books", stated with a similar discourse that children identify with the characters in books or cartoons and apply it to real life: "Those who argue that the element of violence should not be included in children's books are also concerned that the minor readers can identify with the character who is at the centre of violence and display negative behaviors" (Sever, as cited in Yılmaz & Destegüloğlu, 2019, p. 1102).

As stated in the research findings, the main characters of cartoons with Down syndrome spend a significant part of their time at home / indoors. This negative situation prevents minor audiences from gaining awareness about the need for people with special needs to be in social environments outside their homes and to participate in social life. In several studies in the literature, it is argued that peer acceptance and peer interaction play an important role in the participation of children with special needs in social life and in the development of social adaptation skills (Aktan et al., 2019; Bakkaloglu et al., 2019; Selimoğlu & Aydan, 2019).

It is among the findings that traces of the culture of the country where they were created are found in the cartoons, which also represent the parenting attitudes of families of children with special needs. Accordingly, families with disabled children in the traditional Turkish family structure generally organize their lives according to the special situation of the child with the "protective parenting attitude", and although it leads to exhaustion in the long term, parents frequently act too corrective and protective towards their children. This finding overlaps with some studies in the literature (Ardıç, 2020; Ardıç & Olcay-Gül, 2019; Sevgili, 2021; Sezer & Oğuz, 2010). On the other hand, in countries such as Ireland where the Punky cartoon is produced and where the normalization process through the rights and freedoms granted to persons with disabilities is substantially regulated by laws, it is seen that families of individuals with special needs are generally as independent as possible with a "democratic parenting attitude", are productive, and striving for happy individuals. In some studies in the literature, it was emphasized that families with children with special needs raise happier children if they show democratic parenting attitude (Gökkaya, 2020; Sümer et al., 2010; Özdemir et al., 2012).

In both cartoons, it is represented that children with special needs receive education in the same classroom with normally developing students at the school closest to their home. This detail is seen very important for the young viewers to perceive that a disabled student can be their classmate. As a matter of fact, Yılmaz and Erem (2018) stated that governments not only benefit from printed texts, but also from media, which has a very effective power in the formation of the personalities of young children and in the perception of the world, and in raising ideal people who best reflect and protect their social values. They stated that children did not evaluate the situations they saw on TV as artificial and they accepted these situations without criticism: "Television, which is undoubtedly one of the determining factors in the construction of ideal human beings, emerges as one of the biggest factors in the formation of children's personality. Television is the name of a world that children perceive as a whole reality in the first place. For this reason, children do not think that the world they see on TV would be artificial, and they accept this world without criticizing" (Yılmaz & Erem, 2018, p. 542).

Considering the findings of the research, it is seen that the most accurate representation of characters with special needs in productions targeting the preschool age group is extremely important in terms of children's reality, social acceptance, identification and defending the rights of the disabled. In this context, producers of children's shows and cartoons also have very important duties. Singer (1999) and Götz et al. (2003), based on the findings of their research, underlined that children's shows in the media should always provide realistic information about life and data that are always appropriate to targeted individuals for correct perception. Researchers state that the shows prepared by taking seriously the various characteristics and needs of children in the target group are important to support their healthy growth by having a positive effect on the perceptions and psychology of children.

### Conclusion

Children who are the main characters in both cartoons based on the life of two children with Down syndrome aged 5-6 are represented as happy individuals loved by their families. In these cartoons, it is reflected that the main characters play games with their siblings, watch television, go for a tour, and do activities, and this situation sets a better example for normally developing children with siblings with special needs in terms of behavioral patterns.

While Ozi's family exhibits a "protective parenting style" in relation to the classical Turkish family structure, Punky's family acts with a "democratic parenting style" based on a foreign culture. It can be said that this situation is a result of the difference in family structures and cultural reflections of the cartoons in their respective countries. Although there are differences in both family types, it has been observed that the main characters, children with Down syndrome, are accepted by their families who behave with care and patience. Based on this result, it can be said that the parenting attitudes of parents in respective cartoons provide information to families with children with special needs on how to approach their children.

The main characters in both cartoons attend schools where their normally developing peers and siblings also attend and receive inclusive education. Reflecting in cartoons the inclusive education environments, which are accepted as contemporary and modern educational settings in the education of students with special needs, can create an effective environment of awareness in preparing the age group targeted by the cartoon for the fact that they may have friends with special needs in their classrooms.

Continuing mainstreaming education in a classroom with an affectionate teacher, Ozi with Down syndrome was alone in the early days of school but later became friends with Musti who also had Down syndrome. Ozi, who was not represented in any interaction with his normally developing peers, fails to create the perception among the normally developing age group, which is the target audience of the cartoon, that people with disabilities can be made friends, thus normalizes discrimination in the eyes of children. On the other hand, representation of Punky's best friend as a student with normal development is extremely important in terms of implying that having special needs will not prevent one from having friends. In both cartoons, although the children go to school, they are not given homework or school activities, and the children do not do any homework at home.

Considering that the reality of young children about the attitude / perception object may experience changes by watching children's shows and cartoons, it is important to represent the characters with special needs in the most accurate way in productions targeting the preschool / kindergarten age group. Representation of individuals with special needs through cartoons, children's movies and children's shows is extremely critical in terms of empathy, social acceptance, identification and defense of the rights of the targeted age group. Therefore, increasing the number of such shows is of vital importance for children with special needs.

### Recommendations

Producer companies of cartoons representing individuals with special needs must resort to the opinions of people working in the special education field before preparing their shows. It is seen that the cartoon titled Ozi is far from giving the normally developing age group the perception that people with disabilities can be made friends, which normalizes discrimination in the eyes of the child. Therefore, the cartoon in question should be updated and arranged to create a positive perception for peers. Although children go to school in both cartoons, they are not given homework or school activities. Elimination of this deficiency in these productions is of great importance for the development of children. It is necessary to carry out comparative studies on the way individuals with special needs are reflected in the media by examining various TV shows broadcast on national and international channels. These studies will lead to the publication of more qualified publications in the future. It is recommended to determine the attitudes and perceptions of the peers about special needs by watching similar cartoons representing individuals with special needs. It is recommended to carry out further studies on whether the parenting attitudes of families of children with special needs are affected by the structure of the "family with disabilities" represented in the TV shows they view.

### Limitations

This study is limited to the cartoons *Punky* and *My Brother Ozi*, in which individuals with Down Syndrome are represented. 25 episodes of the cartoon *Punky* and 26 episodes of the cartoon *My Brother Ozi* were watched. These episodes were viewed online between 25 August and 20 September, 2020. Each episode of the cartoon titled My Brother Ozi lasted an average of 11 minutes and each episode of Punky lasted 7 minutes.

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