

Detective Characters in Children's Books: A Literacy Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to examine the characteristics of detective characters in children's books and their potential impact on literacy development. A document analysis design was employed in the study. To ensure data diversity, 38 books authored by 26 different writers were selected for examination. While selecting the books that constitute the dataset, attention was given to selecting different publishers and authors and ensuring that each book includes a "detective character" in its content. The data obtained from the examination of the books regarding detective characters were categorized into positive characteristics, negative characteristics, conflict resolution methods, physical attributes, interactions with the environment, personal preferences, and their contribution to fostering literacy skills. According to the findings of the study, detective characters were prominently portrayed with positive attributes, which can engage young readers and support the development of literacy by encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, and reading for pleasure.

Key words: Literacy, Children's Literature, Children's Books, Detective Characters

INTRODUCTION

Books read during childhood form the basis of reading culture in subsequent stages of life. One of the essential components of children's books is the characters, which serve as elements of identification. The characters in literary works can influence a child's perception of real life in various ways. From this perspective, the characters in books that provide children with life experiences are significant in terms of identification and serving as role models. In addition to being effective in developing children's literary tastes, the characters in children's books are essential for conveying messages and fostering character development (Yılmaz, 2016, p. 312). Literacy encompasses the knowledge and skills necessary for individuals to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate written materials. The reading habits developed during childhood have a direct impact on lifelong learning processes and societal participation.

Children often identify with the protagonists in the books they read (Yardımcı & Tuncer, 2002, p. 49). For a reader who recognizes similar traits in a book character, identification becomes easier. A child reader, who believes in a character, feels a sense of trust and understands that they are not alone in facing challenges. This realization can offer

comfort and enhance self-confidence. Moreover, these story characters' behaviors instill social and ethical values (Ural, 2013: 47-48).

Characters in children's literature serve as strong role models for young readers, who view life from the perspective of these characters. Therefore, every attribute of a book character is significant to the reader. At this point, particular attention should be given to detective-themed books because detective novels, with their mysterious and inquisitive nature, are among the genres that capture readers' interest the most. In children's literature, detective novels are defined as narratives suitable for children and young readers, without including elements of violence or brutality. These works often feature young and child protagonists who, in an adventurous manner, solve mysterious events similar to a game or a journey (Asutay, 2013, p. 370).

In detective-themed books for children, instead of murder, themes such as solving mysteries, finding the real culprit, or addressing illegal activities (e.g., smuggling, theft) are emphasized. The main characters of the genre are either detectives or journalists. Characters aiming to solve mysteries engage in actions such as conducting research, establishing cause-effect relationships, gathering evidence,

and pursuing clues. Readers drawn into this fictional world attempt to solve problems by maintaining their focus. They also engage with knowledge from various fields mentioned within the narrative to find solutions.

Through detective characters in children's books, it is believed that these works contribute to the personal development of the reader by enhancing analytical thinking (Yakar, 2014, p. 677), problem-solving (Yiğit, 2005, p. 19), meeting the need for excitement and movement (Oğuzkan, 1997, p. 96), and encouraging the desire to read (Gündüz & Şimşek, 2011, p. 67). Due to these reasons, detective characters in children's books and the messages conveyed through them hold a prominent place.

Detective characters in children's books are significant in terms of their impact on the reader's personal development. At this point, Gündüz and Şimşek (2011, p. 67) emphasize the necessity of evaluating the function of arousing a desire to read in genres such as fantasy, science fiction, or detective stories. Accordingly, detective works in children's literature are seen as particularly important for developing a reading culture.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the portrayal of detective characters in children's books. In line with this objective, the study aims to answer the research question: "How are the characteristics of detective characters depicted in children's books?"

The fact that children's books are examined for the first time concerning how detective characters are portrayed enhances the significance of this study. Analyzing children's books by various authors broadens the scope of this research. Consequently, the study aims to fill a significant gap in the field and serve as a reference for future research.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a document analysis design, which involves analyzing written materials containing information about the phenomena or events targeted for investigation. The research process followed within this design includes: accessing documents, verifying their authenticity, comprehending the content, analyzing the data, and utilizing the findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 217; Forster, 1995). Since the study aims to analyze the characteristics of detective characters in children's books, a document analysis approach was deemed appropriate.

Documents Examined

The dataset of the study consists of a total of 38 children's books featuring detective characters, authored by different writers. Books were selected to achieve data saturation, ensuring they were rich in detective content based on expert opinions. Works belonging to different publishers and authors were chosen to maintain diversity. Additionally, to maintain relevance and depth, the books had to be recent publications (2000 onwards) and contain rich content related to detective characters.

Only Turkish children's novels featuring detective characters were included in the study, while other types of books were excluded. Detailed information regarding the books and their abbreviations can be found in Table 1.

Data Collection and Analysis

Initially, the books comprising the study group were procured. To achieve data saturation, 38 works by 26 different authors were selected. Six books that contained solely positive or negative content or did not provide rich data were excluded from the scope of the study. During the selection process, attention was paid to choosing books that provided diverse and rich content related to detective characters. Additionally, the selected books were required to feature positive and negative characteristics of detective characters simultaneously.

The data obtained from the research were analyzed in two different ways. First, the books constituting the main source of research data were read without taking notes. As a result of these initial readings, a general perspective on the conceptual framework was formed. Subsequently, the books were re-read, focusing on the research's objectives. In this process, data related to the characteristics of detective characters were categorized, and the resulting data were organized systematically.

A coding and categorization system was established by the researcher (Merriam, 2013, p. 170). Accordingly, the focus was placed on detective characters in the books, and their attributes were identified through descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis, which involves summarizing and interpreting data, was complemented by content analysis, which allows for the discovery of previously unnoticed concepts and themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 242). In the content analysis, data were recorded and organized according to various categories such as positive characteristics, negative characteristics, conflict resolution methods, physical attributes, interactions with the environment, and personal preferences.

To ensure the reliability of the results, detailed information regarding the research process was provided, and each stage was thoroughly explained. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) emphasized that data should be presented directly using a descriptive approach to maintain reliability. Consistency was ensured by reading the dataset several times, consulting experts at each stage of the study, and making necessary revisions based on their feedback. While reflecting differences, care was taken to avoid creating a uniform framework. Instead, a variation strategy was implemented to preserve authenticity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Positive Characteristics of Detective Characters

The positive characteristics of detective characters in the 38 children's books examined are shown in Table 2.

Upon examining the books, it was observed that the positive characteristics of detective characters predominantly included curiosity, alertness towards surroundings, determination, courage, honesty, imagination, caution, helpfulness, adventurous spirit, emotionality, intelligence, foresight, diligence, and a sense of responsibility.

Table 1. Documents examined

Author	Title	Publisher	Abbreviation	Publication date
Almila Aydın	Gezgin Dedektifler Kuklanın Gizemi	Altın Kitaplar	KG	2018
Aşkın Güngör	Gizemli Kule	Tudem	GK	2011
Aşkın Güngör	Sözcük Korsanı	Tudem	SK	2019
Aytül Akal	Süper Gazeteciler 1	Tudem	SG	2000
Aytül Akal	Süper Gazeteciler- Parktaki Esrar	Tudem	SGPE	2001
Cihangir Defterdar	Çılgın Dedektifler Baran ile Beren Kaybolan Kitaplar	Yediveren Çocuk	BBKK	2018
Dursun Ege Göçmen	Bilmecenin İzinde Maceranın Peşinde	Tudem	BİMP	2012
Emir Hersan&Sevil Bal	Bilim Dedektifleri Böcek Kam Uyanıyor	İlk Genç Timaş	BKU	2020
Erkan İşeri	Beyaz Kanatlı Vampir 1 Başım Dertte	Pinus Kitap	BD	2014
Esra Avgören	Dedektif Kuruntusu 1 Kimin Bu Parmak İzi?	Genç Damla	KBPI	2019
Esra Avgören	Gizli Dedektiflik Bürosu Çalınan Mercek	Damla Yayınevi	ÇM	2020
Esra Avgören	Gizli Dedektiflik Bürosu Zehirli Variller	Damla Yayınevi	ZV	2020
Esra Avgören	Martı'nın Dedektifleri Pasaklı'nın Pasaportu	Damla Yayınevi	PP	2019
Fatih Tuncay	Kum Saati	Bilgi	KS	2019
Figen Güllü	Amber'in Zaman Kapsülü	Tudem	AZK	2014
Gülsevin Kırıl	Çalınan Kent	Günışığı Kitaplığı	ÇK	2008
Gülsevin Kırıl	Gizli Formül Hangi Zarfta?	Günışığı Kitaplığı	GFHZ	2007
Gülsevin Kırıl	İstanbul' u Çalıyorlar	Günışığı Kitaplığı	İÇ	2010
Hanzade Servi	Kalamar Pansiyon	Tudem	KP	2017
Koray Avcı Çakman	Almarpa' nın Gizemi	Tudem	AG	2012
Koray Avcı Çakman	Doğa Dedektifleri- Kayıp Formül	Doğan	DDKF	2016
Koray Avcı Çakman	Doğa Dedektifleri-Hazine Avı	Doğan	DDHA	2017
Meryem Uçar	Acar Dedektif Eda 1 Yeni Okul Yeni Macera	Erdem Çocuk	YOYM	2018
Mavisel Yener	Dolunay Dedektifleri-İz Peşinde	Bilgi	DDİP	2007
Mavisel Yener&Aytül Akal	Kayıp Kitaplardaki İskelet	Tudem	KKİ	2011
Miyase Sertbarut	Kapiland' ın Kobayları	Tudem	KK	2007
Miyase Sertbarut	Sisin Sakladıkları	Tudem	SS	2005
Meral Kutluğ İlsever	Dedektif Murat	Baygenç Yayıncılık	DM	2017
Mustafa Kemal Çelik	Hiper Cemil Altın Anahtar'ın Gizemi	Genç Hayat	AAG	2019
Mustafa Orakçı	İstanbul Dedektifleri 1 Kayıp Haritanın Peşinde	İlk Genç Timaş	KHP	2013
Özlem Tezcan Dertsiz	Çılgın Sokak Dedektifleri	Yakın	ÇSD	2019
Özgür Özgülğün	Davetsiz Dedektifler Ayasofya' nın Anahtarı	Altın Kitaplar	AA	2017
Sevgi Saygı	Babaannemin İçine Uzaylı Kaçtı!	Günışığı Kitaplığı	BİUK	2017
Sevgi Saygı	Babam Nereye Gitti?	Günışığı Kitaplığı	BNG	2009
Sevim Ak	Vanilya Kokulu Mektuplar	Can Çocuk	VKM	2002
Şebnem Güler Karacan	Dedektif Tayfa 1 Tuhaf Mücevher Hırsızları	Uğurböceği Yayınları	TMH	2018
Yeşim Saygın Armutak	Bataklığın Kıyısındaki Ev	Günışığı Kitaplığı	BKE	2007
Yusuf Asal	Kafadan Yumurta 4 Çakma Dedektif	Uğurböceği Yayınları	ÇD	2017

Table 2. Positive characteristics of detective characters

Emerging Themes	Books and Page Numbers
Inquiry into the underlying causes of events or situations.	(DD 13,23,32,35,52, 54, 60, 121, 134 ; SS 60,61,75;İÇ 32, 68, 105; HA, 42, 73, 77, 93, 94; SG 59, 198; GFHZ 16, 19, 21, 22, 36, 42, 46, 51, 60, 63; SK 27, 53, 86, 100; GK 88,89,114, 152; BİMP 14,18,24, 36,52; YOYM 10, 11, 24, 44, 52, 54, 58, 77, 92; ZV 25; PP 19, 20, 26; KBPİ 35; KP 45, 59, 67, 68, 100; VKM 65, 99, 100, 101; KHP 34,35,44,45; BKE 18, 22, 31, 48, 63, 76, 110; AA 18, 20, 22, 31; KG 8, 18, 35, 36, 59, 62, 90, 103; TMH 71; ÇD 39; BİUK 64, 81; 148; AAG 10, 43, 54, 55; BNG 45, 46, 109; KS 44).
Being attentive to the events unfolding in the environment.	(DD 23, 115; SS 11, 19, 61; İÇ 32; SK 22,39,121; KK 10, 51; GK 112, 114; GFHZ 12, 24; SS 7,11,19,37; YOYM 7,37, 40, 84, 88, 100; ÇM 31, 41, 53; KP 60, 68; VKM 38; KHP 71, 74; AA 11, 12, 22; KG 53).
Having a determined disposition.	(DD 50, SS, 124, 151; SG 56, 62; SK 72; BİMP 81,115,116; ZV 34; VKM 21; AAG 76, 77, 86; BNG 222; KS 72).
Engaging in imaginative thinking.	(İÇ 13; HA,107; SG 103; GFHZ 20, 21, 43, 77, 78; SK 17; KK 9; DD 33; YOYM 5, 12; KP 23, 31; VKM 16, 60; AA 8; KG 13; TMH 13; ÇD 82, 83).
Exhibiting courage.	(SG 151, 209; GFHZ 109; KK, 26; DD 27).
Acting with honesty.	(DD, 67; SG, 81; KK, 52; BİMP, 73).
Exercising caution in the face of any potential danger or situation.	(DD 51; KK 125; YOYM 58; KHP 130; KG 37, 96; KS 81).
Demonstrating helpfulness.	(SS 81; GK 85; YOYM 86; ZV 10, 48; KBPİ 90, 19,20,21; KP 47,54; KHP 11, 15; AAG 107).
Exhibiting an adventurous spirit.	(BİMP 18,120; KHP 70; BKE 15,AA 7; KG 52).
Demonstrating foresight.	(BİMP 56).
Being diligent.	(KP 58).
Having a sense of responsibility.	(BİUK 21).

For the full versions of the abbreviations showing the book titles, refer to Table 1

Negative Characteristics of Detective Characters

The negative characteristics of detective characters in the 38 children's books examined are shown in Table 3.

The analysis of 38 children's books revealed that the negative characteristics of detective characters ranged from giving nicknames and succumbing to anger to privacy invasion, stubbornness, lack of interest in lessons, feelings of worthlessness, tendency towards violence, occasional rule-breaking, arrogance, and messiness.

Relationships with the Environment

Detective characters' relationships with those around them were categorized and summarized in Table 4.

Upon reviewing 38 children's books, the study observed that detective characters often displayed positive social relationships, including cooperation with friends, trust in adults, and altruism. However, certain characters exhibited negative traits such as bullying peers, conflicts with siblings, and concealing problems from their families.

Physical Characteristics of Detective Characters

The physical characteristics of detective characters in the 38 children's books examined are summarized in Table 5.

The analysis of the 38 children's books revealed that the physical characteristics of detective characters frequently include being overweight, wearing hats and trench coats, resembling cartoon characters, and using hair gel.

Conflict Resolution Methods of Detective Characters

The conflict resolution methods employed by detective characters in the examined children's books are shown in Table 6.

The findings revealed that detective characters primarily employ constructive strategies, such as making observations with a skeptical approach, focusing on possibilities, and making plans to solve the problem. Additionally, collaboration, taking notes, and research are frequently used conflict resolution methods. On the other hand, some characters resort to less constructive strategies, such as lying and making threats.

Personal Preferences of Detective Characters

The personal preferences of detective characters in the 38 children's books are summarized in Table 7.

The findings indicate that the personal preferences of detective characters include reading books, loving animals, enjoying fast food, watching films, playing games, dancing, supporting sports teams, drawing, writing, performing magic tricks, and shopping.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to analyze the characteristics of detective characters in children's books under six main categories: positive characteristics, negative characteristics, conflict resolution methods, physical attributes, interactions with the environment, and personal preferences. The analysis

Table 3. Negative characteristics of detective characters

Emerging Themes	Books and Page Numbers
Giving nicknames.	(GFHZ 13, 16; ZV 50; ÇM 65; KBPİ 14, 61; KP 18; BKE 50, 69; BİUK 9; AAG 13, 28).
Succumbing to anger.	(GFHZ 89; KBPİ 38; TMH 103; AAG 36).
Violating privacy.	(KP 60; KHP 100; AAG 11, 91, 119).
Showing indifference towards lessons.	(GFHZ 10; ÇM 20; TMH 34).
Having a tendency towards violence.	(KBPM 21, 22).
Disregarding rules.	(DD 61, 110).
Acting arrogantly.	(BİMP 24).

For the full versions of the abbreviations showing the book titles, refer to Table 1

Table 4. Detective characters' Interactions with their environment

Emerging Themes	Books and Page Numbers
Helping friends.	(BİMP 44, 100; HA 54, 93, 95; SG2 53; SK 117; KK 82; YOYM 95; TMH 43; AAG 108; KS 54).
Trusting adults.	(DD 67, 111, 112; İÇ 65; GK 89; KK 82,94,143; KHP 86, 92; BİUK 116).
Having conflicts with adults.	(VKM 21, 51; BÜİK 15; AAG 31, 33; BNG 8, 12, 16).
Being altruistic.	(DD 48, 78; SS 63; SG 67, 167; KK 98; PP 18; ÇM 34, 37; KP 16).
Not trusting parents.	(GFHZ 32, 73, 87, 94, 95, 96; YOYM 108)
Having conflicts with siblings.	(HA 52; SG 139; BİMP 11; ÇM 24,30).
Loving children.	(GK 10,149; SK 14, 16).
Not sharing some problems with family.	(GFHZ 26, 32).
Loving siblings.	(KHP 109; TMH 88).
Engaging in peer bullying.	(KBPİ 31).
Sharing secrets with friends.	(ÇD 22).

For the full versions of the abbreviations showing the book titles, refer to Table 1

Table 5. Physical characteristics of detective characters

Emerging Themes	Books and Page Numbers
Being overweight.	(BİMP 120; SK 13; ÇM 14).
Wearing a hat.	(SK 8, GK 9).
Wearing a trench coat.	(SK 8, GK 9).
Resembling cartoon characters.	(BİMP 22).
Using hair gel.	(GK,78).

For the full versions of the abbreviations showing the book titles, refer to Table 1

revealed that detective characters are predominantly portrayed with positive characteristics.

One prominent positive characteristic is curiosity. Curiosity, presented as a prerequisite for knowledge, is portrayed as a tool leading detective characters toward the solution. However, when the framework of curiosity is not well defined, it can lead to the invasion of privacy. When the plot lacks a foundation of reality, hallucinations come into play, and the narrative loses its credibility. Consequently, unfounded fears replace the reality of children. Characters who follow rational paths to answer all their questions are depicted as using their intelligence to overcome obstacles. When it comes to problem-solving, different characters exhibit necessary solidarity regardless of gender differences. In scenarios where characters cannot solve on their own, they seek help from peers or adults.

According to Yılmaz and Destegüloğlu (2021), conflicts are resolved permanently when characters seek help from their surroundings and use reasoning to solve issues, even if their efforts are insufficient. The findings of this study align with those of Yılmaz and Destegüloğlu, showing that characters often need external support to overcome their challenges.

Another prominent characteristic is attentiveness. Characters with strong memories approach events with skepticism. They achieve solutions by paying attention to the logical order of events. The criminal and mysterious elements in the examined works are conveyed to the reader through logical sequences established by the characters. This finding supports Karagöz et al.'s (2013) suggestion that, in children's detective stories, the formation phases of crimes should be clearly stated, and incidents should be resolved using realistic methods rather than coincidences to maintain the readers' continuous interest.

In the narratives, characters who act courageously in the face of dangerous situations are often also depicted as having an adventurous spirit. The protagonists embark on various adventures to reach the truth. Despite the difficulties in achieving a solution, they succeed due to their adventurous nature. Attributes such as courage, honesty, and helpfulness are consciously chosen by the protagonists as a result of their free will.

In children's literature, the goal is not merely to impart lessons or teachings but to create sensitivity toward life and

Table 6. Conflict resolution methods of detective characters

Emerging Themes	Books and Page Numbers
Making observations with a skeptical approach.	(SS 99, 123; SG 74, 79, 113, 117, 217; GFHZ 24, 43; SK 57; KK 77; GK 10,11,14,19,67,76, 83, 101, 107, 114; BİMP 50; YOYM 29, 44, 52, 61, 69, 98; PP 22, 48; ÇM 68; KP 54, 78; VKM 100; BKE 31, 72, 80, 93; AA 7, 20; KG 52, 67,68,69; TMH 24, 124; BİUK 91).
Focusing on possibilities.	(SS 65,98, 128; İÇ 91, 114; HA 152; SG 96, 118; SK 26; KK 23, 77; GK 83; BİMP 11, 25,33,60, 78, 79, 96; GFHZ 73; YOYM 58, 59; ZV 51, 73; PP 33, 34, 40, 42; ÇM 40, 41; KP 90; VKM 24; KHP 129; BKE 23; AA 27,29; KG 12, 37, 65, 92; ÇD 38; BNG 148; KS 46).
Creating problem-solving plans.	(SS 111; HA 54; SG 53, 151, 167; GFHZ 24, 26, 98; BİMP 46, 82,90,100; DD,51; GK 7; YOYM 58, 59, 66; ÇM 36, 47; KHP 95, 124; BKE 163; AA 38; KG 32; TMH 45; ÇD 57; BİUK 48; KS 95).
Conducting research.	(SS 39;KK 96; YOYM 80; ZV 28, 34, 37; PP 22; ÇM 41, 44, 51, 53, 57; KBPİ 89; KP 66, 94; KHP 70; BKE 23; AA 18,19,25,30,31; KG 10, 55; AAG 109; BNG 48; KS 41, 42, 47, 100, 103).
Concentrating on clues.	(SS 84; İÇ 103, 124; HA 112, 149; SK 42, 111, 122, 131, 149; BİMP 93; GFHZ 57; YOYM 74; PP 47, 48; ÇM 39; KBPİ 55, 56, 61, 68; VKM 10; BKE 22; AAG 109).
Pursuing leads.	(GFHZ 62, 65, 66; SS 58,62; YOYM 39, 71, 104; ZV 29, 51, 65; KP 97; KHP 88, 95,96, 105, 109; AA 13, KG 38, 51, 56, 70, 72, 88, 90, 105; ÇD 60, 84; BİUK 130).
Collaborating.	(SS 63,111; HA 149, SG 126, 167; KK 109; BİMP 44, 107; GFHZ 24; YOYM 44; PP 44; KBPİ 34, 41; KHP 77; AA 34; KS 70).
Utilizing technology.	(İÇ 76; DD 64; KK 96;SS 20; YOYM 80; ZV 73; ÇM 31, 48; KG 50).
Generating solutions.	(SK 138; KK 138; GK 63; AA 21).
Conducting exploratory tours.	(YOYM 48; VKM 102; KHP 70, 129; BKE 100; ÇD 75)

For the full versions of the abbreviations showing the book titles, refer to Table 1

Table 7. Personal preferences of detective characters

Emerging Themes	Books and Page Numbers
Reading books.	(KK 7; GK 32; BİMP 9; ÇM 14; VKM 18; BKE 47; AA 8, 23).
Loving animals.	(BİMP 109; SS 37; KP 12; AAG 8, 74, 75).
Enjoying fast foods.	(SS 7; KBPİ 68; VKM 16; TMH 45).
Watching films.	(VKM 22; BKE 47, 85; BNG 96).
Playing games.	(GFHZ 10; HA 20).
Enjoying dancing.	(BKE 47).
Supporting a sport team.	(GFHZ 10).
Enjoying drawing.	(BİUK 30).
Enjoying shopping.	(PP 8).

For the full versions of the abbreviations showing the book titles, refer to Table 1

humanity. A child's encounter with numerous literary-quality books from the preschool period onward can enable them to be equipped with various universal values. İpek (2017) observed that universal values such as courage, a desire for learning, and love were subtly conveyed in the popular children's book *The Little Black Fish*. These values provide children with a sense of responsibility for hearing and thinking. The glorification of values in children's books has a significant impact on a child's moral development.

When children witness negative situations, it can lead them to seek different adventures, leaving them unchecked and completely free. Detective children's novels, by 'making the inexperienced seem experienced,' help children to distance themselves from crime. The glorification of values in the examined works is appropriate for the moral development of the reader. The characters, acting within a logical

framework, always align with the good side. In this respect, the findings of the current study resonate with previous research that suggests detective fiction in children's literature significantly contributes to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

'Emotionality', another characteristic that stands out in the study, is portrayed in a way that leads emotional characters to become victims of verbal violence. In the books analyzed, both male and female characters are depicted as emotional. Due to their emotional nature, these characters are often ridiculed by their peers. It is noteworthy that these characters tend to choose crying instead of using communication as a means of expression. Communication barriers are thus portrayed as the source of violence, and the inability to express oneself emotionally is linked to internal struggles.

Overall, the emotional characteristics of female characters were highlighted more prominently in the analyzed books, and emotions were depicted as vehicles leading to reality. In contrast, the main characters, predominantly male, were portrayed as representatives of logic. Female characters in supporting roles were depicted as emotional figures within the narratives.

The 'helpfulness' category mainly emphasized the characters' assistance to their peers, along with helping adults and animals. Because detective characters are depicted as more intelligent and practical than their peers, they are often portrayed as experts in problem-solving. The findings show that intelligence is consistently represented as a superior value in all works, and these positive traits are conveyed to the reader through subtle suggestions.

Detective characters' 'negative attributes', such as stubbornness, feelings of worthlessness, nicknaming, rule-breaking, lack of interest in lessons, anger, and arrogance, are also highlighted in the study. These negative characteristics are

depicted as surmountable obstacles within the narrative. Conflicts arising from these negative traits are eventually resolved through the characters' efforts. Notably, most negative attributes are portrayed in male characters. Only two works featured female characters with negative attributes. Establishing a connection between negative traits and masculinity may shape gender perceptions negatively; therefore, it is crucial to avoid gender biases while conveying such messages.

The 'negative characteristics' do not persist throughout the plot. When communication barriers are resolved, characters gradually overcome their negative traits. From a certain point in the narrative, characters experience a change and transformation. Characters who feel regret and empathize with others do not persist in their negative behaviors. This transformation, depicted realistically, enhances the credibility of the narrative. However, a few works include characters who persist in their negative behaviors and are isolated within the plot.

In these cases, characters who are "trapped" in negativity stand out with their unchangeable traits. The acceptance of negative attitudes by other fictional characters detracts from the narrative's realism. According to Yılmaz and Kılıç (2015), idealized characters in children's books create an artificial sense of reality, serving as negative examples. However, despite this, literary-quality texts often depict characters in exaggerated ways that deviate from reality, which diminishes their credibility.

The findings also revealed that characters exhibiting 'anger and violence' sometimes direct this aggression towards their own bodies. Characters are often compared with successful individuals, which leads to feelings of worthlessness. For instance, in one work, the detective character harms themselves when their family does not believe in them. Issues of trust within the family often accompany a lack of communication. Characters experiencing feelings of worthlessness tend to act out violently during moments of anger, directing aggression towards either themselves or objects around them. This lack of self-control is depicted as a significant issue in several works.

Some characters are also portrayed as 'prone to physical violence'. The key finding in this category is that violence is typically directed toward peers. Characters seeking authority use violence as a means of achieving dominance. When considering detective characters, no significant gender differences were observed in terms of tendencies towards violence. Violence generally stems from communication issues, and characters who resolve these problems tend to abandon their violent behaviors.

Detective characters often give 'nicknames' to those around them, typically based on physical attributes or specific characteristics. This tendency was prevalent among all the characters examined. Nicknames given to adults are used primarily in peer settings. Teachers and school administrators are common targets of these nicknames, and their titles often reference specific terms related to their profession. These characters are generally portrayed as unsympathetic and prejudiced. Destegüloğlu (2020) notes that almost all of the negative characters in children's books have nicknames.

In many cases, these nicknames are directed toward either school authorities or peers, reflecting the time children spend in these environments, sometimes even more than with their families. Similar patterns were found in the current study, suggesting that nicknaming serves as a means of establishing social dynamics among children.

When engaged in mystery-solving, detective characters often 'disregard rules' they would otherwise follow in everyday situations. Social norms and family rules are frequently violated during the investigative process. These transgressions are either concealed by the protagonists or disclosed to adults at a later stage. Driven by the goal of solving mysteries, characters often act impulsively, raising concerns that such narratives might promote the idea that "everything is permissible in pursuit of truth."

In terms of 'relationships with their surroundings', detective characters are characterized by solidarity with their friends, trust in adults, altruism, distrust of parents, sibling rivalry, affection for children, concealing issues from their families, and seeing role models in older individuals. The findings suggest that detective characters predominantly have positive social interactions. They frequently work in collaboration with their peers, dividing responsibilities according to the strengths of different characters.

The detective characters in the analyzed books also display 'conflict with authority figures', especially parents and teachers. Characters who are reprimanded or questioned by adults often feel misunderstood and decide to address their problems on their own. The protagonists' self-confidence is undermined by parental criticism, leading them to seek independent solutions. In these narratives, parents tend to compare their children unfavorably to others, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Children who are expected to be like others often become passive and feel undervalued. Such treatment from parents diminishes the child's trust in their family and, ultimately, in themselves.

Detective characters sometimes have 'disputes with their siblings', which usually stem from a lack of respect for personal space. Sibling rivalries and conflicts arise when privacy is not respected. Protagonists who frequently argue with their siblings experience remorse and guilt when they can no longer reach them. This emotional tension is often resolved later in the narrative, reinforcing the value of sibling relationships.

A notable finding regarding the interpersonal relationships of detective characters is their involvement in 'peer bullying'. Characters engage in verbal or physical aggression towards their peers. Those who are given nicknames or subjected to verbal harassment are often emotionally wounded, while those exposed to physical aggression experience fear and anxiety. One of the primary purposes of children's books is to encourage children to take responsibility for their emotions and thoughts by modeling positive behaviors through identification with the characters (Çer, 2016). In the examined books, passive responses to violence are initially portrayed, but as the narrative progresses, these passive stances are gradually replaced by more assertive and constructive behaviors, thereby enhancing the story's credibility. According to Yılmaz and Destegüloğlu (2019), the

inclusion of bullying in children's books enables young readers to feel emotionally and mentally prepared for such situations in real life, helping them realize that they are not alone in facing these issues.

In terms of 'conflict resolution strategies', detective characters predominantly use constructive methods such as making observations with a skeptical approach, focusing on possibilities, making plans, and conducting research. Collaboration, brainstorming, and critical thinking are frequently used strategies. The findings of the study show that detective characters adopt a rational and strategic approach to conflict resolution, considering various possibilities and making logical connections between different events.

Some detective characters also exhibit 'destructive behaviors', such as lying, threatening, and concealing the truth. In such cases, lying is depicted as a defense mechanism, often used to avoid punishment or conceal mistakes. Characters frequently lie to adults while remaining honest with their peers, suggesting a disparity in their perceived relationship with authority. Lying is sometimes portrayed as a temporary solution, while in other cases, it is used as a permanent means of covering up the truth.

'Exploration and investigation' are also highlighted as key activities for detective characters. These characters are portrayed as inquisitive individuals who investigate, gather evidence, and follow leads. They meticulously document their findings, taking notes on key details. The ability to connect disparate events and make logical deductions is a hallmark of detective characters in children's literature. They approach mysteries methodically, and their reliance on rational methods reinforces the value of critical thinking and problem-solving.

Technology is another tool often used by detective characters in resolving conflicts. Characters are depicted using various forms of technology to assist in their investigations, such as computers, cameras, and other devices. This use of technology reflects the contemporary setting of these narratives and aligns with the interests and experiences of young readers in today's digital age.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study aimed to examine the characteristics of detective characters in children's books through a detailed document analysis. The findings were categorized under six main headings: positive characteristics, negative characteristics, conflict resolution methods, physical attributes, interactions with the environment, and personal preferences.

The study revealed that the most frequently emphasized positive traits of detective characters include 'curiosity', 'determination', and 'courage'. These traits are highlighted as essential components that drive the characters to solve mysteries and overcome obstacles. Other positive characteristics, such as honesty, helpfulness, and emotional sensitivity, are also presented as attributes that contribute to the characters' development and appeal. These characteristics align with the idea that detective characters in children's books serve as role models, teaching young readers the value of perseverance, bravery, and empathy.

In terms of negative characteristics, detective characters were often portrayed as being 'stubborn', 'prone to anger', and 'occasionally arrogant'. These traits were usually depicted as temporary flaws that the characters ultimately overcame through personal growth and improved communication skills. The depiction of negative traits, predominantly in male characters, highlights a potential gender bias that may influence young readers' perceptions of gender roles.

The findings related to conflict resolution methods show that detective characters primarily employ 'rational and logical approaches' to solve problems. They rely on critical thinking, research, and careful analysis to reach solutions. However, some characters resort to less constructive methods such as lying and making threats, raising concerns about the potential impact of such behaviors on young readers.

The study also highlighted the 'physical attributes' of detective characters, which included wearing distinctive clothing (e.g., hats and trench coats) and having unique physical features (e.g., being overweight or using hair gel). These physical traits help establish the identity of detective characters and make them recognizable to young readers. However, some of these characteristics, such as weight, could potentially reinforce stereotypes.

The 'interactions with the environment' category revealed that detective characters generally have positive social relationships, cooperating with friends, trusting adults, and acting altruistically. However, some characters exhibited problematic behaviors such as bullying peers or mistrusting parents. These traits were usually presented as obstacles that the characters needed to overcome to achieve personal growth.

In terms of 'personal preferences', detective characters were portrayed as having interests that resonated with the typical activities and hobbies of young readers, such as reading, watching films, playing games, and enjoying fast food. These preferences help create a connection between the characters and the reader, making the characters more relatable and enhancing the reader's engagement with the narrative.

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