

Mediatized Child Characters

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Abstract

Child actors and actresses perform in television programs, such as contests, shows and series, and in movies broadcasted in Turkey. After the program is broadcasted, social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram are opened by their parents for these children and it is attempted to increase their popularity. Children with increased popularity begin to act in new series and advertisements, and they are drawn into a consumption cycle. While these children, who are used for humour, promotional or dramatic factors, are disturbed, on the other hand, they cause that children's real and big problems (poverty, child labor, abuse, abduction, refugee, etc.) are ignored. This study provides a perspective on child characters in competition programs, TV shows, television series, television programs and movies broadcasted on televisions in 2018 in Turkey. The program in which children aged between 5 and 12 years appear, and their Instagram accounts were tracked and examined. The culture of benefiting from the child in the media multiplies itself as the use of children as mediatic characters in the media in Turkey continues, and the fact that children can be used as a source of income without considering that they can be overwhelmed by the burden of fame becomes widespread. This indicates the perception of childhood in society, the visibility of child individuals' problems, and a frightening future for children.

Keywords: Cinema, Television, Social media, Children, Mediatized Children

Introduction

Fame is the state of being known or recognized by all. However, it is not easy to bear it. The early days of fame are impressive and attractive. The maintenance of fame is difficult. It is very hard for the ones losing fame to cope with this situation. Fame, even a challenging process for adults, can lead to greater trauma for children. Pedagogues say that fame nourishes the narcissistic personality traits and can even bring them to a pathological level, which can lead to a fanciful but fragile perception of identity. In the tabloid press, people who cannot carry the burden of fame or who are not able to maintain their fame are faced with the deplorable situation. It is quite difficult for children to lift the burden of fame that even adults have difficulty in bearing.

Adler states that the personality is shaped by the environment. According to him, "Human beings are primarily motivated by social drives" (Adler, 2014: 65). The concept of "self" begins to appear around 2 years of age (Goodnow, Miller and Kessel, 1995). Interactions of the self-perception developing are important for the continuation of people's lives (Özçiçek, 2014: 9). According to Cooley, the interaction of the child with people like the mother, father and teacher around him has a decisive role in the formation of self. Self is not an innate concept. It is formed by the child's understanding of himself, his physical characteristics and his thinking ability (Argun, 2005: 53-61). The concept of positive self is the self-acceptance of the self as a whole with the success and failures of the individual (Özçiçek, 2014: 10).

Adler argues that the negative effects that occurred in the first childhood are permanent and determinant. These effects can cause children to adopt a wrong lifestyle. Adler observed that children who have disabilities, are spoiled and neglected lead a wrong life. Adler described being spoiled as the biggest problem. He says spoiled children cannot develop a social feeling and they can be the most dangerous part of the society. He asserts that spoiled children will be despotic people who want to adapt society to their own desires, and manipulate people with their self-centered desires (Yörükan, 2000: 72).

The welfare and development of a society is possible with the healthy development of children who are raised in that society regarding physical, mental and social aspects. When the media are used correctly, it can contribute to the upbringing of children in a society. When the media and children are taken into consideration together, the child may be considered a media consumer in the position of the viewer or user. However, there are children used by the media. In the scope of this

research, there are children who have become known throughout the country through television, one of important stakeholders in the media sector. Why would a three or five-year-old want to be famous? Do children want to be famous? Does fame profit children? What awaits children with fame?

Why are children used in the media?

Children's cuteness, inability, clumsiness, their not knowing life yet, inexperience and purity can attract the attention of adults. Children are used in the media because people tend to find children's voices, faces, mimics cute, and they can rely more on what children say. For example, it is known that children are used in TV commercials to make the commercials attractive and to benefit from children's credibility. In a study, it is observed that a child image is also used to show off and to create an experienced and arrogant image and so on. "There are commercials that make use of this situation by reproducing these patterns that reveal children's inexperience and introduce them as ignorant, incompetent and clumsy" (Uğurlu and Uğurlu: 2017: 34). This is a kind of exploitation and abuse of children in the media.

The number of screens used in everyday life increases day by day. In the research of television rates of countries, it is found that Turkey ranks first with 330 minutes (Haber.sol, 2017). According to the statistics of TSI, 76% general of Turkey in 2016 have access to the internet. Children often appear on TV or on the Internet. It is seen that children appear as contestants in competition programs, performers in talent shows and figurants or actors in TV series or commercials. These children, who get the appreciation of the audience, gain a fast reputation. However, does this fame affect children?

Fame can be perceived as success by families. For this purpose, there are families who register their children for acting agencies. They think it's right for their children. However, will a studio, a set or an ad set be an appropriate environment for children? The dynamics of these environments are not designed for children. The rehearsals, shootings, working hours and conditions are not planned for children. The child must play the role in the set during the time when he / she will be playing or having fun in the school. Sometimes children may be spoiled with too much interest to play the role. These can have adverse effects on the child. There are many examples of celebrities that cannot cope with fame gained at an early age through the media both in Turkey and in the world. Drew Barrymore, Bobby Driscoll, Brad Renfro, Breatney Spears, Macaulay Culkin, Lindsay Lohan and Natalie Wood are among these. The formation of an individual's personality cannot be explained only by the effects of fame. However, it should be known that this responsibility is a burden that cannot be easily removed.

As good as the previous, beautiful and perfectly performed role will not be enough for the continuation of the fame. In order to take part in a project again, it is necessary to arouse interest. For this reason, in order to keep the attention on the child who has been on the screen or gained fame, cast agencies or their families open and manage social media accounts such as instagram, facebook and so on. To share new and interesting photos, they organize various events that they have never done before and add them to their social media accounts. Children who are expected to play another role will be trying to show themselves to their parents. Moreover, for each child who has to move the bar higher each time, the price may be heavy. On the other hand, children who cannot take a role, cannot continue their reputation and cannot increase the number of followers, may regard themselves as "unsuccessful" and "inadequate". This situation can reach a size that children cannot cope.

Child actors and actresses also play a role in TV programs such as competition programs, shows, television programs, movies and series broadcast in Turkey. After the broadcast of the programs, social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram are opened by parents aiming to increase their children's popularity. Children with increased popularity begin to act in new series, commercials, and are drawn into a consumption cycle.

Method, Scope and Sample

There are at least one series of films on 6 national channels every week in a week's television stream from (Monday to Sunday) April 23rd to April 29th. Within the scope of this research, TV series of ATV, Fox TV, Kanal D, Show TV, Star TV, TRT1 channels which have the highest ratings were examined. As the series of these channels were broadcasted on the internet, they were not recorded, but the episodes of that week were watched on the Internet and the names of the child actors and actresses were tracked. Television channels have their own web pages with cast information. Instagram accounts, youtube accounts, facebook accounts have been examined if child actors and actresses have and within the scope of this research the data is limited with the number of followers of instagram accounts.

Findings

In this section, the TV series broadcast within one week on 6 different national TV channels in Turkey are listed. During the same period, children in TV shows have also been identified.

	ATV	FOX	KANAL D	SHOW TV	STAR TV	TRT1
Monday	8. Gün	Yasak Elma	Siyah Beyaz Aşk	Çukur	Söz	-
Tuesday	Eşkiya Dünyaya Hükümdar Olmaz	Kadın	Mehmed "Bir Cihan Fatihi"	-	Ufak Tefek Cinayetler	-
Wednesday	Sen Anlat Karadeniz	-	-	-	-	Diriliş Ertuğrul
Thursday	Kanatsız Kuşlar	Bizim Hikaye	Vatanım Sensin	Servet	Avlu	Mehmetçik Ku'ul Amare
Friday	Aşk ve Mavi	-	Arka Sokaklar	Fi	İstanbul Gelin	Payitaht
Saturday	-	Adı Zehra	İnsanlık Suçu	Yeni Gelin	Fazilet Hanım ve Kızları	Kalk Gidelim
Sunday	Cennetin Gözyaşları	Savaşçı	Çocuklar Duymasın	Tehlikeli Karım	Jet Sosyete	Aslan Ailem

Table 1. Weekly TV series and child actors/actresses

A total of 30 TV series are broadcast in "prime time" on television channels examined between these dates. There are a total of 16 children players in 11 TV series. During the week there is no day without child actors/actresses. There are child actors/actresses in at least one series of these channels.

Child	Gender	Birthdate	Their Instagram followers	Page Administrator	The Title of the TV series they play in
Doğancan Sarıkaya	M	2004	174 k	Unspecified	Çukur
Ali Semî Sefil	M	2013	48.4 k	Family, Agent	Kadın
Kübra Süzgün	F	2009	86.4 k	Family, Agent	Kadın
Lavinya Ünlüer	F	2011	154 k	Family	Ufak Tefek Cinayetler
Demir Birinci	M	2012	432 k	Agent	Sen Anlat Karadeniz
Yaman Tümen	M	2010	93.8 k	Family, Agent	Diriliş Ertuğrul
Zeynep Selimoğlu	F	2007	None	None	Bizim Hikaye
Alp Akar	M	2006	109 k	Family	Bizim Hikaye
Ömer Sevgi	M	2004	84.3 k	Agent	Bizim Hikaye
Beren Gökyıldız	F	2009	562 k	Family, Agent	Bizim Hikaye
Mihrimah Cankur	F	2011	15.6 k	Unspecified	Avlu
Efe Günay	M	2010	None	None	Arka Sokaklar
Artun Kasapoğlu	M	2008	41.7 k	Family, Agent	İstanbul Gelin
Ülkü Hilal Çiftçi	F	2009	58.1k	Agent	Adı Zehra
Alperen Khamis	M	2003	52.4k	Unspecified	Çocuklar Duymasın
Öykü Güven	F	2003	26.5k (fan page)	Unspecified	Çocuklar Duymasın

Table 2. The age of children in TV series, and their Instagram followers

There are 16 children in total (9 boys, 7 girls) acting in the TV series. The ages of children vary between 5 and 15 years old. There are 2 children each in two series, 4 children in one series and 1 child each in eight series. These children have followers ranging between 15.6 thousand and 562 thousand.

Except two child actors/actresses who play in the series, others have an Instagram account. Most Instagram accounts (10%) are managed by the family and / or the agency. The accounts of Instagram include the names and contact information of their manager or agency.

Child	Gender	Birthdate	Their Instagram followers	Page Administrator
Efe Koçyiğit	M	2011	28 k	Unspecified
Ebrar Alya Demirbilek	F	2012	542 k	Agent
Arda Şahin	M	2013	64.8 k	Agent
Kuzey Demirel	M	2012	28.3 k	Unspecified
Sarp Demirel	M	2012	28.3 k	Unspecified
Melisa Naz Baş	F	2012	6.2 k	Agent
Ada Derin Acarser	F	2011	15.8 k	Unspecified
Efe Dadak	M	2013	80.8 k	Unspecified
Tuğra Öğtem	M	2012	25.5 k	Unspecified
Irmak Yıldız	F	2011	39.6 k	Unspecified

Table 3. Children in Çocuktan Al Haberi Show program and their Instagram followers

There are 10 children, (6 boys and 4 girls) in Çocuktan Al Haberi Show program. The ages of children vary between 5 and 7 years old. All children in the program have Instagram accounts. The accounts of 3 children are managed by the agency. The other 7 children's accounts are not specified by whom the Instagram accounts are managed. However, children are too young to manage their Instagram accounts themselves. These children have followers ranging between 6.2 thousand and 542 thousand followers.

Child	Gender	Birthdate	Their Instagram followers	Page Administrator
Melis Kara	F	2005	35.1k	Agent
Mert Erdoğan	M	2007	14 k	Agent
Ceren Reis	F	2006	41.2 k	Agent
Efe Aydın	M	2005	34.8 k	Agent
Alperen Efe Esmer	F	2007	24.6 k	Agent
Sarp Doruk Kayan	M	2005	None	None
Melissa Giz Cengiz	F	2007	145 k	Unspecified
Berat Efe Parlar	M	2004	113 k	Unspecified
Berke Mutlu	M	2005	20.6 k	Agent
Nehir Gökdemir	F	2006	15.5 k	Agent
Beren Gökyıldız	F	2009	562 k	Agent
Esat Polat Güler	M	2007	73.7 k	Agent
Defne Erşen	F	2008	42.6 k	Unspecified
Kadir Toprak Kataman	M	2004	27.3 k	Unspecified
Alp Akar	M	2006	108 k	Agent
Gülse Göçer	F	2005	117 k	Agent
Yusuf Batuhan Kıracı	M	2004	15.1 k	Unspecified
İhsan Berk Aydın	M	2005	17.6 k	Agent

Table 4. Children in Güldü Güldü TV show program and their Instagram followers

Güldü Güldü has 11 children (7 girls and 4 boys). The ages of children vary between 9 and 13 years old. Except one child who plays in the series, others have an Instagram account. Most of the Instagram accounts (12%) are managed by the family and / or agency. The accounts of Instagram include the names and contact information of their manager or agency. The other 5 children's accounts are not specified by whom the Instagram accounts are managed. These children

have followers (excluding 9-year-old Beren Gökyıldız with 562 thousand followers as she is listed in the previous table (2) as a child actresses in the TV series) ranging between 15.1 thousand and 146 thousand.

Conclusion

Even an ordinary adult doesn't have so many followers. It can be said that these children, who do not know how to read and write, are "micro-celebrity" (internet sensations). In order to increase their popularity and sales, brands try to benefit from the impact of "micro-celebrities" (internet sensations) on their followers as well as their own social network accounts. They use their social networks as a medium for their promotion and advertising activities (Aslan and Ünlü, 2016: 44). With this approach, it is possible to say that Instagram accounts opened on behalf of children who are famous / celebrated by acting on television series, TV shows, contests, advertisements, films, etc., are also used with commercial function. This can be called the commodification of the child. It is also an indicator of the economic use of the child. Increasing the number of followers maintains a cycle by increasing the chances of the child to take part in new projects.

The culture of benefiting from the child in the media multiplies itself as the use of children as mediatic characters in the media in turkey continues, and the fact that children can be used as a source of income without considering that they can be overwhelmed by the burden of fame becomes widespread. This indicates the perception of childhood in society, the visibility of child individuals' problems, and a frightening future for children.

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