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The Impact of the News on Children and Children's Perception of the News

Haberlerin Çocuklar Üzerindeki Etkisi ve Çocuklardaki Algısı

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Öz

Araştırma haber izlemenin çocuklar üzerindeki etkilerini çocuklardan alınan cevaplar doğrultusunda incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Fenomenolojik desende yürütülen araştırmada, uzman görüşü alınarak oluşturulan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu aracılığıyla görüşmeler yapılmıştır. 6-8 yaş arasındaki 105 çocuk ile yapılan görüşmeler sonrasında elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın amacıyla tutarlı olacak şekilde verilerden şu temalar elde edilmiştir: "Haberin amacı", "haberlin anlamı", "haberlin duygusal etkisi" ve "haber ve aile". Araştırmacıların birbirinden bağımsız olarak yapmış oldukları her temaya ait kategoriye temsil edecek kodlamalar arasında iç tutarlılığı belirlemek için Miles ve Huberman modeli kullanılarak güvenirlik analizi yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda çocukların çoğunluğu için haberlerin olumlu bir amaç ama olumsuz anlam taşıdığı, dikkat çeken rengin kırmızı olduğu, üzen haberlerin daha fazla olduğu, ailelerin haberleri tepkisiz bir şekilde izlediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma, medya okuryazarlığı ve çocuk gelişimi konularında çalışmalar yürüten araştırmacılara, eğitimcilere ve ailelere yönelik önemli ipuçları sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuk, Haberler, Televizyon, Aile, Ebeveyn Arabuluculuğu.

Abstract

The research aims to examine the impact of watching the news on children in line with the answers received from them. In the research conducted in the phenomenological design, interviews were conducted through a semi-structured interview form created by getting expert opinion. The data obtained after the interviews with 105 children between the ages of 6 and 8 were analyzed with the descriptive analysis method. Consistent with the purpose of the research, the following themes were obtained from the data: "the purpose of the news", "the meaning of the news", "the emotional impact of the news" and "the news and the family". As a result of the research, it has been concluded that the news has a positive purpose but a negative meaning for most of the children, the color that attracts attention is red, the news that makes children sad is more, and the families watch the news unresponsively. The research provides significant clues for researchers, educators and families working on media literacy and child development.

Keywords: Child, News, Television, Family, Parental Mediation.

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Introduction

Although internet and social media journalism has become widespread today, television news is still followed with interest by people. Therefore, it can be said that the effect of television news on individuals is still valid today.

Although children receive their news information from sources such as family and school, the media and especially television are the main sources of information for children about humanitarian crises, fires and accidents, crime and war (Ball-Rokeach, 2018; Walma van der Molen & Van der Voort, 2000). It is because even if children do not prefer to watch this news themselves, they often encounter the news while searching for other programs or while their parents are watching TV (Cantor, 1998).

Parents, educators and politicians are expressing growing concern about children's exposure to television news. Many of these concerns are based on the fact that in recent years television news has been dominated by stories of crime, violence and pain. Because of these kinds of content, the news is considered to have a harmful effect on children. In addition, the exposure of children to this kind of inappropriate news will also prevent them from building a naive, optimistic and innocent childhood (Carter, 2013; Johnson, 1996; Kunkel, 2017; Riddle et al., 2012). In addition, some studies show that the intense coverage of dramatic and extraordinary incidents in the media can lead to both short-term and permanent fear reactions in children. In addition, various studies have found a relationship between the amount of exposure to the news and the intensity of fear responses to events (Schuster et al., 2001; Wilson et al., 2005). Former First Lady Hillary Clinton argued in a speech in 1994 that children could not protect themselves from the violence shown on TV news and that exposure to such violent content could have negative emotional and psychological effects (Smith, 1994).

Although news programs are regarded as an important source of information that helps citizens to form their attitudes and decisions on fundamental issues such as politics and economy, they are often perceived as inappropriate and even dangerous for children (Gunter et al., 2000). It is because children are perceived as naive and apolitical individuals who should not deal with the complexity of the world around them (Carter & Davies, 2005; Lemish, 2007). It is also assumed that children do not have the necessary cognitive tools to deal with content that is not suitable for them (Buckingham, 2000).

It is possible to see that the news has turned into a commercial commodity and propaganda tool by keeping the competition in the forefront with the concern of being clicked, watched and preferred. The subjects and events on television news are presented with a view to making them remarkable instead of reflecting the facts. As a matter of fact, Postman and Powers state that "the news is whatever managers and reporters say" (Postman & Powers, 2008). The interpretation of a real event from a subjective point of view shows that the information passing through the mental filter of others is presented as the news.

Developed by George Gerbner, "Cultivation Theory" is based on the fact that there is a direct relationship between the time an individual spends in front of television and the possibility of adopting the social events presented on television. This theory examines the effect of mass media on the individual (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). In other words, the more the individual is exposed to television, the more he believes in the reality of the content presented on television by adopting the world view reflected from the message and the value repeated on television (Morgan & Shanahan, 1992). According to Cultivation Theory, television content

acts as a message source in people's minds and affects their personal characteristics such as worldviews, values and beliefs. Therefore, presenting a behavior that may set a bad example in the content presented to children, integrating it with a striking event and constantly exposing children to it can accelerate their process of imitating and adopting the characters on the screen.

Television news, in which various models are presented, has a great effect on gaining positive or negative behaviors through imitation and observation. Social learning theory argues that children learn their behavior from models around them. Children can learn certain behaviors and values not only from living models, but also from characters depicted in the fictional space, which Bandura describes as a "symbolic model" (Bandura, 2006). In addition to learning values such as helping, showing respect or being compassionate by watching television news, children can also normalize and adopt behaviors such as violence and aggression. Therefore, although television news is sometimes regarded as a tool that reflects the society, it also has the potential to lead children to inappropriate behaviors.

Through social learning, children shape their own habits of watching the news and their own reactions to events by observing how their families watch the news. Therefore, what parents are interested in, how they interpret the news and how they react can affect the way children view the news. It is an important opportunity for the family to watch television with the child and to comment on the watched program together with the child to change the effects of television in the desired direction. Parental mediation (Nathanson, 1999), defined as the family's control of the child's media use and family's guidance about the media content consumed, can help children to understand the news content on television correctly. According to Blum-Ross and Livingstone, the purpose of parents' mediation is to reduce the potential negative risks faced by the child during television use (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016). According to Nathanson and Austin et al., parental mediation consists of three different strategies. In the active mediation type, the parent interacts with the child by talking about the content on the television and by helping him understand the issue (Austin et al., 1999; Nathanson, 1999). Through evaluations and explanations, parents express their beliefs and values regarding the television content (Kallio & Ruusuvuori, 2019). In the restrictive mediation type, the parent sets rules that restrict the child's television content and watching time, while in the social co-watching type, the parent watches TV with the children without commenting.

Significant changes in media environments for children have raised two important questions, both in public and academic debates. The first one is the question of "How are children responding to the increasingly abundant and open news coverage?". And the second question that comes to mind is "How can parents and other caregivers deal with their children's reactions to the news?" (Buijzen et al., 2007).

The main problems of this research are the reasons such as the fact that the main news bulletins are broadcast before children's bedtime and usually during the hours when the whole family has the opportunity to watch television together, and they include content that makes children worried and sad. In the light of this information, the main purpose of the research is to reveal what kind of opinions children have about the news and to examine the impact of the news on children. For this purpose, answers to the following questions will be sought in the research:

1. Do children watch the main news bulletins in the evening?

2. What do children think about the purpose of watching the news?
3. What meanings do children attribute to the news?
4. What kind of news makes children sad and happy?
5. What kind of reactions do parents give when watching the news?

1. Method

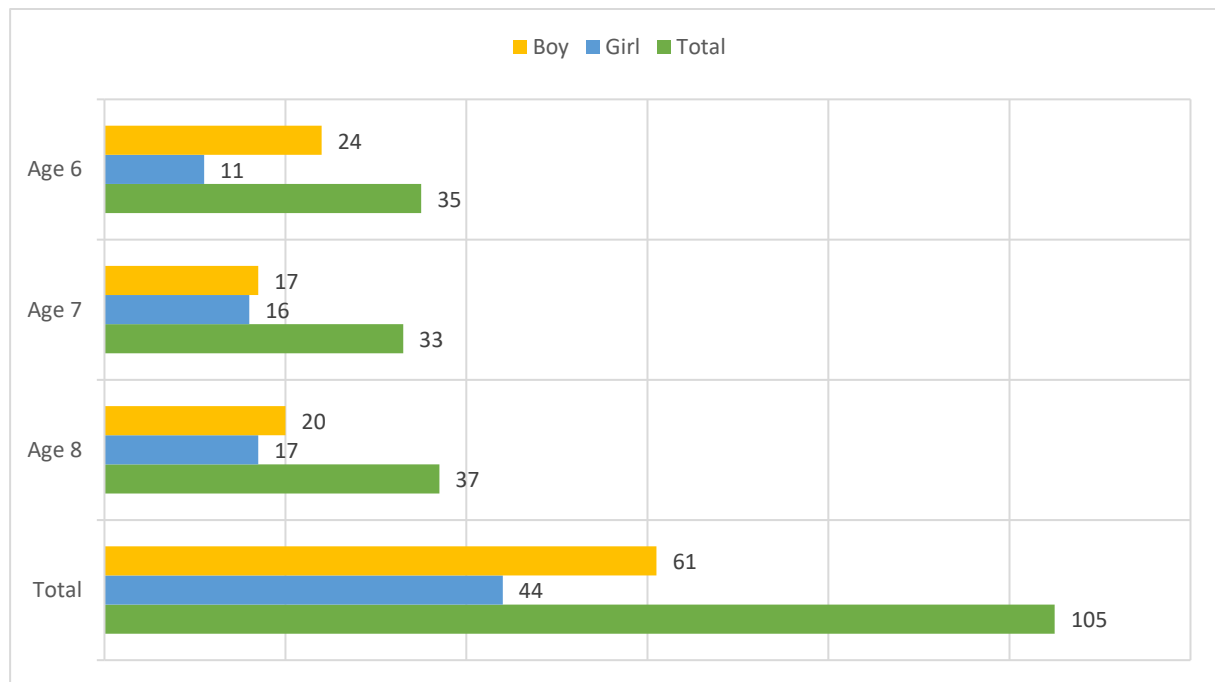
1.1. Pattern of the Research

The research was based on the phenomenology pattern. With the phenomenological design, the researcher tries to explain how one or more participants experience a phenomenon (event, situation, concept, etc.) (Christensen et al., 2014). The basic question of a phenomenological research is thought of as “What is the meaning, structure, and essence of this human group or individual's experience of this phenomenon?” (Patton, 2014). Since this study aims to examine the phenomenon of children’s watching the news, the related experiences of children aged 6-8 were examined.

1.2. Participants

Purposive sampling is generally used in qualitative research designs because it focuses on specific situations. It is because, in qualitative research, it is important to choose the study group as a specific group or person, since a certain subject is investigated in detail (Christensen et al., 2014). In this study, the study group was formed by using purposive sampling method in order to collect healthy and comprehensive data. The study group of the research consists of 105 children between the ages of 6 and 8 who continue their education in Beyoglu and Fatih districts of Istanbul. The age and gender distribution of the study group is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Age and Gender Distribution of the Study Group



1.3. Data Collection Tools

Since the data collection process in phenomenological studies usually includes interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), the data of the research were obtained using the interview technique. The data of the research were formed after the interviews conducted using the semi-structured "Television news interview form for children", developed by the researchers. In the interviews, the general viewpoints of the children between the ages of 6 and 8 who participated in the interview were determined, and the emotional impacts of the news on the children were examined. In the preparation phase of the interview form, the researchers asked for the opinions of two different experts after preparing the semi-structured interview form. After the feedback received from both experts, the interview form was rearranged and given its final form. The final version of the interview form consists of 9 questions. The interview form includes demographic information of children, like age and gender, as well as questions related to the aims of the research, such as "Why do people watch the news?", "Do you watch the news on TV in the evenings?", "Has there been any news that made you sad?"

1.4. Data Collection

The data of the study were collected through interviews with 105 children between the ages of 6 and 8 attending kindergarten and primary school in Istanbul. Ethics committee report was obtained before starting to collect data for the research. After the ethical report was received, approval was obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education regarding the interview. In addition, parental consent forms were obtained from the parents of the children participating in the study. After all approvals, interviews were conducted with the children by the two researchers. Both researchers went to the school where the students to be interviewed were and met the school administrator, classroom teachers and children. It was ensured that the interviews were conducted in a safe environment and the response rate of the children increased. In the interviews, the effects of the stimuli in the environment were minimized and the answers given to the questions asked to the children verbally were noted and recorded by the researchers. The interviews took place between 5-10 minutes on average. The children who participated were coded according to the interview order and gender, and all the data were analyzed in the computer. (For example, the 12th interviewed girl was coded as K12, and the 25th interviewed boy was coded as E25.)

1.5. Data Analysis

The data obtained after the interviews were analyzed with the descriptive analysis method. The data obtained during the descriptive analysis were summarized and interpreted according to the previously determined themes. Before the analysis of the data obtained in the research, 4 themes were determined in a way that would be consistent with the purpose of the research. These themes were determined as "the purpose of the news", "the meaning of the news", "the emotional impact of the news", and "the news and the family". Since the main purpose of the research is to reveal the state of the news in children's minds, 3 separate categories were created for each theme: "positive situation", "negative situation" and "neutral situation". Two of the three researchers who conducted the research made codes to represent the category of each theme determined from the data obtained. Reliability analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model to determine the internal consistency between the codings made by the two researchers independently of each other. According to this model, intercoder consistency is calculated using the formula $\Delta = C \div (C + \partial) \times 100$. In this

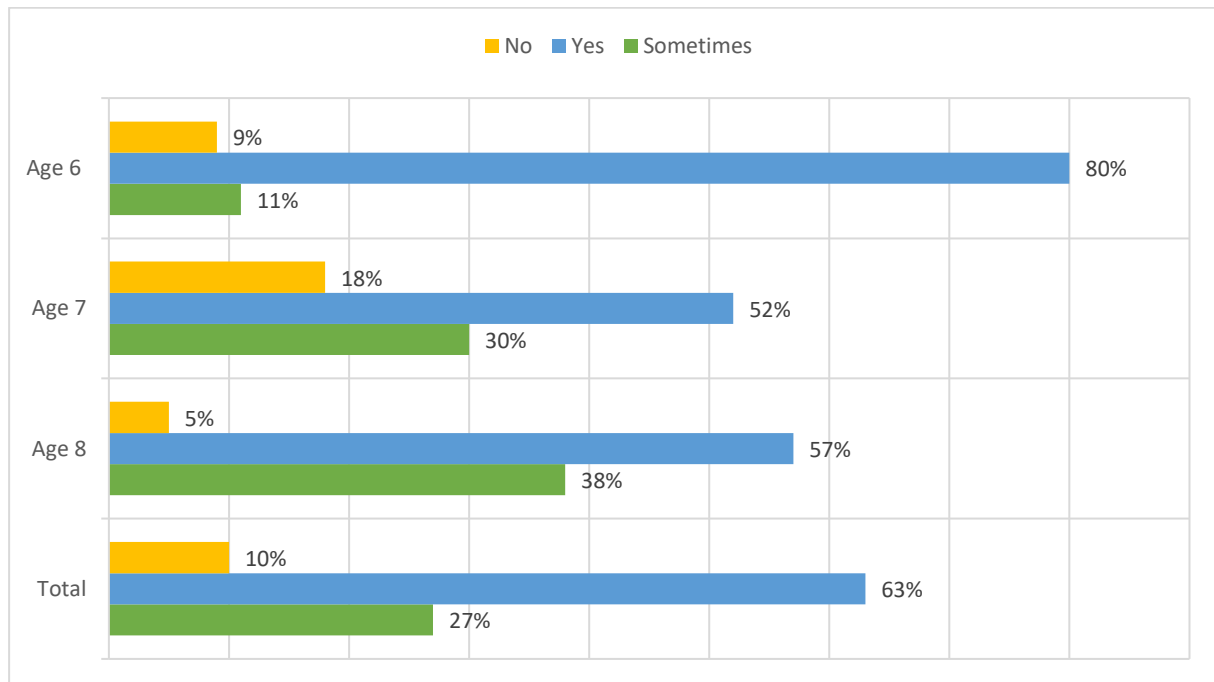
formula; Δ symbolizes the reliability coefficient, C symbolizes the number of subjects/terms on which consensus is reached, and ∂ symbolizes the number of terms on which there is no consensus. After applying this formula, it is expected that the consensus among the coders should be at least 80% in order to determine the internal consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the internal consistency analysis made after the coding of the researchers, the consensus was found to be 97%. After the coding made by two of the researchers, the third researcher examined all the codings with or without consensus as an external evaluator. After the examinations made by the third researcher, a consensus was reached among the 15 codes that did not have a consensus between the two researchers. In the last analysis, direct quotations of the children's views were often included during the explanations of the findings in order to give the views of the interviewed children in depth.

2. Results

The answers obtained from the questions asked to obtain children's opinions about the news were used to reach children's general opinions about the news. It was determined that 50% of the children approached the news from a positive perspective, while 34% had a negative perspective and 14% had a neutral perspective. Since 67% of the children stated that they felt sad while watching the news, it was concluded that the news had an emotional impact on children.

2.1. Whether Children Watch the News

Table 2. Whether Children Watch the News

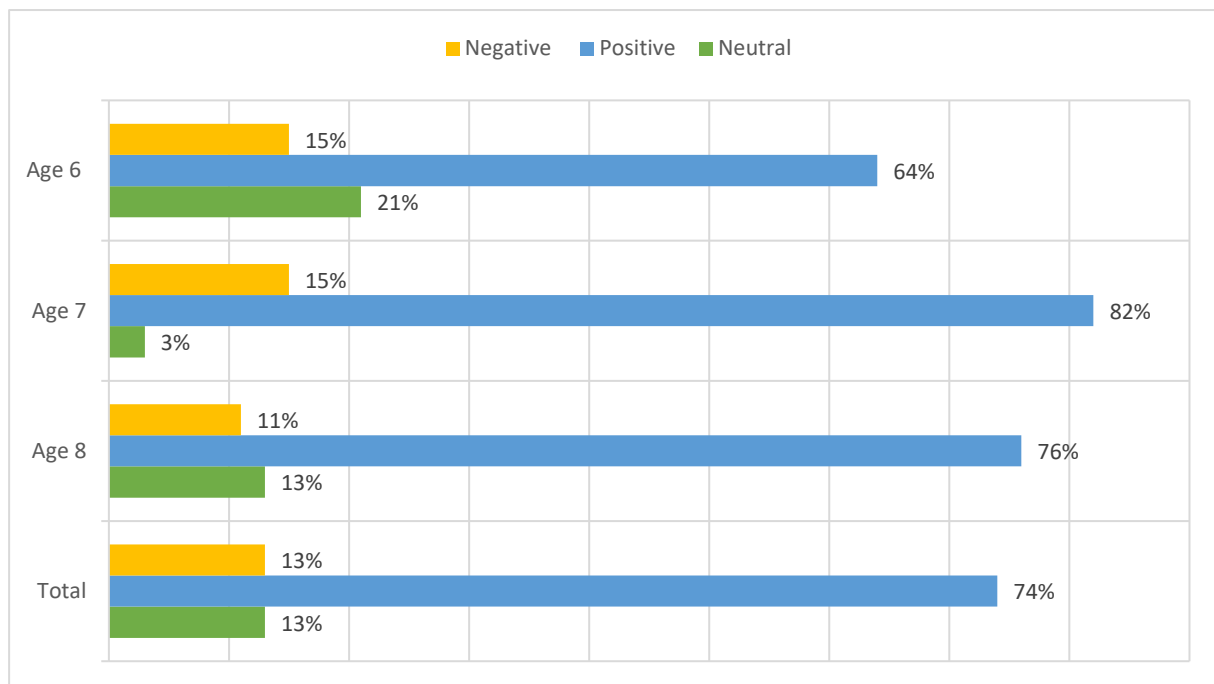


It can be seen in Table 2 that 63% of the children participating in the study stated that they watched the news, while 27% stated that they watched it sometimes. The rate of the children who stated that they did not watch the news was 10%. The total rate of children who stated that they watched the news and sometimes watched it was determined as 90% among the interviewed children. According to this result, 90% of the children in the 6, 7 and 8 age group are in contact with the news. The rate of children aged 6 who stated that they watched the

news was 80%, and the rate of children who stated that they sometimes watched the news was 11%. It has been concluded that 91% of the children in the 6-year-old group come into contact with the main news bulletins in the evening. The rate of children in the 6-year-old group who said that they did not watch the news was 9%. Among the 7-year-old children, the rate of those who stated that they watched the news was 52%, and the rate of children who stated that they sometimes watched the news was 30%. It has been concluded that 82% of children in the 7-year-old group come into contact with the main news bulletins in the evenings. The rate of children aged 7 who said that they did not watch the news was 18%. Among the 8-year-old children, the rate of those who stated that they watched the news was 63%, while the rate of the children who stated that they sometimes watched the news was 27%. It has been concluded that 90% of the children in the 8-year-old group come into contact with the main news bulletins in the evenings. The rate of children aged 8 who said that they did not watch the news was 10%.

2.2. The Purpose of the News

Table 3. Findings Related to the Theme of Purpose of the News

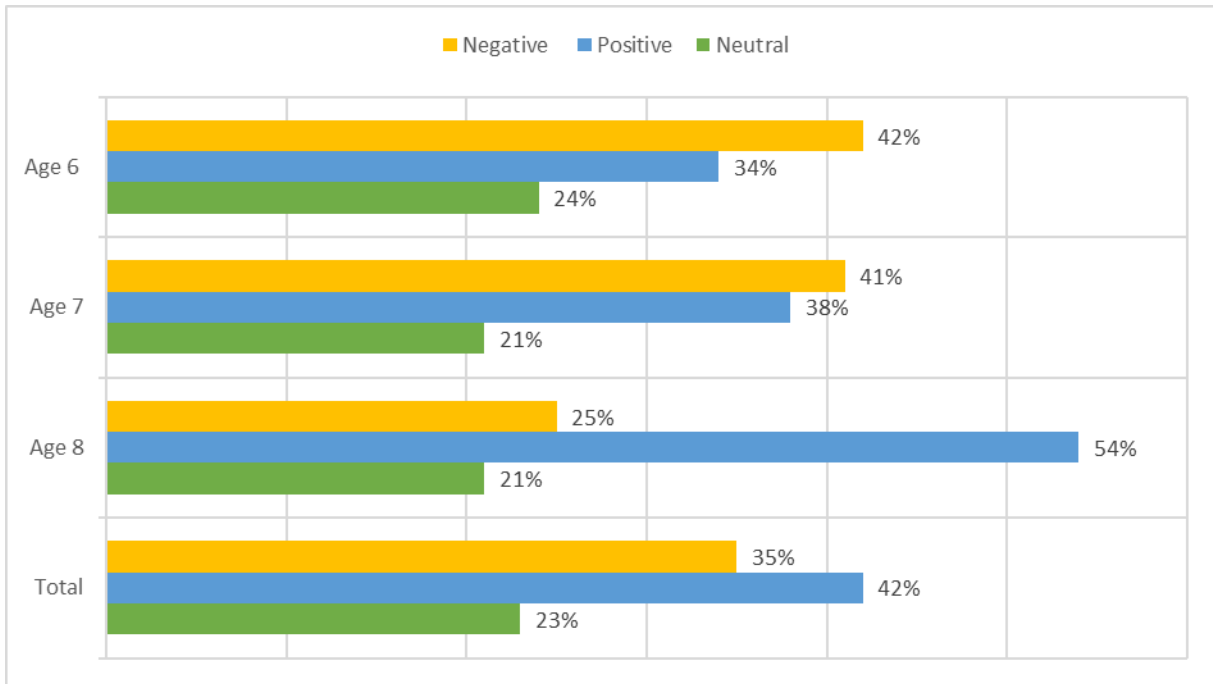


Findings related to the purpose of the news were obtained from the answers given to the question of "Why do people watch the news?", which was among the interview questions. In the light of the data obtained after the interviews with the research group, 3 different categories were obtained about people's purpose of watching the news: positive situation, negative situation and neutral situation. It is seen in Table 3 that 74% of the children participating in the research stated that people watched the news for positive purposes, 13% said they watched it for negative purposes, and 13% stated that the purpose of watching the news was neutral. Among the children who stated that they watched the news for positive purposes, E87 said that people watched the news "to gather information or to learn something". K64 said that people watched the news for a positive purpose, saying "to find out

what is going on in the world". While stating the purpose of watching the news, K91, who was one of those who made the statement that falls under the category of negative situations, thought the purpose of watching the news was "to learn about bad situations". E35 explained the reason for watching the news negatively, replying "to find out if there is an accident, if anyone dies". E46, on the other hand, made a neutral statement, saying only "to look", without putting the news under either a positive or a negative category. 64% of children in the 6-year-old group, 82% of the children in the 7-year-old group, and 76% of the children in the 8-year-old group developed a positive perspective for the purpose of watching the news.

2.3. The Meaning of the News

Table 4. Findings Related to the Theme of Meaning of the News



Findings related to the theme of the meaning of the news were obtained from the answers given to the questions of "What does the news mean to you?" and "If you were a child reporter, what kind of news would you prepare for people?" In the light of the data obtained after the interviews with the research group, 3 different categories were obtained regarding the meaning of the news for children: positive situation, negative situation and neutral situation. According to the data on what the news means for children, news has positive meaning for 42% of the children, negative meaning for 35%, and neutral meaning for 23%. E69, who was among the children who stated that the news had a positive meaning for them, said this about the news: "There are events that tell good things". K6 ascribed a positive meaning to the news by saying "entertainment" to the question of "What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'news'?" E101, on the other hand, was an example of children who ascribed a negative meaning to the news by saying "child abduction". K107 also attributed a negative meaning to the news with the answer "bad things, dropping bombs". E32, one of the children who approached the news neutrally without attaching any positive or negative meaning, said "watching TV" as the answer to the question of "What does the news mean the most to you?" K60 was also among the children who ascribed a neutral meaning to the news with the answer: "Different events come to my mind". Regarding the meaning of the news,

34% of the children in the 6-year-old group attributed positive meaning to the news, while 42% had negative attributions, 38% of the children in the 7-year-old group attributed positive meaning to the news, while, 41% had negative attributions, and 54% of the children in the 8-year-old group attributed positive meaning to the news, while 25% had negative attributions. According to these findings, it is seen that the meaning of the news changes from negative to positive as children get older. Although the rates of attributing positive and negative meaning to the news are close to each other among children aged 6 and 7, it has been found that the meaning of the news is more positive in children aged 8.

2.4. Colors That Catch Children's Attention on the News

Table 5. Colors That Catch Children's Attention on the News

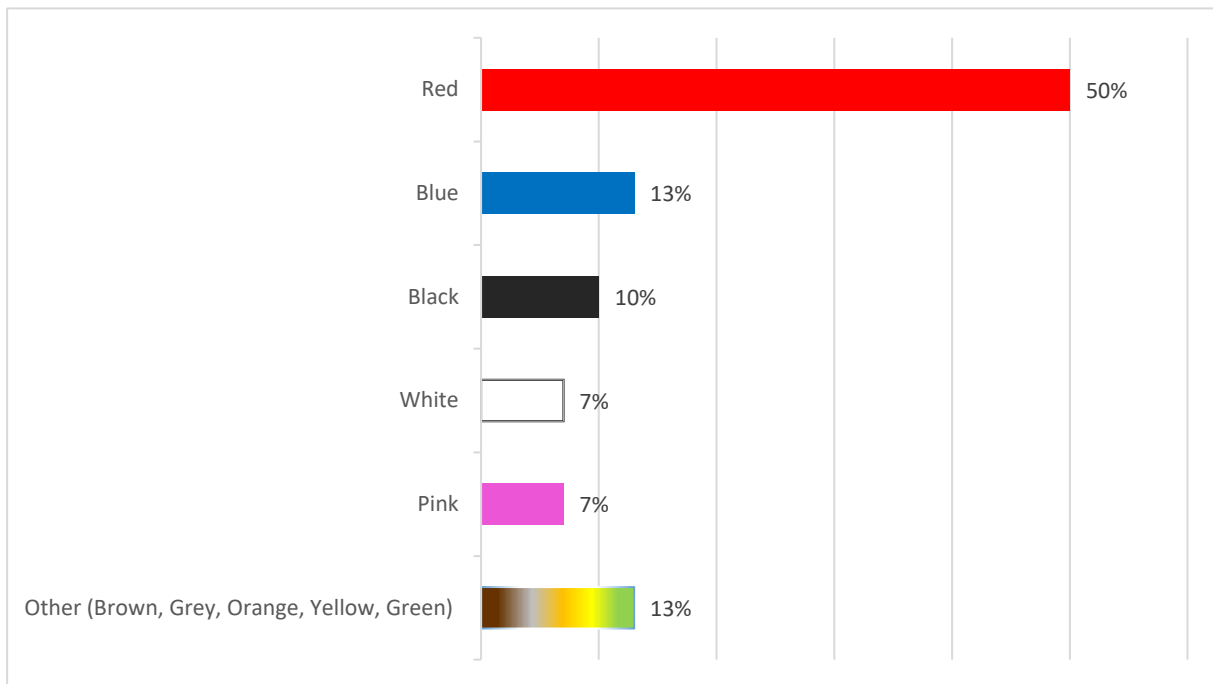


Table 5 shows that 50% of the children interviewed stated that the color that caught their attention while watching television news was red, while 13% stated it was the color blue. The rate of those who stated that black caught their attention while watching television news was 10%. Children's stating that their attention was drawn to both the color white and the color pink, with 7%, after black, emphasizes the importance and attractiveness of visual elements on television news.

2.5. The Emotional Impact of the News

Table 6. The News That Makes Children Sad and Happy

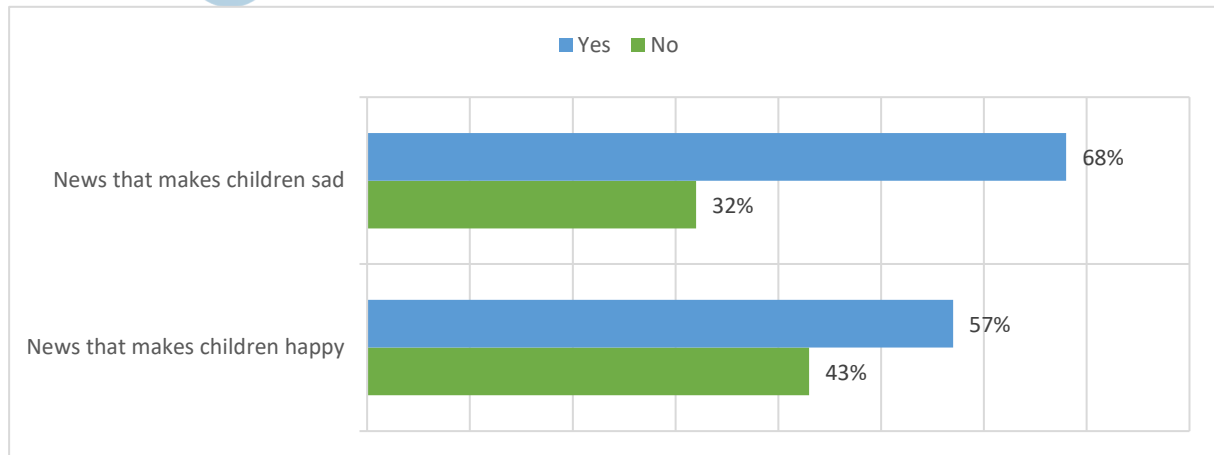


Table 6 shows that 68% of the children stated that they were affected by the news that made them sad, such as natural disasters, war, terrorism, theft, diseases, accident news, and death incidents, while 57% of them stated that they encountered news that made them happy, such as treating animals and meeting their food needs, weather events, the reduction of the pandemic, football, cars, school holidays and news containing funny elements. When the evaluation is made according to the ages of the children; 62% of 6-year-olds, 45% of 7-year-olds, and 62% of 8-year-olds stated that there was news that made them happy, whereas 54% of 6-year-olds, 67% of 7-year-olds, and 78% of 8-year-olds stated that there was news that made them sad. It was observed that as the age of children increased, there was an increase in the number of news that made them sad.

The fact that the news that children are affected by is mostly negative can bring about feelings of sadness, fear, panic and insecurity. For instance, 8-year-old K38 talked about the effect of the incident she watched on the news on his life by saying: "In my dreams, I see the theft incident that I have seen on the news, and it scares me". Similarly, K61 said "I was so scared that the same thing would happen to us" about the news on the collapse of a building, and with this expression, she showed that she was affected by the news, with feelings of fear and insecurity. Even if the child did not experience the collapse of the building directly, she experienced it indirectly through television news, which resulted in anxiety and stress due to the thought of the earthquake as a phenomenon that could happen at any moment.

The question "What was the news that made you sad?" was asked to understand the negative feelings of the children, and the answers given to this question included different topics. In line with the answers given by the children, it was observed that the news that mostly resulted in death and violence revealed the negative feelings of the children. 6-year-old E118 listed the news that made him sad one after the other with the following statements: "Someone died on the plane, someone had a car accident, someone shot a gun, someone died in the military, they dropped a bomb from the helicopter and there was a fire". Similarly, other children stated the news that made them sad. For example, 8-year-old K77 said "Incidents of death and war news of countries", 8-year-old E86 said "People dying in wars", and 6-year-old E45 said "Russia-Ukraine war, why wouldn't they live together?" Apart from the news of death, diseases or wars, there was also news that was interpreted differently by children. For

instance, the following news was shared as the news that made children sad. Stated by 7-year-old E95, the news that a child’s uncle kicked him to death because he was crying at night, and stated by 8-year-old K68, the news that a man cooked cats in the oven and ate them.

According to Table 6, the rate of the news that made children happy is at a substantial level (56%). However, it is possible to see expressions of negative factors even on the news that is considered positive for children. 40% of the children stated the news that made them happy as “having no accidents, having no wars, healing of the diseases, or removal of the masks”, in other words, as “having no negative incidents”. Some news was among the news that made some children happy, such as the news about diseases (K21), news about coronavirus and the Ukraine war (K31), news that the war is about to end now (E17), the decrease of the virus (K14), news that the thief did not enter because they closed their doors (K106), news that the terrorists were killed (E32), news that nothing happened to the people in the car accident (E100).

The question “What was the news that made you happy?” was asked to understand the positive feelings of the children. There were children who gave positive answers to this question other than negative ones. News about meeting the treatment and food needs of animals, news with funny content, and news about school holidays were expressed as news that made children happy. Some news that revealed the positive feelings of the children was shared as follows. K61 said “Children somewhere bought tons of food for all animals”, E112 said “I felt happy when I saw the children playing football”, and E56 said “The news that it snowed in Istanbul made me very happy”.

2.6. The News and the Family

Table 7. Parents’ Attitudes While Watching the News

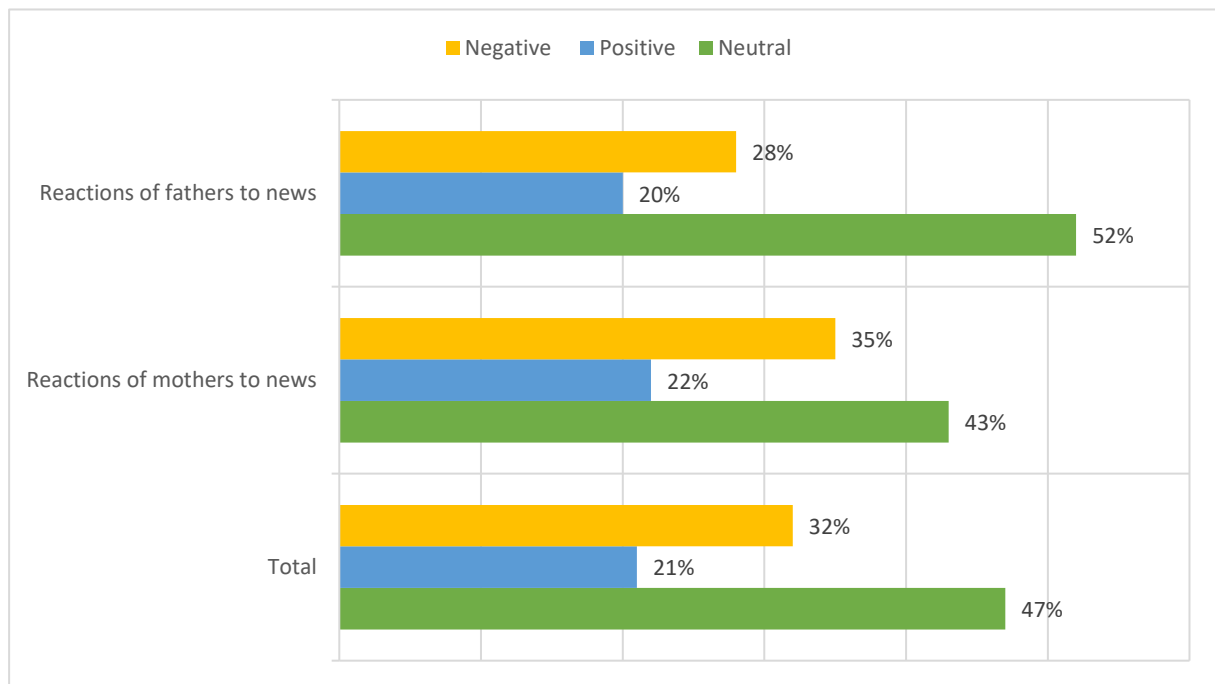


Table 7 shows that, according to children (47%), parents watch television news without any reaction or comment. Family reactions, which were evaluated as neutral based on the

children's answers, were stated as follows. “She is looking at the phone (K34), she is drinking tea (K24), she has no reaction (E113), she is just watching television (E104)”. 32% of the children stated that their parents gave negative reactions such as getting angry, cursing, swearing, and feeling sad while watching the news. When children were asked the question “How do your parents react while watching TV?, they were observed to reply stating their parents’ reactions to news with violent content and inappropriate visuals, which we can call bad news. For example, E23 stated that his mother said “It is nice that the terrorists died”, K74 said her mother was surprised and closed her eyes so as not to see, K11 stated that her mother said “This is bad” and cursed, and K54 said that he (his father) never cried but that she saw him crying while watching the news. Also, K68 said that her father would continue to watch even if he saw terrible things on the news. The reactions of the family while watching the news are important in terms of children's internalizing those behaviors and emotions by imitating them.

According to 21% of the children, families’ positive reactions are considered as protective reactions to children when there is inappropriate news that may negatively affect the development of the child. According to the children's observations, the mother or father displays positive reactions while watching the news, such as turning off the TV or taking the child out of the room. For instance, 8-year-old E30 stated that his father turned off the TV when there was terrible news, saying “Something like this can’t be happening”, 7-year-old E68 stated that his mother turned off the TV when there was terrible news because she could see those terrible things in her dreams, and 8-year-old K52 stated that her mother told her father to turn off the channel when there was bad news.

It was noticed that the children stated that their parents had consistent reactions. For example, it was understood that the parents of 8-year-old E51 had similar reactions as he said “My father tells me to go inside and says this is bad news” and “My mother tells my father to turn off the channel when there is bad news”. Also, 6-year-old E108 expressed his family's consistent reactions, saying “My mother smiles while watching the news” and “My father watches the news nicely”.

3. Discussion

Our research is divided into 4 themes that help us understand children's habits of watching the news and their effects. The theme of the purpose of the news reveals, from children’s perspective, why people watch the news; the theme of the meaning of the news reveals how the content of the news is understood and interpreted by the children; the theme of the emotional impact of the news reveals the effects of the news on children, and the theme of the news and the family reveals families’ habits of watching the news and their attitudes towards the news.

3.1. Whether Children Watch the News

According to the results of the research, 63% of the children stated that they generally watched television news in the evenings, and 27% of them stated that they sometimes watched it. In a study conducted by Riddle et al., it was concluded that 83.5% of the children watched the news (Riddle et al., 2012). Also, a study by Atkin revealed that children were exposed to a large extent to news programs prepared for adults (Atkin, 1978). In this study, it

was determined that 60% of the children watched news programs. In a study conducted by Smith and Wilson, it was concluded that approximately 32% of the primary school students watched television news "every day" or "most days" of the week (Smith & Wilson, 2002). Davies conducted a study with 110 children and concluded that 34% of the children watched adult news very often, 59% sometimes watched it, and only 6.8% never watched it (Davies, 2008). The rates of children's watching the news in Davies' study and in ours are very close to each other.

There are some uncertainties in the interviews carried out with the children to determine their frequency of watching the news. At the beginning of these uncertainties is the fact that children may claim they watch the news even if they watch the news for a very short time (Atkin, 1978). This ambiguous situation didn't exist in our study, as children explained how much they watched the news with the expressions "always" or "sometimes" when explaining their frequency of watching the news.

3.2. People's Purposes of Watching the News According to Children

According to the results obtained from the research, children generally attributed positive meaning to people's purpose of watching the news. The first of these positive meanings is "learning from the news". Similarly, in the study of Drew and Reeves, it was concluded that children learned from the news (Drew & Reeves, 1980). In the same study, it was revealed that the news was considered as a means of entertainment by children as well as learning. It was found that the more the children regarded the news as informative, the more information they received from the news. One of the reasons why children regard news as informative might be the fact that news remains in children's minds for a long time. Similarly, in another study, it was found that children remembered television news significantly (Gunter et al., 2000).

3.3. The Meanings That Children Attribute to the News

According to the findings of the research, 42% of the children attribute positive meaning to the news, and 35% attribute negative meaning to it. As the age of the children increases, the rate of attribution of positive meaning to the news also increases. It can be thought that the reason why 42% of the children attribute positive meaning to the news is that positive news remains more in their minds. Silveira's research shows that children perceive the news as disturbing, controversial and violent images (Silveira, 2019). Also, Alon-Tirosh states that children do not fully understand the content of the news they are exposed to because they are less knowledgeable than adults, and they are also disturbed by the content of this news, which they do not understand (Alon-Tirosh, 2017). In Leeuw et al.'s study, it was observed that the social intentions and behaviors of children increased as they were exposed to content with prosocial behaviors on television news (Leeuw et al., 2015). In another study, it was found that constructive news remained in the minds of children more (Kleemans et al., 2018).

3.4. The Emotional Impact of the News

On television news, negative events are kept in the foreground and popular topics are conveyed strikingly, regardless of whether they are good or bad (Burton, 2002). In our research, it was found that the news that made children sad was more than the news that made them happy. When children were asked about the news that made them sad, it was

revealed that they were affected by natural disasters, wars, terror, theft, diseases, accidents and deaths, and these caused sadness, fear and anxiety in children. These results are in line with the results of research stating that television news causes children to develop stress, anxiety, fear and negative attitudes (Cantor, 1998; Rigel, 1995; Van Der Molen et al., 2002).

Children often experience negative emotions after being exposed to the news (Riddle et al., 2012). The audio and video messages of the news presented strikingly on television news, and the interviews of the victims or eyewitnesses can affect the children who observe the emotional reactions of the victims and can expose them to traumatic elements as a result of the transmission of negative information. According to (Pfefferbaum et al., 2003), post-traumatic stress can occur indirectly (for example, through the media) in addition to the direct experience of being exposed to trauma. Emotional and spiritual development of children who are indirectly exposed to traumatic events can be affected and turn into negative experiences.

Children's thought that the events they watch on the news can happen to them can cause them to have future anxiety and nightmares. The following statements reveal the negative effects of the news. The child coded as K38 in our study said "I dream about the theft incident that I saw on the news, and it scares me", and K61 said "I was so scared when I saw the news of the building collapse, and I feared that the same would happen to us". Although a child has never been in an earthquake or has never encountered a thief, she might fear that these things can happen to her. The fact that a child fears something she has not experienced before or the fact that she has fear of war and future anxiety even though there is no war in her country suggests that it is due to the negative effects of television news. Considering the studies conducted (Cantor, 1998), it has been pointed out that watching television news with violent content may cause a reaction such as worrying about being a victim. Considering that the news reflects the real world, the negative images on the news about real life cause children to interpret the world in a pessimistic way and carry the risk of leaving deep traces on the child, who is in the first years of life (Rigel, 1995).

Similarly, according to Kandemir, it has been suggested that girls experience sleep-related problems after watching television news, and boys show easily irritable behavior (Kandemir, 2011). Bauer reported that 74% of 6-year-olds and 80% of 8-year-olds had dreams about fearful events they watched on television (Bauer, 1976).

News with negative elements not only causes children to feel worried that the same things will happen to them, but also desensitizes the children. Baudrillard underlines that "the news creates an insensitive and unresponsive mass" (Baudrillard, 2003). In such a society, in which social relations are isolated and the necessity of enjoying everything is emphasized, the problem is not that television presents us with entertaining themes, but that all themes are presented as entertainment, and this poses a completely different problem (Postman, 2007). In our research, the 8-year-old child coded as K31 stated that among the news that made her happy, there was news about the Coronavirus and the Ukraine war. Associating the disease that affects the whole world and the state of war in a country with happiness shows that children become desensitized to negative events. It is thought that including too many negative elements with striking sounds and visuals on television news and children getting exposed to them cause the children to accept violence and diseases as natural facts and to normalize them.

3.5. Families' Reactions to the News and Parental Mediation Style

According to the data obtained from our research, 47% of the children stated that their parents watched television news without any reaction or comment, 32% of them said their parents showed negative reactions such as getting angry, cursing, swearing and feeling sad, and 21% of them stated that their parents engaged in positive behaviors such as taking the child out of the room or turning off the television during scenes that are not suitable for the child.

Nathanson grouped the attitudes parents display in order to minimize the harm children are exposed to due to the media, and this grouping is called 'parental reactions according to mediation behaviors' (Nathanson, 1999). When these reactions are examined, co-watching mediation style, which reflects the situation of watching television only in the same environment as the children but without interacting with them, was the most common mediation type in our study, with a rate of 47%. The fact that the children in our research said their parents watched television without reacting and speaking while watching the news with them shows that the parents have a co-watching mediation style. In our study, it is seen that the rate of parents with restrictive mediation style, who limit the time children spend in front of the media and the content of the media, is 21%. The fact that the parents of the children in our study turn off the television or take the child away from the setting where there is television when there is inappropriate news shows that they exhibit behaviors in accordance with the restrictive mediation style. Active mediation style, which is defined as parents talking to children about media content (Nathanson, 1999), has never been found among parent reactions in our study, according to the statements of the children.

From the child's perspective, it is important how the parent watches and reacts to the news. In terms of developmental characteristics, the child first imitates the ones in his immediate environment. Thus, it is inevitable for him to internalize the way his mother or father interprets the events on television news, their behaviors and emotions. While watching the news, the reaction of the parents may affect the child and stimulate permanent and anxiety-provoking stress factors (Ertürk & Gül, 2006). How children interpret and internalize the messages they receive through television depends on family reactions. Parents' comments and statements about the news content can be an important factor in mediating the child's media experiences and helping him gain a worldview (Kallio & Ruusuvaori, 2019). Explanations made by parents are needed in order to prevent misjudgments of the news prepared for adults by children whose decision-making skills are not yet complete. Parents' comments on the content, effective guidance and supervision are required to avoid the influence of the television content that presents both good and bad models for children.

Children create their schemas about the media for the first time with their family. For this reason, the family should be a positive model in order to support the development of children in interpreting the messages on television news and approaching them by thinking critically. Children learn their environment and behaviors by observing those around them (Bandura, 2001). Children can model their parents' reactions against the events when watching television because children imitate the behavior and opinion around them. Therefore, adults should be careful when they display their own behaviors and expressions. Otherwise, parents' positive or negative comment about the news on the agenda can cause children to internalize and defend that comment as if it was their own opinion, as they learn through modelling. It is

possible to make this inference from the discourses of the children in our study (6 year-old E113, 7 year-old F37) towards the politicians on the news. Children's expressing their feelings about international politicians and politicians in their country suggests that these expressions are products of internalized opinions through modeling.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that 90% of the children watch the news shown on the main news bulletins in the evening. For this reason, social awareness studies should be carried out to prevent children from watching the main news bulletins in the evenings.

Research findings also show that children attribute positive meaning to the purpose of watching the news. The fact that the news is regarded as a source of information in children's minds is a striking situation that should be considered. Children should be taught by families and schools what real sources of information are, apart from the news. Media literacy education can be included in school curricula. In this way, children can be trained to understand and interpret news correctly. In addition, children should be told that the purpose of the news is not to provide information, but to convey daily events in the world.

In addition, a significant proportion of the children interviewed attributed negative meaning to the news. The children stated that the events presented visually and audibly in the news were not heartwarming events. Therefore, the news shown in the main news bulletins should be re-evaluated in terms of its relativity to the child. In this regard, both public administrators and channel managers who put the news on the screen should consult experts working with children and get their advice about the news content.

In the interviews with the children, it was learned that the parents also gave negative reactions to the news. Parents need to be informed about active parental mediation, rather than reacting negatively or neutrally to the news. In this regard, social workers and educators should carry out parent training.

Declarations

* *Approval of Institutional Review Board (IRB)*: Ethical approval was received on 07 April 2022 with 2022-14/09 numbered decision from the Ethics Board of Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University.

* *Author's Contribution Rate*: The first author's contribution rate is %35, the second author's contribution rate is %35 and the third author's contribution rate is %30

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