

A Content Analysis of International Children's Picture Books: Representation of Poverty

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Although poverty affects all age groups, children are especially affected because they are dependent for their survival on adults. Many children from around the world feel the impact of poverty on their lives and the lives of their families and friends. Images of poverty found in books can influence children's belief systems. Children's visions of themselves, the world, and their place in the world have been greatly impacted by the literature. Picture books are useful tools for teaching many abstract and complex concepts of the social studies at the elementary level. Therefore, books about poverty create opportunities for adults and children to talk about some tough issues.

Purpose of Study: This study examined the text and images in 15 contemporary international children's picture books published between 1970 and 2004, in order to discover the themes and messages conveyed in text and illustrations to describe the representations of poverty.

Methods: The research methodology for this study was qualitative content analysis that includes methods for data collection and analysis and descriptions of the books and illustrations.

Findings and Results: The books portray poverty in many ways: within a father's absence, child labor, housing, daily life, barter system, life conditions and homelessness. Low national income (less-developed countries), social inequalities (homelessness and class system), inadequate

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employment opportunities, family debts, war, and drought were found as causes of poverty in international picture books.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Poverty is a problem in all countries including under-developed, developing, and developed nations. Societies encounter the poverty in different ways and to different degrees. It is clear that children can be affected in a higher degree by adults when they live in poverty. The analysis of these books reveals that while they provide valuable information about the experiences and the lives of people who live in poverty in international settings, they cannot be used alone to speak about the issues of poverty at a sophisticated level.

Keywords: Poverty, international children's picture books, qualitative research, content analysis.

The world is getting both poorer and richer at the same time. More people than ever before have enough to eat and drink, live in adequate housing, get a good education, and live healthy lives. However, there are also many more people than ever before living without these things. Although poverty affects all age groups, children are especially affected because they are dependent for their survival on adults. As a result, children experience a higher incidence of illness, developmental delays, and poor health conditions when they live in poverty conditions. Historically, people have different opinions about the poverty. If these different views are a paradox for children and adults to deal with, it is important to examine how poverty and the effects of poverty play out in representations of poverty in books written for children around the world. In addition, it is important to know that these representational images impact all children who have exposure to them whether or not they are living in poverty conditions.

Developments in technology, travel, and books help us realize that our world is shrinking and that there are many common experiences across cultures. What happens in distant places can change our lives locally. Books about poverty create opportunities for adults and children to talk about some tough issues. Picture books are useful tools for teaching abstract and complex concepts of social studies at the elementary level. Books allow students to develop visual literacy through sustained viewing time necessary for exploration, critique, and reflection on the images portrayed.

Children's Literature

Children's visions of themselves, the world, and their place in the world have been greatly impacted by the literature. Therefore, the books to which children access have an effect on not only learning to read the words but also learning to read the world (Finn, 1999; Heath, 1983). Children are given a view of the world by children's books (Banks, 1997; Norton, 2003). Morrison (1992) explains that literature can be seen as one of the media to present the world to us. Lowery (2000) states that "Children see books, or texts, everywhere. They are sanctioned in schools and read at home or in library. Books, then present a viable medium for presenting different images and concepts for children" (p.3). These statements support three theoretical

assumptions of the relationship between literature and society: Literature reflects society; literature influences society; and literature functions as social control (Albrecht, 1954). The value and importance of international children's literature have been evaluated by many scholars in the field of children's literature. Freeman and Lehman (2001) state that:

1. Through international literature, children's horizons are expanded as they engage in reading a story not only set in another country but also written from an insider's perspective.
2. Children's literature about other cultures around the world is a way to bring people together, to travel the globe, to bridge our differences, and to rejoice in our common joys and triumphs.
3. Literature can increase international understanding and help to remove barriers among people (pp. vii-viii).

What constitutes good children's international/multicultural literature? If books are to help children deal with social issues, conflicts, and concerns, they should foster realistic rather than stereotypical attitudes. Through the articles in *Stories matter*, Fox and Short (2003) point that books should meet the criteria for good children's literature regardless of content. Authenticity is also vital to literature selections. The books should be evaluated to make sure they are free from stereotyping and they reflect the values and beliefs of the culture they represent. The authors also caution against being too "politically correct," so that a variety of perspectives exist in the stories. Those who research authentic multicultural literature agree that, compared to the number of children's books published each year, the number of books focusing on minority cultures is extremely low. Of the few that are published, a small percentage could be considered authentic, or culturally conscious.

Poverty

Most economists use the income or consumption rates to measure poverty. Kingdon and Knight (2006) explain that this represents a narrow view of the issue, and they show how many scholars describe the poverty within broader criteria such as "fulfillment of 'basic needs' and the 'capabilities' to be and to do things of intrinsic worth" (p. 1199). Habitat World's (2003) description of poverty reflects this reality. Habitat World lists five things about poverty around the world. These are:

1. Geography matters: The southern hemisphere is the home of the majority of the world's poor.
2. Half the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day, but we should realize that poverty is more than income. It is the result of insecurity, inequality, poor health, and illiteracy.
3. Poor health makes people poor, and being poor makes people sick.
4. Gender matters: Women especially lack rights in Africa, western Asia, and Latin America.
5. Lacking clean water and adequate sanitation exacerbates poverty. Some 2.4 billion people lack adequate sanitation; 1.1 billion have no clean water.

Historically, liberals and conservatives have different opinions over the causes of poverty. Liberals explain the poverty with a focus on economic, social, and structural inequities as causes. Conservatives explain the poverty with a focus on individual defects as causes (Sider, 1999). These assumptions about poverty such as people deserve their social class, social class results from level of hard work or intelligence, and poverty and economic class are mostly about money and assets have been described by researchers as myths that societies hold about poverty (Hill, 1996; Russell, 1996). What is important about these beliefs is that they result in a number of stereotypical assumptions about the poor and about poverty in general. Seeing the poor as immoral or lazy and ignorant, the responsibility for poverty and its consequences have two major faulty assumptions (hooks, 2000). These beliefs are important because they can impact our attitudes toward the poor and our attributions for poverty (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001).

Researching the Images of Poverty

There are many research studies on poverty and children's literature, but a small body of work exists on the images of children experiencing poverty. For example, Chafel, Fitzgibbons, Cutter, and Burke-Weiner (1997) analyzed 18 books in their relation to poverty and young children. Using a content analysis, they described nine categories to create a schema for objectively and systematically quantifying the text and illustrations in the books. These categories were; (a) occupation, (b) income, (c) employment, (d) unemployment, (e) race, (f) ethnicity, (g) geographic locale, (h) education, (i) family structure, and other variables usually associated with these categories (e.g., sex, age, and race). They found all nine categories in the books along with a range of associated variables. Lamme (2000) examined children's picture books in their relation to images of poverty. Mainly, she examined how authors and illustrators portray the children of poverty in 20 children's picture books with international settings. She lists fathers' absence, child labor, transportation, housing, lack of material goods, and barter system as causes and representations of poverty.

Taylor and Napier (1992) examined how economically deprived people were portrayed in selected works of children's literature, including 30 children's books of realistic fiction by award winning illustrators and authors. They found that:

1. Almost all economically disadvantaged characters were described as attractive.
2. The books especially written by winners of Caldecott Award and Honor Books portrayed young black males as economically deprived at a significantly higher rate than white males.
3. Books written by winners of Newbery Award and Honor Books portrayed young white females as economically deprived at a slightly higher rate than males.
4. More children than adults were portrayed as economically deprived in both Caldecott and Newbery books (p. 15).

Similarly, Fitzgibbons and Tilley (1999) focused on 20 contemporary realistic fiction books for youth, in middle school and above, to analyze the images of

poverty. They conclude that, in general, books rely on concrete images of poverty, but they do not adequately represent current demographics for people living in poverty. Some researchers also looked at the portrayal of poverty in textbooks. For example, Sleeter and Grant (1991) examined 47 elementary textbooks, and they found that the books, in general, conveyed the reflection of a society unstratified by class.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the text and images in 15 contemporary international children's picture books published between 1970 and 2004 and to discover the themes and messages conveyed in text and illustrations to describe the representations of poverty.

Methodology

The research methodology for this study was qualitative content analysis that includes methods for data collection and analysis, and descriptions of the books and illustrations. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stated that "qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278).

According to Short (1995), content analysis "provides in-depth contextual analyses and so presents a powerful exploration of content within the framework" (p. 21). Crossing international boundaries through literature, we carefully examined the books considering issues and criteria such as availability, authenticity, translation, publishing, language, illustrations, accuracy, portrayal of characters, and authors' qualifications and backgrounds. Based on the reviews of the books in academic journals and library databases, recommendations from experts of children's literature and library specialists, and searches on the Internet and book reviews, 15 well-known international children's picture books from 14 different countries, written in English, were purposefully selected to analyze for this study.

To generate data with which to look at poverty in international children's picture books, we completed a content analysis on the text and illustrations appearing in each book. We focused on the story lines for textual images, illustrations for visual images, and symbolic messages for associated images of poverty.

Books Used in the Study

Location of the Books

Habitat World (2003) lists the geographic location as a first sign of poverty. Books from African territories set in southern hemisphere, and two of the books set in America include Caribbean territories from dense poverty populations. Even if the majority of the world's poor live in southern hemisphere, poverty can be seen all around the world in different forms. Therefore, our selections include books set in both hemispheres and different continents and countries. Table 1 indicates that out of 15 books, 6 are set in Africa, 4 are set in America, 3 are set in Asia, and 2 are set in Europe.

Author Perspectives

Cultural authenticity is an important issue when it comes to writing, illustrating and publishing children's books. Cai (2003) states "Before authors try to write about another culture, they should ask themselves whether they have acquired the specific perspective of that culture, in other words, whether they have developed a culturally specific sense of its reality" (p. 178). Table 1 indicates that out of 15 authors, 4 of them wrote a book about their own culture (Lewin, 1992; Olaleye, 2001; Park & Park, 2000; Sonneborn, 1970). Five of the 11 authors have several experiences about their countries in which their stories set. These experiences include living in that country (Schermbucker, 1991), being a peace corps volunteer in that country (Stuve-Bodeen, 2002), and having several years or months of experiences in the country (Riecken, 1996; Williams, 1990; Williams, 1998). We could not find any information about the rest of the authors' experiences with the culture in which their stories were set except for their research on the content of the books.

Illustrations

Cohee (2000) states that "Quality of line, value, color and the artist's style of characterization convey messages that guide young audiences to empathic understanding of contemporary social issues and/or global experiences" (p. 30). Illustrations can portray the poverty in ways that mere words cannot. Images of poverty in these books representing different locations may help reader acquire a more conscious understanding about social issues around them. Except for "*The royal bee*" that has oil paint illustrations and four with mixed media, the rest of the books have watercolor illustrations. Using watercolor illustrations bring the problem that illustrator not able to work with small details. But also, this may be considered as a sign of simple life. Because of the illustrators' color choices, like Lamme's (2000) argument, illustrations gloss over the issue of poverty in these books.

Table 1
Evaluation of the Books

Title	Location	Author perspectives	Representation/ causes of poverty
<i>Bikes for rent</i>	Nigeria	Insider	Daily life / low national income
<i>Charlie's house</i>	South Africa	Outsider	Life condition / low national income
<i>The Christmas angel</i>	Germany	Outsider	Homeless/social inequality
<i>The day of Ahmed's secret</i>	Egypt	Outsider	Child labor / low national income

(Table I continues)

Table 1 continued

Title	Location	Author perspectives	Representation/ causes of poverty
<i>Elizabeth's school</i>	Tanzania	Outsider	Life condition / low national income
<i>Friday night is papa night</i>	Puerto Rica	Insider	Father's absence / inadequate employment opportunities
<i>Galimoto</i>	Malawi	Outsider	Barter system / low national income
<i>Jafta, the homecoming</i>	South Africa	Insider	Father's absence / low national income \ inadequate employment opportunities
<i>Painted dreams</i>	Haiti	Outsider	Child labor / inadequate employment opportunities
<i>The royal bee</i>	Korea	Insider	Life condition / social inequality-class system
<i>The seven Gods of luck</i>	Japan	Outsider	Child labor / family debts
<i>Today is the day</i>	Mexico	Outsider	Father's absence / drought-inadequate employment opportunities
<i>Harvesting hope</i>	United States	Outsider	Life condition / drought
<i>Boxes for Katje</i>	The Netherlands	Outsider	War / post war condition
<i>The hungry coat</i>	Turkey	Outsider	Life condition / self appearance

Results

Emerged from the content analysis of the international children's picture books as representations of poverty, this section includes following themes and issues: father's absence, child labor, housing, daily life, barter system, life conditions, and homelessness.

Father's Absence

Father's absence is one of the reasons for the increased number of children living at or below the poverty level. In all cases, they work at away from home for their dependents. Table 1 indicates that out of 15 books, 3 of them present the father's absence in their stories. In *Friday night* (Sonneborn, 1970), Pedre wonders about why his papa does not come home every night, while Anna's papa comes home. Mama says, "Poor papa has to work very hard. He has to have two jobs to get enough money so we can eat and have a place to live. His jobs are far from here." This conversation presents low national income as a reason for papa's being away from home.

Yesenia has hopes and fears about her father's homecoming. He has been in the city for 6 months because drought made it impossible for him to farm, in the *Today is the day* (Riecken, 1996). Yesenia's mother explains, "There's been no rain for months, and corn won't grow in the dust. There are no jobs, Yese. He has to go where the money is." Droughts as well as inadequate employment opportunities were the main answers to Yesenia's question of "why did papa leave?" *Jafta the homecoming* (Lewin, 1992) is about a child's joy about his father, who is coming home from the mines where he works. Jafta says, "He's been in the city, making money for us, working down a deep hole in the ground, and he's left a big hole in our lives." Inadequate employment opportunity is seen as a reason for father's absence. But the book also brought attention to some issues for adult readers that many African-American people had to work in mines under bad conditions for many years in South Africa, as a minority population whites had power and wealth.

Child Labor

Child labor can be related to many variables such as the poverty status of the household, the wages of the parents, adult employment rate, education of the head of household, social norms and interactions, and legal restrictions against child labor (Lopez-Calva, 2001). The presence of child labor in our books, with the exception of *The day of Ahmed's secret* (Heide & Gilliland, 1990), does not convey the hard realities and conditions of children who work all around the world. Because of her family's poor condition to be able to buy paints for her, 8-year-old Ti Marie finds her own way to create pictures in *Painted dreams* (Williams, 1998). Ti Marie's mother says, "We have no money for such things" as an answer to Ti Marie's request for money to buy paints. Inadequate employment opportunities for well-paid jobs as well as low national income were reasons for the poorness of Ti Marie's family.

In *The day of Ahmed's secret* (Heide & Gilliland, 1990), we read the story of a young Egyptian boy who describes the city of Cairo as he goes about his daily work and waits for the evening to share a special surprise with his family. Ahmed's father says, "Hurry to grow strong, Ahmed." The story continues from Ahmed's perspective that "for the first time I saw his face had a tired look, like the faces of the old men in the city." Even with Ahmed's help, family lives in poor conditions that point the low national income as well as inadequate well-paid job opportunities in Cairo for poorly educated adults. In *Bikes for rent*, (Olaleye, 2001), we experience a Nigerian young boy who works hard so that he can rent a bicycle and ride with the other boys. Child labor is represented as a sign of poverty in illustrations that show people have poor living conditions.

Housing

Safety and reasonable priced housing are crucial necessities for every family. The places where a family lives are a very apparent scene in both illustrations and texts for a sign of poverty in some books. For example, in *Charlie's house* (Schermbucker, 1991), we journey to a South African ghetto where Charlie lives with his mother and grandmother in a shelter. During the winter "Charlie watched his mother move the

furniture and place pots on the cement floor to catch the leaks. She sighed while the water dripped." Poor housing conditions are represented as a sign of poverty in this story. Low national income is the main cause for Charlie's family to have to live in such poor conditions.

Daily Life

In some books, we take journeys through places, which reflect even small things such as walking on bare feet or having old dresses as signs of poverty. *Elizabeth's school* (Stuve-Bodeen, 2002) takes us on a first-day school experience of a young Tanzanian girl, who greatly enjoys going to school. Elizabeth has new shoes because she is starting school. The illustrations show that her father wears slippers rather than shoes and all family members walk on bare feet. Also, their house is illustrated in a way that they live in poor condition. Living in a less-developed country with low national income are main causes of the poverty for Elizabeth's family. In the *Hungry coat* (Demi, 2004), Demi introduces us to a Turkish folk hero, Nasrettin Hoca, who attends a friend's banquet clad in a filthy, tattered coat. The host is embarrassed, the guests shun him, and no one serves him food. Nasrettin goes home, bathes and dresses in his finest clothes, and returns to the banquet, where he stuffs food into his coat. Asked why he feeds his coat, Nasrettin notes his earlier appearance and explains, "This shows it was the coat and not me that you invited to your banquet." One's appearance is the criterion for evaluating poverty in this book.

Barter System

The practice of "bartering" is found in *Galimoto* (Williams, 1990). We witness the poor people's daily activities with a young African boy who tries to find the materials to make a special toy. As a sign of poverty, Kondi uses barter system by giving his knife to his friend to get more wires. In addition to barter system, illustrations of bare feet children and their daily life show that they live in a poor condition.

Life Conditions

Events during a post-war period, social structure in the lived society, and lack of educational experiences were also presented as signs of poverty in many books. *The royal bee* (Park & Park, 2000) takes us a century journey that only wealthy Korean children are allowed to attend school. A poor boy named Song-ho learns by listening outside a schoolroom door, which eventually earns him a chance to better himself and make life easier for his widowed mother. Having lack of opportunity to go to school as well as doing all house chores himself as a child is represented as signs of poverty in this story. *Harvesting hope* (Krull, 2003) is a biography of Cesar Chavez from age 10 when he and his family lived happily on their Arizona ranch to age 38 when he led a peaceful protest against California migrant workers' working conditions. The book challenges the reader to think on a few socio-cultural details such as "White Trade Only" signs and why Chavez couldn't speak Spanish in school. The families' financial difficulties, laboring in the fields and the inhuman living

conditions imposed by the growers' are represented as images of poverty in the book.

Boxes for Katje (Fleming, 2003) takes us to the life in Katje's town of Olst in Holland after World War II. Her family, like most Dutch families, must patch their old worn clothing and go without everyday things like soap and milk. Writing to her American friend in thanks for the care package, Katje begins to receive larger boxes. The living conditions of the town people are represented as an example of poverty in this book. *The seven Gods of luck* (Kudler, 1997) is an adaptation of a Japanese folktale that about two poor Japanese children hope to be able to celebrate New Year's Day properly. "Mama-san, did you bring home the rice for the rice cakes?" ask Sachiko and Kenji. "There will be no New Year's feast for us this year. To pay off our debts, I had to use all the money we had" is the mama's answer to the children. Family debts were the main reason not to be able to celebrate New Year for the family.

Homelessness

Poverty is one of the underlying causes of homelessness. Other factors, many of which are inter-related, also cause homelessness such as unemployment, high cost of buying or renting a home, inadequate community support services, ill-health, drugs and alcohol misuse. Maria sees a old man and asks, "Doesn't he have any home? You mean he has to search for food? Even at Christmas?" During the rush hours of Christmas, a homeless person is represented as an example of poverty in *The Christmas angel* (Vainio, 1995).

Discussion

There are many reasons for poverty offered and many different ways that families cope with living in poverty in international children's picture books. Many children from around the world feel the impact of poverty on their lives and the lives of their families and friends. Families display amazing resilience in these books as they strive to survive.

Even though father's absence, child labor, housing, and some social issues point out the poverty, still many things are not clear in these books. In *Charlie's house* (Schermbucker, 1991), we have no access information about Charlie's father. Living with a single parent might be considered as a sign of poverty. Also, many fathers go away from home because of lack of job opportunity, but we have no information about their educational levels. Even in all houses represented without books or any educational material, information about their jobs may tell more about the causes of poverty in these books. Except for the "*The Christmas angel*" (Vainio, 1995), all books represent poor families and children. Only *The Christmas angel* (Vainio, 1995) includes the main character live in good conditions. Mainly, in these stories, poor people's perspectives represent poverty. Similar to Taylor and Napier (1992), we found that the main characters of the stories are poor, but they are happy people, and every story has a happy ending. Celebration either with family, friends, and people around the main character or by herself is illustrated at the end of the every story. All

characters are represented as imaginative, helpful for their families, and well behaved.

Out of 15 international children's picture books used in our study, 6 of them were used by Lamme (2000) in her study on images of poverty. These books are *The day of Ahmed's secret*, *Jafta, the homecoming*, *Today is the day*, *Charlie's house*, *Galimoto*, and *Painted dreams*. Even though we used a different list of books, we came up with similar themes. Out of 9 different books, 6 of them were published after Lamme's (2000) study. This is a sign that images of poverty were seen from similar perspectives in later books by both illustrators and authors.

It should be noted that the results of this study include a small number of books on poverty. In congruence with Fitzgibbons and Tilley (1999), we should state that the images of poverty do not adequately represent current demographics for people living in poverty. Poverty is a problem for all countries including under-developed, developing, and developed countries. In another word, all societies encounter the poverty in different degrees. And in encountering the poverty, it is clear that children can be affected in a higher degree from adults.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

The present study was based on the assumption that images of poverty found in books can influence children's belief systems because research confirms that books have the potential for educating children about social issues (Campbell & Wittenberg, 1980). Olen, Machet, and Marchand (1998) stated that "children's books are a mirror of society's attitudes, values, norms and perceptions" (p. 78). Therefore, an analysis of picture books should reveal current attitudes toward poverty and related concepts and also reflect the similarities and differences in the various parts of the world. According to Buffon (1979), economic principles are a part of our everyday life, so it would seem imperative that children understand these concepts as soon as possible. Acknowledging these, teachers can view children's books as an opportunity to teach economic and geographical concepts. And as Royce (2006) stated

"Literature has power. It is a weapon in the fight against bigotry and hypocrisy and ignorance. Literature can open minds, help us cross those borders, give us understanding. And at its best, international literature does not just tell us about other people; at its best, it tells us about ourselves" (p. 38).

Another way is that these books help readers to overcome some of the prejudices and myths about poverty and people who are poor. For example, it is commonly believed that people live in poverty because they do not work. In reality and it can be seen in some of our selected books that many of them work in full-time jobs, but earn such low that they cannot pull them and their families out of poverty. And we can also see that children, the elderly, and people of color suffer disproportionately from poverty.

The analysis of these books revealed that while they give valuable experiences about the lives of people who live in poverty in international settings, these books cannot be left alone to speak for themselves about the issue of poverty at a sophisticated level. To use these books in the classrooms, we need a more conscious effort to integrate them rather than just adding the books reflecting poverty into curriculum.

Future research about the images of poverty in picture books can be focused on the cultural and geographical variations. Also, impact of these books and images on the reader and implications for educational context would be other directions for researchers.

Many of the books that were examined in our study are not available for Turkish readers in Turkey's book market. A small number of international children's books are translated into Turkish each year by many publishers. Because of the big publishers' different interests, not only the number of the books but also the selected books to translate into Turkish by publishers are questionable in terms of their literary qualities, variations in genres, and selections of countries and cultures. According to Taxel and Ward (2000), primarily sociocultural and political forces always have influenced the publishing industry, especially children's book publishing. Similarly, Hade and Edmondson (2003) explain how long tradition in publishing as an intellectually and politically engaged profession has changed recently to owner's only interest in making money. Therefore, we need to support the efforts of publishers especially who bring the international books to Turkey, and we should have a strong desire to learn about the literature of other countries and cultures.

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Yabancı Resimli Çocuk Kitaplarının İçerik Analizi: Yoksulluğun Görünümü (Özet)

Problem Durumu: Yoksulluk tüm yaş gruplarını etkilemesine rağmen, başkalarına bağımlı olarak yaşama durumunda olan çocuklar bundan diğer yaş gruplarına oranla daha fazla etkilenmektedir. Dünyada milyonlarca çocuk kendi yaşamları, aileleri ve yakın çevreleri aracılığıyla yoksulluğun etkisini doğrudan hissetmektedir. Çünkü teknolojik gelişmeler, iş ve gezi amaçlı seyahatler ve kitaplar bizlere dünyanın ortak bir yaşam merkezi olduğunu göstermekte bu nedenle sınırlarımız ötesinde olanlar bizi doğrudan etkilemektedir. Bu etkiler özellikle kitaplar ve medya aracılığı ile tüm yaş grupları tarafından izlenebilmektedir. Edebiyat ister çocuk ister yetişkin olsun bireylerin kendileri, çevreleri ve dış dünya hakkındaki görüşlerini etkileyen ya da yeni değerlerin oluşmasına katkıda bulunan etkili bir araçtır. Bu konuda yapılan araştırmalar çocuklar için yazılmış olan kitapların çocukları sosyal konular üzerinde bilgilendirdiğini ve onların görüşlerini etkilediğini göstermektedir. Bu bilgilendirme ve etkileme süreci yoksulluk kavramı açısından ele alındığında çocuklar tarafından okunan ve incelenen kitaplar çocukların yoksullar ve yoksulluk üzerindeki düşüncelerini ve gelecekte yoksullukla mücadeleye olan ilgi ve tutumlarını etkileyecektir. Bu nedenle yoksulluk hakkında yazılan kitaplar yetişkin ve çocuklar için yoksulluk ve bununla ilgili diğer sosyal içerikli konularda konuşma ve tartışma fırsatları sunacaktır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı 1970-2004 yılları arasında yayınlanmış olan Dünya üzerindeki ondört farklı coğrafi bölgeyi içeren onbeş yabancı resimli çocuk kitabının metin ve görsel içeriklerinde yer alan, mesajlar ve işlenen konular açısından yoksulluğun görünümünü incelemektir. Bu amaca ek olarak incelenen kitapların niteliksel bir inceleme yoluyla değerlendirmelerini yapma amacı güdülmüştür.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Bu çalışmada verilerin toplanması, analizi, metin ve görsel içeriğin incelenmesinde içerik analizine dayalı nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Yapılan metinsel içerik incelemeleri, görsel içerik incelemeleri ve kitaplarda yer alan açık ve gizli mesajların incelenmesi yoluyla derinliğine yapılan bir araştırma sonucu yoksulluğun görünümü nedenleri ile birlikte ortaya çıkarılmaya çalışılmıştır. Çalışmada ondört farklı ülkeden seçilen onbeş yabancı resimli çocuk kitabı incelenmiştir. Kitapların tamamının dili İngilizce'dir. Yabancı nitelik taşıyanları nedeniyle kitapların okuyucular tarafından ulaşılma düzeyleri, içeriklerinin niteliği, çeviri özellikleri, karakterlerin sunuluşu ve yazarların konu ve yazmış oldukları kültürlerle ilgili deneyimleri dikkatli bir şekilde incelenmiştir.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Kitaplarda yoksulluğun görünümü babanın evden uzakta olması (3 kitap), çocuk işçiliği (3 kitap), barınma (1 kitap), günlük yaşam döngüsü (2 kitap), alışveriş sistemi (1 kitap), yaşam koşulları (4 kitap) ve evsizlik (1 kitap) şeklinde okuyucuya sunulmaktadır. Düşük ulusal gelir düzeyi (az gelişmiş ülkeler), sosyal eşitsizlikler (evsizlik, sınıf sistemi), yetersiz iş olanakları, aile borçları, savaş sonrası yaşanan kıtlık ve kuraklığa dayalı tarımsal sorunlar yabancı resimli çocuk kitaplarında yoksulluğun nedenleri olarak gösterilmiştir.

Yazarların yazmış oldukları kitaplarda yer alan k lt rle ilgili deneyimleri incelendiđinde d rt yazarın kendi k lt r  hakkında yazdıđı, beş yazarın yazmış oldukları k lt rler hakkında o b lgede deđişik s relerde bulunma şeklinde deneyimlere sahip oldukları ve diđer yazarların kitaplarını konu ve ilgili k lt r ile ilgili yapmış oldukları arařtırmalara dayalı olarak yazdıkları belirlenmiřtir.

Kitaplarda yer alan resimlendirmeler dikkate alındıđında kitaplardan biri dıřında tamamında suluboya tekniđinin kullanıldıđı g r lmektedir. Bu tekniđi resimleyicilerin k çük detaylar  zerinde durmama ya da basit bir yařam tarzını ifade etme amacıyla seřtikleri d ř n lebilir. Resimlendirmelerde seřilen renkler sunulan mesajlarla paralellik iermekte ve yoksul olmalarına rađmen t m karakterler mutlu bir řekilde g sterilmektedir. Genel olarak resimlendirmelerin yoksulluk kavramının  n ne getiđi g r lmektedir.

Arařtırmanın Sonuları ve  nerileri: Yoksulluk az geliřmiř, geliřmekte ve geliřmiř t m  lkeleri ieren ortak bir sorundur. Diđer bir ifadeyle, t m toplumlar yoksullukla deđişik d zeylerde karřı karřıya kalır. Yoksulluđun etkileri yetiřkinlere nazaran ocuklar  zerinde daha y ksek oranlarda hissedilmektedir. Yapılan alıřmada kullanılan kitapların yoksulluđun d nyanın deđişik b lgelerindeki g r n mleri hakkında g rsel ve metinsel ierik aısından bir ok bilgi sunmalarına ve yoksulluđun deđişik g r n mlerini iermelerine karřın tek bařlarına yoksulluk kavramını aıklamada yetersiz oldukları g r lmektedir. Bu nedenle  zellikle okul ve okul dıřında bu kitapların kullanımı iin destekleyici deđişik etkinliklerin kullanılması ocukların yoksullukla ilgili kavramları edinmelerini olumlu y nde etkileyecektir. Burada dikkat edilmesi gereken  nemli bir husus ocukları bu kitaplarla bir araya getirmektir. Veliler ve  đretmenlere bu konuda  nemli sorumluluklar d řmektedir.

Bu kitapların en  nemli yararlarından birisi yoksulluk hakkında edinilmiř ve edinilmesi muhtemel  nyargı ve d ř ncelerin ortaya ıkmasını engelleyici ve kaldıracı nitelikte olmalarıdır. ocukluk d nemi deneyimlerinin yařamımızda kalıcı izler bıraktıđı geređi bunun  nemini artırmaktadır. İncelenen kitaplardaki resimlendirmelerin verilen ya da verilmek istenen mesajların  n ne gemesi bu deneyimlerin niteliđini d ř r c   zellik tařımaktadır.

Sosyal konuları ieren ocuk kitabı sayısının azlıđı alıřmada sınırlı sayıda kitap kullanılması sonucunu dođurmuřtur. Sosyal konuları ieren kitap sayısının azlıđı sorunu yoksulluk gibi uluslararası d zeyde bir konu ele alındıđında daha da belirginleřmektedir. Burada eviri kitaplarda yer alan sınırlılıklar da ortaya ıkılmaktadır. Bu nedenle sosyal ierikli konularda, eviri ocuk kitapları aracılıđıyla ocuklara ve yetiřkinlere deđişik k lt rleri ve cođrafi b lgeleri tanıma fırsatlarını sađlamada bu t r yayınları  n planda tutan yayınevlerinin desteklenmesi bir zorunluluk haline gelmektedir.

Anahtar S zc kler: Yoksulluk, yabancı resimli ocuk kitapları, nitel arařtırma, ierik analizi.