

## SOCIAL PROFILES OF TURKISH CHILDREN AND YOUTH LITERATURE AUTHORS

### *PERFIS SOCIAIS DE AUTORES DE LITERATURA INFANTIL E JUVENIL TURCA*

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#### **ABSTRACT**

When examined the national and international literature, there are very few studies on the social profiles of the artists working in the fields of children and youth literature. The scarcity of existing studies in the field in terms of quantity has been the starting point for this study. In this study, the profiles of 577 authors in Hasan Latif Sarıyüce's encyclopedia of Turkish children's and youth literature were examined in terms of gender, date and place of birth, educational status, father's profession, own profession, literary genre, the number of awards they received, and foreign expansion variables. The study was qualitative, and the data were analyzed using content analysis technique. According to the results obtained in the study, it is evident that the number of authors who wrote works in the field increased after the Republic period. The gender role of most authors was male. The artists were mainly born in the western provinces of Turkey. The fathers of the artists were mostly soldiers, teachers, and members of parliament. When the professions of the artists are examined, it is seen that they are mostly teachers, authors, and civil servants. It has been seen that artists mostly produce poems, stories, and novels. Few artists in the field have received awards. The number of authors whose works have been translated into foreign languages is also very low. Some suggestions are presented based on the findings obtained from the study.

**Keywords:** Author profile, Children's literature, Turkish children's and youth literature, Youth literature.

## RESUMO

Quando examinada a literatura nacional e internacional, há poucos estudos sobre os perfis sociais dos artistas que atuam nas áreas de literatura infanto-juvenil. A escassez de estudos existentes na área em termos quantitativos foi o ponto de partida para este estudo. Neste estudo, os perfis de 577 autores da enciclopédia de literatura infantil e juvenil turca de Hasan Latif Sariyüce foram examinados em termos de sexo, data e local de nascimento, situação educacional, profissão do pai, profissão própria, gênero literário, número de prêmios que receberam, recebidos e variáveis de expansão externa. O estudo foi qualitativo e os dados foram analisados pela técnica de análise de conteúdo. De acordo com os resultados obtidos no estudo, fica evidente que o número de autores que escreveram obras na área aumentou após o período da República. O papel de gênero da maioria dos autores era masculino. Os artistas nasceram principalmente nas províncias ocidentais da Turquia. Os pais dos artistas eram principalmente soldados, professores e membros do parlamento. Quando se examinam as profissões dos artistas, verifica-se que são em sua maioria professores, autores e funcionários públicos. Foi visto que os artistas produzem principalmente poemas, histórias e romances. Poucos artistas da área receberam prêmios. O número de autores cujas obras foram traduzidas para línguas estrangeiras também é muito baixo. Algumas sugestões são apresentadas com base nos resultados obtidos no estudo.

**Palavras-chave:** Perfil do autor, Literatura infantil, Literatura infantil e juvenil turca, Literatura juvenil.

## **Introduction**

Studies on children's and youth literature in Turkey continue from past to present. These studies have increased recently because of the importance of the subject. It is seen that the works and author profiles in the field have started to be examined with the increase in the number of works produced in this field (Ungan & Demir, 2016). Each of these studies illuminates one aspect of literature and creates a perspective for different fields. This perspective has led to the need to examine the literature with historical and social facts. According to Starfield (2002), the autobiographical self refers to the author's emotional universe regarding his own past and roots. The background, socioeconomic and political factors that the authors are familiar with also deeply affect the formation of his works. Authors, knowingly or unknowingly, create their writing expressions due to their sense of self, considering both their sociological profile and potential readerships. It is important to deal with the author profiles from a sociological perspective.

Çelik (2013) states that in the sociology of literature, the world of authors and readers is tried to be analyzed through the work. This analysis can create an in-depth and holistic understanding by dealing with different author profiles from

different social layers. With this aspect, evidence-based data can be put forward regarding the different social and historical backgrounds on which literary works are based.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that national and international studies deal with the profiles of authors who produce works in the field of literature in terms of different dimensions such as genre, profession, subject, gender. Firstly, Cemal Süreyya, in his article titled *Türk Yazarının Halklaşması* (The Publicization of the Turkish Author), evaluated the artists included in the *Edebiyatımızda İsimler Sözlüğü* (Dictionary of Names in our Literature) prepared by Behçet Necatigil, considering their place of birth and educational status. In this study, it was concluded that as Turkish authors approached from the Tanzimat period to the present, the number of people born in Istanbul decreased and those born in Anatolia increased, and simultaneously, the number of folk artists whose financial situation was not good also increased (Yıldırım, 2017). Kabacalı (1981) examined the economic conditions of Turkish authors in his book titled *Türkiye'de Yazarın Kazancı* (Writer's Earnings in Turkey), considering certain periods of Turkish Literature. In his analysis, he pointed out that the artists had financial difficulties in the line from the Tanzimat period to the Republic and from there to the present. However, Tok (1995) examined the authors sociologically in his article titled *Türkiye'deki Yazarlar Üzerine Sosyolojik bir İnceleme* (A Sociological Analysis on Writers in Turkey). In his study, he presented statistical data on the gender distribution of the authors. Aksoy and Cankara (2002) examined the authors mentioned in the *Çağdaş Türk Edebiyatçısının Toplumsal Profili* (The Social Profile of the Contemporary Turkish Literary Writer) from the Tanzimat period to the present day according to their birth date and place, region of residence, gender, genre, father's occupation, occupation, and educational status in their study titled *Tanzimattan Bugüne Edebiyatçılar Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Literary Figures from the Tanzimat to the Present). In the study, they presented data on the proportional distribution of the works produced by the authors from the Tanzimat period to the Present. Ungan and Demir (2016) searched for answers to the questions of who the children's literature authors are and what their works are with their article titled *Günümüz*

*Çocuk Edebiyatı Yazarları ve Eserleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme* (An Analysis on Contemporary Children's Literature Writers and Their Works). This study presents information on 132 contemporary children's literature authors and their works. However, no study has been found in the literature that comprehensively deals with the profiles of authors who work in the field of Turkish children's and youth literature.

When world literature is researched, it is seen that there are some studies on the profiles of authors who work in the field of children's and youth literature. Escarpit (1971) studied a profile of a period of French literature in his work titled *Sociology of Literature*. The researcher emphasized that the process of creating a literary work and reaching the reader is a communication activity with social dimensions with this study. Bourdieu (1996), on the other hand, made a profile study about readers and publishers in his work titled *Rules of Art*. In this work, the author attempted to describe the interests and purposes of the artists' work (Dursun, 2018). Starfield (2002) in *"I'm a second-language English speaker": Negotiating writer identity and authority in sociology one*, examined the influence of the social environment and roots of artists in literary works on the works they produce. It has been seen that there are very few studies in the international literature that deal with author profiles comprehensively.

Considering that the relationship between literature and society is an undeniable fact, it will guide to analyze the social profiles of authors who work in the literary fields, to recognize them and to evaluate them within the framework of their sociological and social context. The scarcity of studies examining the sociological profiles of artists in the field of Turkish children's and youth literature has been the starting point of this research. It is thought that the findings obtained in this study will reveal guiding results in the field. Based on this understanding, the profiles of Turkish children and youth literature artists will be better understood and the experience in the field will be evaluated in a holistic picture from past to present.

In this study, it is aimed to present a detailed perspective on the profiles of the authors who work in the field of Turkish youth and children's literature. The research questions that guide the research are as follows:

- What is the authors' gender, place of birth and year?
- What are the professions of the authors and their father?
- What is the educational status of the authors and the number of awards they received?
- What are the literary genres in which these authors work?
- What is the international expansion of the authors?

### **Methodology**

This study was a qualitative case study. Document analysis technique was used in the data collection and data analysis process. According to Creswell (2017), a case study is a qualitative research approach in which situations and situation-related themes are defined in-depth by the researcher's observations, interviews, visuals, documents, and reports. Document analysis, on the other hand, is a qualitative research method used to comprehensively analyze the contents of written documents (Wach & Ward, 2013).

### **Data Source**

The data of this study consists of information in 577 author profiles in Hasan Latif Sarıyüce's Encyclopedia of Turkish Children and Youth Literature. The encyclopedia consists of two volumes. In the first volume of the encyclopedia, the importance of children's and youth literature, the stages it went through, the types and examples of children's and youth literature are mentioned. In the second volume of the encyclopedia, detailed information about the demographic information, life stories and works of children and youth literature artists is presented. In this volume, the introduction and historical existence of Turkish children's and youth literature, which dates to 1858, has been attempted revealed.

The data obtained from the second volume of the encyclopedia were used in this study.

### **Data Analysis**

The content analysis technique was used as the data study. Content analysis occurs by following the coding, classification, and definition stages of the obtained data (Brodsky et al., 2012). Content analysis technique was used in the study because it was aimed to reveal the social profiles of the authors in the field of Turkish children's and youth literature.

### **Results**

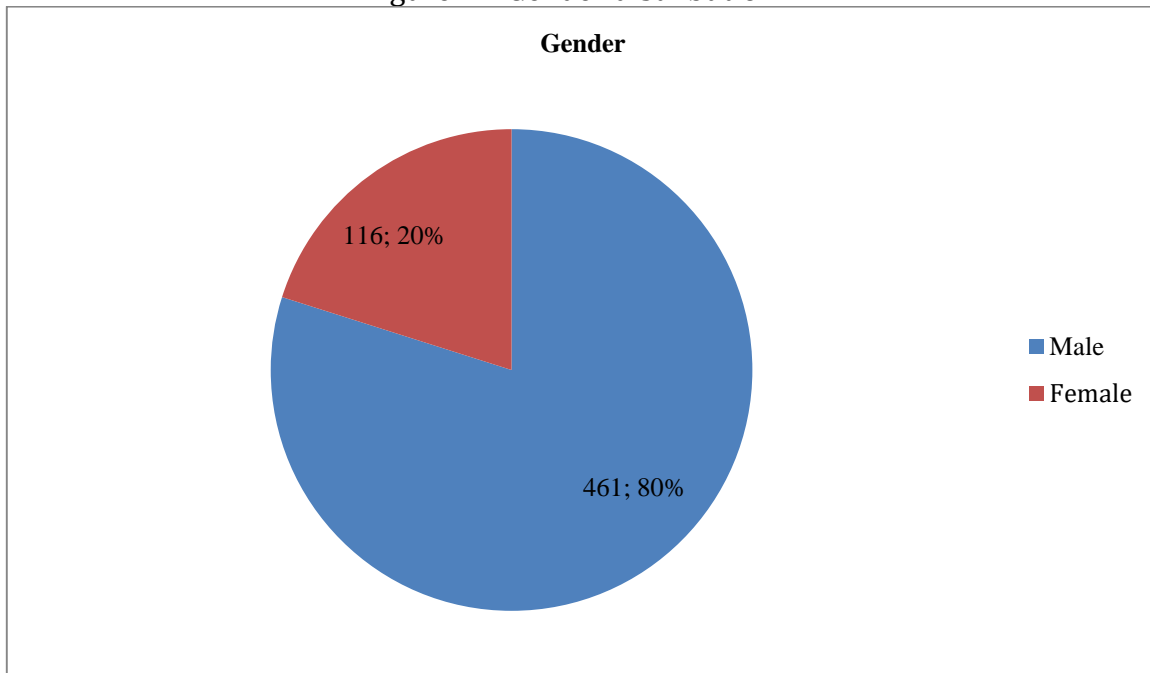
This study analyzes the social profiles of the authors who produce works in the field of children and youth literature by examining their gender, birth year/place, educational status, father's occupation, profession, literary genre, the number of awards they received and their overseas expansions. Findings obtained in the study are shown below with tables and figures in accordance with the research questions.

### **Gender**

The findings regarding the genders of Turkish children and youth literature artists are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 – Gender distribution



In Figure 1, the numerical distribution of the authors' gender who produce works in the field of Turkish Children's and Youth Literature is shown. It has been determined that 461 (80%) of the 577 authors who wrote in the field shown in the figure were male and 116 (20%) were female. It has been observed that the number of male authors working in the field is one-fourth more than the number of female authors. The reason why most authors in the field are men can be explained by the relatively late entry of women into social and academic life in Turkey. As a matter of fact, as of the 1970s, social women's movements made their impact felt in Turkey as well as worldwide, and in this process, women authors made a great leap forward in terms of both quantity and quality (Karataş, 2009).

### ***Date of Birth***

The findings regarding the date of birth of Turkish children and youth literature artists are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2 – Date of Birth

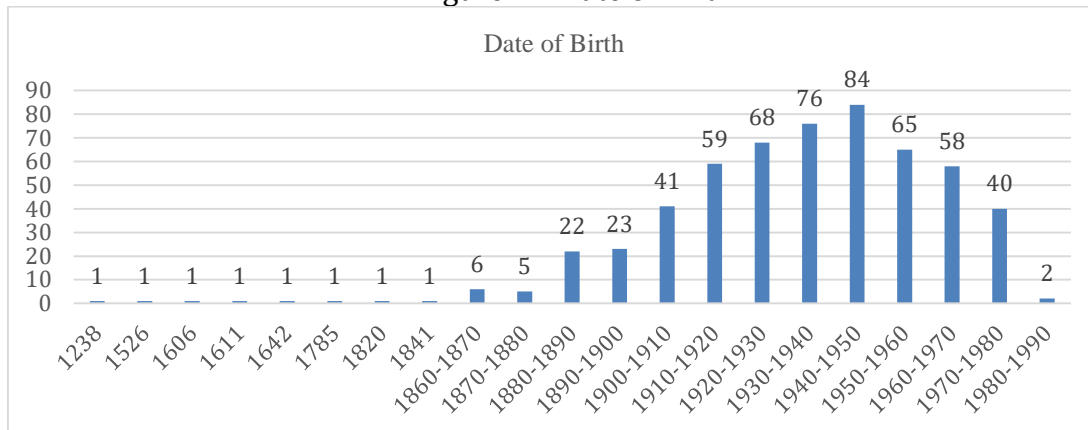


Figure 2 shows the findings about authors born between 1238 and 1990. As shown in the figure, most people were born between 1940 and 1950. The years 1930–1940, 1920–1930 and 1950–1960, the number of births were close to each other. The number of authors born much earlier than these years is quite low. Figure 2 demonstrates that Turkish youth and children's literature is an extremely young field. Works have been produced in the field since the pre-Republican period (the period before 1923), but the real rise was in the Republican era.

**Place of Birth**

The findings regarding the place of birth of Turkish children and youth literature artists are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3 – Place of Birth

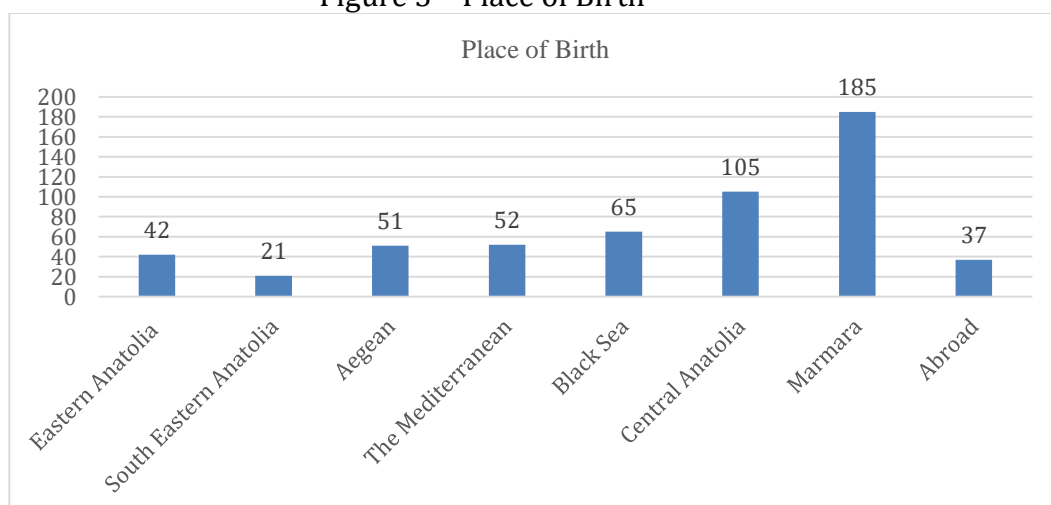


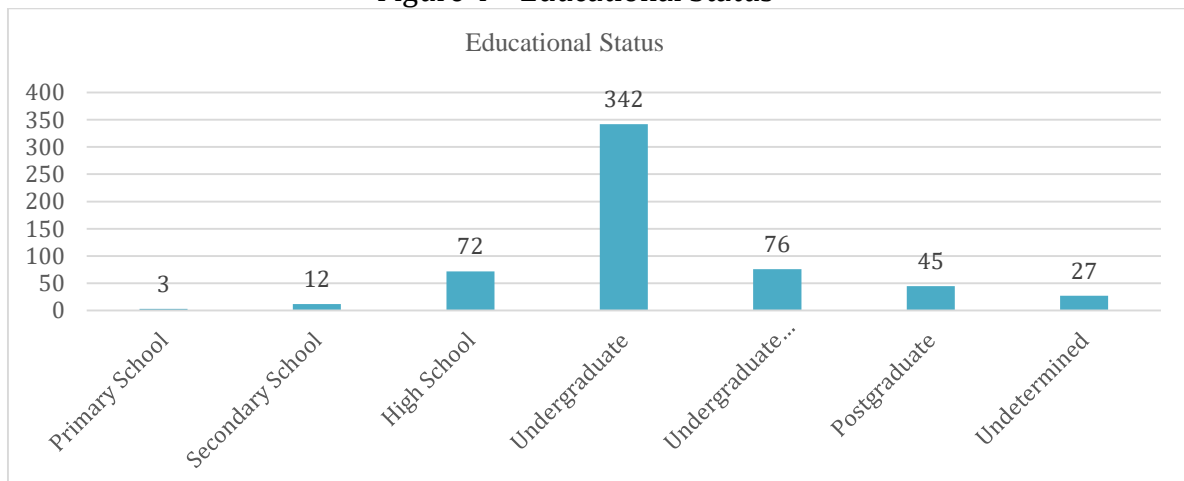


Figure 3 shows the distribution of artists by place of birth. Accordingly, most artists were born in the Marmara Region. The authors born in the Marmara Region were mostly born in Istanbul (f=121), Balıkesir (f=14) and Bursa (f=14). The second region where the most artists were born is the Central Anatolia Region. The authors born in the Central Anatolia Region were mostly born in Ankara (f=21), Sivas (f=21) and Konya (f=16). The third region is the Black Sea Region. The authors born in the Black Sea region were mostly Trabzon (f=12), Samsun (f=11) and Tokat (f=9). The number of artists born in the regions in the eastern part of Turkey is less than the artists born in the Western regions. As shown in figure 3, some artists were born outside Turkey. However, looking at the inter-regional distribution, it is seen that there is a direct connection between the social-economic status of the regions and the number of authors from the region.

### **Educational Status**

The findings regarding the educational status of Turkish children's and youth literature artists are shown in figure 4.

Figure 4 – Educational Status



According to the figure above, most Turkish children and youth literature authors are undergraduates (f=342). Postgraduates are in the second place (f=76). Authors who graduated from high school are in the third place (f=72). When we look at the table in general, the education level of the authors in the field is high.

### ***Profession of Father***

The findings regarding the professions of the fathers of Turkish children's and youth literature artists are shown in Table 1.

Table1 – Profession of the Father

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Undetermined	548
Soldier	11
Teacher-Instructor	6
Member of Parliament	6
Bureaucrat	4
Poet	4
Researcher	4
Authors	3
Academician	3
Engineer	2
Publisher	2
Politician	1
Total	594

There is almost no information about the father's professions of authors in the field of Turkish child and youth literature. This is clearly shown in Table 1. However, it was determined that the fathers of 11 artists were soldiers, the fathers of 6 artists were educators and teachers, and the fathers of 6 artists were members of parliament. There are also artists whose fathers were bureaucrats, poets, and researchers (f=4).

### ***Profession***

The findings regarding the own professions of Turkish child and youth literature artists are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Frequency of Profession

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Teacher	244
Author	107
Officer	79
Journalist	54
Academician	45
Bureaucrat	34
Administrator	29
Poet	28
Interpreter	22
Soldier	17
Lawyer	12
Editor	11
Diplomat	10
Scenarist	10
Painter	8
Director	7
Graphic artist	6
Doctor	6
Employee	6
Accountant	6
Reporter	6
Thespian	6
Actor	5
Architect	5
Engineer	5
Secretary	5
Banker	4
Craft	4
Cartoonist	4
Librarian	4
Politician	4

Publisher	4
Total	813

As shown in Table 2, Turkish children and youth literature authors are 577 artists from 33 different professions. When the author profiles are examined in terms of professional distribution, it is seen that there are artists from various professions. Teacher (f=244) takes the first place among the professions of artists. In the second place is the profession of the author (f=107). In the third place is the profession of civil servants (f=79).

### ***Literary Genres and Frequency Levels***

The literary genres that Turkish children and youth literature artists produce and the numerical information about them are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Literary Genres and Frequency Levels

<b>Genre</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Poem	270
Story	242
Novel	158
Tale	10
Children's book	62
Biography	42
Memory	39
Travel literature	31
Essay	26
Course book	22
Compilation	26
Examination	16
Play	14
Anthology	13
Conversation	12

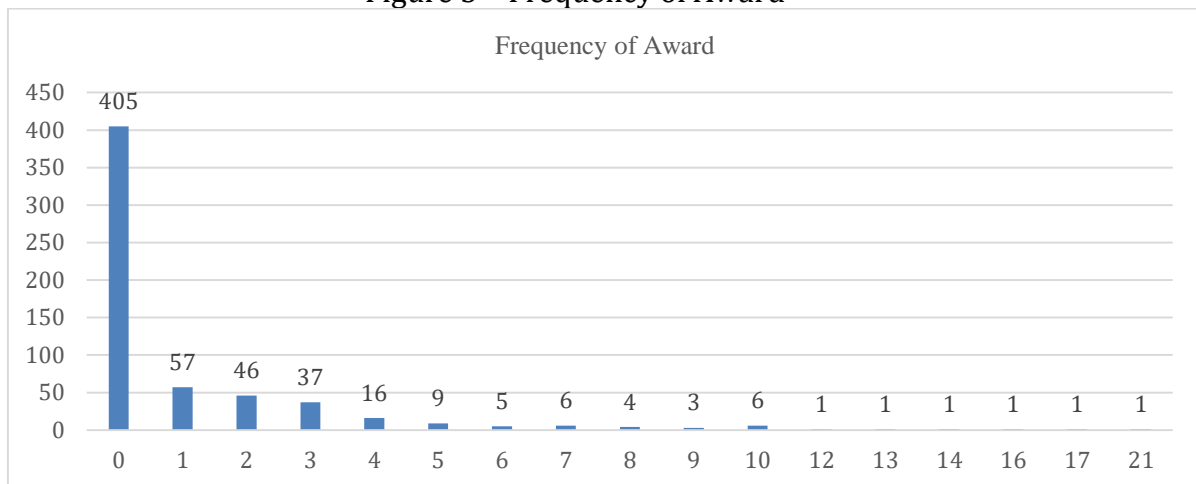
Joke	11
Criticism	8
Article	8
Religious book	6
Comics	6
Translation	5
Dictionary	5
Theater	5
Epic	4
Scenario	4
Caricature	3
Encyclopedia	2
Bibliography	2
Riddle	2
Folklore	1
Diary	1
Corpus	1
Total	1057

As shown in Table 3, 1057 works in 34 different literary genres were produced in the field of Turkish children's and youth literature. According to the findings, it was understood that the authors in the field produced works in many different literary genres. When the works are examined in terms of literary genre, they are listed as poetry (f=270), short story (f=242) and novel (f=158). Poetry, story, and novel genres are the most preferred literary fields compared to other genres. On the other hand, folklore, diary, and corpus (f=1) are the least preferred literary genres.

### **Awards Received**

The frequency of the awards received by Turkish children's and youth literature artists is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 – Frequency of Award

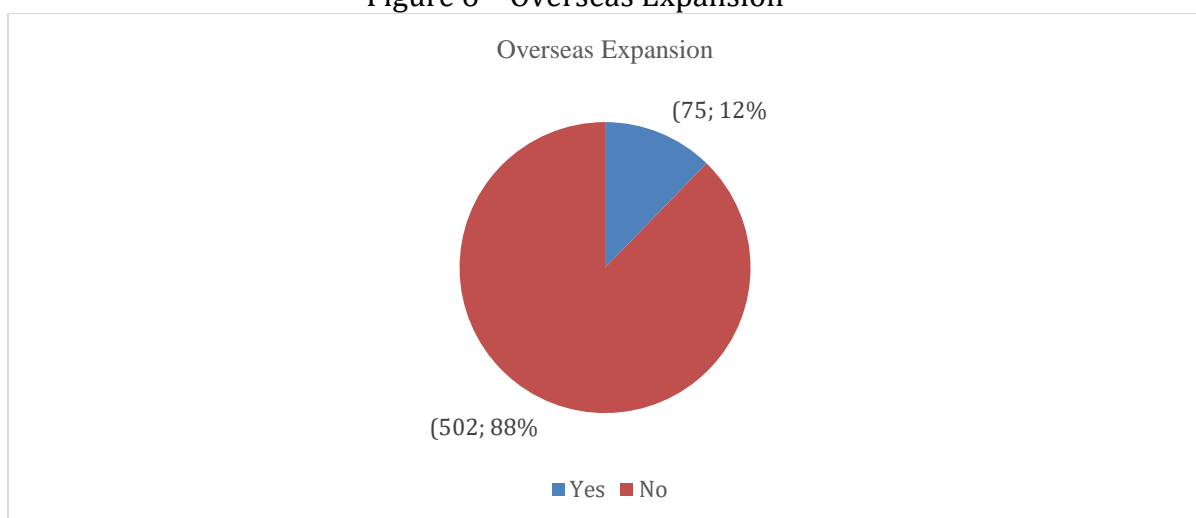


In Figure 5, the number of awards received by Turkish children's and youth literature artists is shown. Accordingly, it was seen that most of the artists ( $f= 405$ ; 70.8%) did not receive any awards in their publishing lives. However, it was seen that 1 author ( $f=21$ ), 1 author ( $f=17$ ) and 1 other author received 16 awards.

### ***Overseas Expansion***

Frequency on the international publication status of works by Turkish children's and youth literature artists is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 – Overseas Expansion



According to Figure 6, there is information about whether the works of Turkish children and youth literature artists have been published abroad. Accordingly, it was determined that the works of 75 of the artists in the field were translated and published by various publishing houses in different countries. On the other hand, it was seen that the works of most artists in the field were not translated into a language other than Turkish (f=502).

## Discussion and Conclusion

An evaluation was made on the social profiles of the artists who work in the field of Turkish children's and youth literature by examining the gender, place/year of birth, own profession, father's profession, educational status, literary genre, the number of awards they received and their overseas expansions. Accordingly, the results obtained from the study are as follows.

As a result of the research, 577 children's and youth literature authors' profile were investigated from the Turkish Children's and Youth Literature Encyclopedia. It is seen that most of the authors who work in the field of children's and youth literature have written works in the genres of poetry, story, and novel. This shows that artists prefer to write mostly fictional works. It is a thought-provoking result that less space is given to non-fiction works. At the same time, it has been concluded that the number of works is very low in genres that reflect the rich folklore accumulation of Turkish literature such as tale, main (Turkish folk poem) and riddle. Most authors who work in the field are men. The rate of female authors is quite low compared to the rate of male authors. Considering the professional distribution of the authors, the authors with the most teacher profession stand out. This situation suggests that there is a pedagogical literature mainly created by educators in Turkey. In other words, Turkish children's and youth literature is a field that has been given great importance by teachers. However, it is a remarkable result that the artists in the author staff could not make a living just by writing. The father's occupations of the authors in the field of Turkish children's and youth literature are mostly soldiers, teachers, and bureaucrats. This finding reveals



that the authors were raised in family environments where there was a certain cultural and social life. There was a significant increase in the number of authors due to the mission of development and progress imposed on education and literature with the proclamation of the Republic in 1923. It is seen that the birthplaces of the authors are mostly the provinces located in the western regions. Istanbul leads the way in this regard. This situation reveals that Istanbul is the center of literary production in Turkish children's and youth literature. When the authors who have produced works in the field are evaluated in terms of the awards they receive, it is seen that most of the artists have never received any awards, and the works of very few artists have been awarded. It is difficult to say that this situation is related to the quality of the works produced. However, it should be noted that children's and youth literature is a branch of literature that does not attract attention in Turkey (Sarıyüce, 2012). The fact that children's and youth literature has not yet been formed in Turkey and that it is regarded as an easy literature is effective in this. Therefore, awarding the literary accumulation in Turkey can be an important bridge that will enable the field to connect with the world literary circles.

When we look at the information on whether the works of Turkish children's and youth literature artists are published in different languages, it is seen that very few of the works of the artists in the field have been translated into different languages. The international appreciation of the works produced in the field will contribute to the international visibility of Turkish literature. In this respect, a policy should be developed at the point of translation of works.

In this direction, the "Project for Supporting the Expansion of Turkish Culture, Art and Literature Works of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism", whose short name is "TEDA", initiated in 2005 and carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, gave foreign readers the opportunity to read Turkey's cultural and literary heritage in their own language. (URL-1). Supporting more Turkish children's and youth literature works within the scope of TEDA can contribute to the internationalization process of the field and authors.

## Recommendations

The following suggestions can be made through the findings obtained as a result of the examination of author profiles in the field of Turkish children's and youth literature:

- It has been observed that the artists produced less works in genres such as fairy tales and mania, which reflect national cultural elements more intensely. For this reason, encouraging measures should be taken to increase the diversity of genres.

- It has been observed that most writers cannot make a living just by writing. It is thought that the earnings of Turkish children's and youth literature artists through literature are insufficient. For this reason, it is foreseen that the works to be given in the field of eliminating the financial concerns of the artists who work in fields such as Turkish children's and youth literature will provide an opportunity to increase the works in terms of both quality and quantity.

- It was observed that most of the artists who worked in the field were born in Istanbul. In this context, measures should be taken to highlight the artists who produce works in places other than Istanbul.

- It was observed that very few artists' works in the field were translated into foreign languages. In order to increase the international influence and visibility of the authors, it is foreseen that the translation of the works and bringing them to the international literature with both public support and private sector incentives will make a significant contribution to the field.

- It has been observed that the number of female artists working in the field is quite low. Implementation of incentive programs to increase the interest of women artists in the field can have positive results both for literature as a whole and for children's and youth literature.

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