Examination of Old Age Representation in Picturebooks: Inquiring Stereotypes, Embracing Diversity

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ABSTRACT: Representation preferences are at the core of picturebooks since they often prime children's perception about the world. More specifically, the representation of old age holds especial importance, as it shapes perceptions that influence attitudes towards aging, subsequently impacting the manner in which individuals age. Depictions of old age have the capacity to impact intergenerational relationships and the overall well-being of older adults within societies. In this article, we examine depictions of old age in contemporary Turkish picturebooks published between 2013 and 2023. The study aims to assess the verbal and visual narratives of selected picturebooks from a pluralistic perspective. We mainly examine how these books reflect diversity and promote positive attitudes towards aging. In our content analysis, we looked for various facets of portraying old age such as role, environment, outlook, and experience. We recorded repetitive patterns for positive and negative stereotypical features that at times lead to a similarity in depictions of old age. We discuss ways to further empower or empathize with old-age characters, and hence support constructing affirmative attitudes towards aging. Thus, we propose a guide chart to promote pluralistic strategies for varied depictions of old age.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Picturebooks; Diversity; History of visual; Literature; XXI Century.

Introduction

With the increase in the old-age population across societies, aging has become an important topic and gained visibility. People over the age of sixty were once categorized as a homogenized single group, stigmatized as dependent, weak, and without many possibilities, whereas today positive attitudes are on the rise. For instance, the World Health Organization has updated its definition of old age. According to the World Health Organization, aging can result in some damage in terms of physical and mental resonances over time, but such changes cannot be generalized. In their report published in 2022, they stated as «There is no typical older person. Some 80-year-olds have physical and mental capacities similar to many 30-year-olds»[1]. Thus, it is important to appreciate the variety of old-age characteristics and the varied life experiences of older people. A recent study highlights the importance of how old people are represented and suggests constructive approaches enriched by research and practice, because such approaches may affect older adults' quality of life[2]. Moreover, research has found that older people who held more positive views about aging, live longer than those with less positive views on aging[3]. Exposure to ageism affects older adults adversely[4]. After being exposed to cultural stereotypes about age throughout their lives, older people tend to internalize these stereotypes, thus attitudes towards aging play a major role in how well people age[5]. Myriad media including TV programs, magazines, newspapers, films, and books shape our perception of aging and of being an older adult. In this respect, children's books, specifically picturebooks, play an influential role as they are most likely to be the materials to which children are exposed when constructing an initial perception of the world. Bandura's social learning theory[6] emphasizes the impact of actual or fictional media characters that inspire children and might affect their perceptions towards aging [7]. Thus, picturebooks help children in their understanding of varied characters and char-

[1] World Health Organization (WHO), Ageing and health, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health> (last access: 10.04.2024).

[2] H.J. Swift, B. Steeden, *Exploring Representations of Old Age and Ageing*, Project Report, Center for Ageing Better, 2020, <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Exploring-representations-of-old-age.pdf> (last access: 10.05.2024).

[3] B. R. Levy, M.D. Slade, S.R. Kunkel, S.V. Kasl, *Longevity increased by positive self-perception of aging*, «Journal of Personality and Social Psychology», vol. 83, 2002, pp. 261-270.

[4] B. Levy, *Improving memory in old age by implicit self-stereotyping*, «Journal of Personality and Social Psychology», vol. 71, 1996, pp. 1092-1107; B. Levy, *Handwriting as a reflection of aging self-stereotypes*, «Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry», vol. 33, 2000, pp. 81-94.

[5] Id., *Eradication of ageism requires addressing the enemy within*, «Gerontologist», vol. 41, n. 5, 2001, pp. 578-579.

[6] A. Bandura, *Social learning theory*, New Jerse, Prentice Hall, 1977.

[7] L. Hollis-Sawyer, L. Cuevas, *Mirror, mirror on the wall: Ageist and sexist double jeopardy portrayals in children's picture books*, «Educational Gerontology», vol. 39, n. 12, 2013, pp. 902-914.

acter traits. In addition, the images/ texts used for representation in children's books provide meaning and could play a vital role in forming attitudes toward aging[8]. With this in mind, we need to pay greater attention to evaluating children's books in terms of their representations of old age, seeking depictions that feed upon diversity. Confronted with similar portrayals of old age, children may develop conservative perceptions of what aging may be. As scholar Vanessa Joosen (2023) notes, age norms are not necessarily bad, and they can be akin to other norms in society that can help us navigate through life[9]. Nevertheless, these norms should not be restraining, as they can also change in time or from person to person. As such, what these norms may be is open to discussion and interpretation and altered under different case scenarios.

Compared to the past, awareness about depictions of older adults and aging seems to have evolved in a more favorable way. However, this tendency could lead towards positive stereotypes which could again limit diverse portrayals of being or getting old. In our article, we aim to uncover diverse portrayals apart from repetitive depictions, whether they present positive or negative stereotypical features. We examine Turkish contemporary picturebooks published in the last ten years through content analysis of visual and verbal narratives, to understand how the old-age characters are portrayed. We specifically look at different aspects of these depictions such as role, environment, intergenerational relationships, physical and personal traits as well as the plurality within the character. The study points out the importance of the relationship between the depictions of old age from different *facets* to examine diversity among the selected books. Moreover, the study investigates strategies on how representations can empower older adults, focusing on diverse features within the character. We also present a guiding chart that might encourage a diversity of depictions of old age in children's literature, in order to support children's flourishing understanding of age and the well-being of older adults. In our article, we first go through the literature on the transformation of old-age representation in children's literature. We then share our methodology together with our findings, followed by a discussion.

[8] P.A. Crawford, S. Bhattacharya, *Grand images: Exploring images of grandparents in picture books*, «Journal of Research in Childhood Education», vol. 28, n. 1, 2014, pp. 128-144; S.L. McGuire, *Promoting positive attitudes toward aging : Literature for young children*, «Childhood Education», vol. 69, n. 4, 1993, pp. 204-210.

[9] V. Joosen, *Age*, in C. Nelson, E. Wesseling, A.M. Wu (edd.), *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature and Culture*, New York, Routledge, 2023, pp. 229-240.

1. *Depictions of old age in children's literature*

A study conducted by Edward F. Ansello, considered a seminal work, examines the representation of older adults in 656 children's picturebooks. Ansello scrutinizes these picturebooks according to the older character's presence, sex, racial composition, relationship to the main character, occupational role, and behavior[10]. Illustrations, physical and personality descriptions also contributed to these categories. The results provide evidence of ageism[11] in the ways in which the older adult characters are depicted. As such, older adults were less frequently illustrated compared to younger characters. Apart from the deliberate or unintentional ageism, the matter still carries a great importance, as these picturebooks are fundamental learning objects during children's literary socializing. They may establish a basis for children's attitudes towards that context[12]. Thus, it is possible to enhance quality of life for the older adults in general by counteracting ageism and teaching young children realistic ideas about aging[13]. Therefore, early childhood educators also play a key role in combating ageism.

The attitudes towards age are formed not only through literary socializing channels but through a synthesis of the messages from overall cultural media, as children form their assessments about the concept of old age through a blend of «direct concrete and indirect vicarious experiences»[14]. Thus, the nature and the content of the attributes are often based on media experiences[15]. The repetitive behaviors and descriptions of the older adult characters in the cultural media may restrict creative thinking, leading to a materialization of similar products and works. Developmentally appropriate classroom material about older adults' positive aspects, abilities, and social characteristics makes a positive impact on preschool children's perception. In return, older adults' abilities rather than their personal traits were more impactful in building positive attitudes towards them on the part of children. Based on their findings, Blunk & Williams (1997) suggest highlighting the strengths of older adults in order to constructively support children's impressions[16].

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[10] E.F. Ansello, *Age and ageism in children's first literature*, «Educational Gerontology», vol. 2, n. 3, 1977, pp. 255-274.

[11] *Ageism* is the systematic stereotyping of and discriminating against people due to their old age: R. Butler, *Ageism: Another form of bigotry*, «The Gerontologist», vol. 9, n. 4, 1969, pp. 243-246.

[12] M. Dellman-Jenkins, L. Yang, *The portrayal of older people in award-winning literature for children*, «Journal of Research in Childhood Education», vol. 12, 1997, pp. 96-100.

[13] S.L. McGuire, *Counteracting ageism: Promoting accurate concepts about aging in young children*, in M. Renck Jalongo, P.A. Crawford (edd.), *Intergenerational Bonds*, Cham, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021, Vol. 18, pp. 19-39.

[14] Ansello, *Age and ageism in children's first literature*, cit., p. 262.

[15] Dellman-Jenkins, Yang, *The portrayal of older people in award-winning literature for children*, cit.

[16] E.M. Blunk, S.W. Williams, *The effects of curriculum on preschool children's perceptions*

Dellman-Jenkins & Yang (1997) analyzed the illustrations of older adults in picturebooks that received the Caldecott Medal, comparing those works published between 1972 and 1983 with those published between 1984 and 1995[17]. Their examination implied that the illustrations in the more recent works depict older adults with more positive and respectable attributes. This fact is also a sign of awareness on the part of the award jury, since the books' messages may shape readers' age-related biases. When we look at later studies in time, we see a continued positive trajectory. For instance, another study examined a selection of illustrated books on the «New York Times» Best Seller list, the Book Sense Best Seller list, and the Caldecott award winners, published between 2000 and 2010[18]. The study revealed important progress regarding positive representations of old age compared to previously conducted studies. Although underrepresentation of old-age characters was still detected, the overall results pointed to an optimism about promoting positive attitudes toward aging. Another study examining diversity among grandparents in children's books suggests that, over time, grandparent characters have increasingly represented a wider range of cultures. However, these depictions still show limited variety in terms of their employment, hobbies, and other aspects[19]. The subsequent studies present similar results with positive outcomes compared to previous studies, but still scholars point to the need for more work on this topic. Vanessa Joosen (2018) proposes that merging critical age studies with children's literature studies is necessary to reconsider the connection between children and older individuals[20]. She also suggests that ageist stereotypes create challenges due to children's limited understanding of old age, which underscores the necessity of further studies (both analyses and empirical research) on the influence of age norms in children's literature[21]. Moreover, how old age is represented visually requires more attention as children's books might be influential to shape attitudes towards aging[22].

When we look at old-age representations in Turkish children's books, older

of the elderly, «Educational Gerontology», vol. 23, 1997, pp. 233-241.

[17] Dellman-Jenkins, Yang, *The portrayal of older people in award-winning literature for children*, cit.

[18] J. Danowski, T. Robinson, *The portrayal of older characters in popular children's picture books in the US: A content analysis from 2000 to 2010*, «Journal of Children and Media», vol. 6, n. 3, 2012, pp. 333-350.

[19] P.A. Crawford, S. Bhattacharya, *Grand images: Exploring images of grandparents in picture books*, «Journal of Research in Childhood Education», vol. 28, n. 1, 2014, pp. 128-144.

[20] V. Joosen (ed.), *Connecting Childhood and Old Age in Popular Media*, Mississippi, University Press of Mississippi, 2018.

[21] Id., *Aging in children's literature*, in D. Gu, M.E. Dupre (edd.), *Encyclopedia of Gerontology and Population Aging*, New York, Springer, 2019, pp. 1-5.

[22] S.L. McGuire, *Promoting positive attitudes toward aging: Literature for young children*, «Childhood Education», vol. 69, n. 4, 1993, pp. 204-210, S.L. McGuire, *Growing up and growing older books for young readers*, «Childhood Education», vol. 79, n. 3, 2003, pp. 145-151; Ead., *Counteracting ageism: Promoting accurate concepts about aging in young children*, cit.

characters are often seen as grandparents which is also supported by a recent study[23]. That study points out that older characters are reflected by their social position rather than their personal characteristics. Grandmothers are self-sacrificing, caregivers, responsible for their stereotypical duties mainly in the home, whereas grandfathers are considered extrovert and kind, play with their grandchildren, and spend time in outdoor activities. The study states that predominant social gender perceptions are represented in most of the children's books. When examining other forms of media aimed at children, one study investigated the portrayal of intergenerational relationships in Turkish animated cartoons via a survey study based on grandparents' and grandchildren's views of each other[24]. The study found that in recent domestic productions, older characters are mainly represented in similar patterns like in the role of grandparents, transferring didactic messages, and bearing most of the stereotypical features of old age. The study results show the inconsistency between what the contemporary audience wants to see and what the selected productions at times provide. The survey results also present insights such as the need for going beyond traditional idealized family portrayals, gender roles, or occupations, or adding more diverse and atypical features attributed to old-age characters. Similarly, a recent study investigating picturebooks published in Turkey between 2008 and 2018 shows that the diversity found in real life regarding physical traits, roles, and experiences of older adults, is not reflected in the books[25]. The mentioned study also includes books from foreign authors translated into Turkish. However, we only focus on picturebooks produced within Turkey in order to analyze the local context in depth. In the next section, we will present our methods that shaped our study.

2. *Sample and Analysis*

We began to collect picturebooks in which older characters are one of the main characters. These picturebooks were published between 2013 and 2023 from online bookstores (idefix.com, pandora.com.tr dr.com.tr, kitapyurdu.com, amazon.com.tr). Our search terms were the Turkish words for «old man», «old woman», «grandmother», «grandma», and «grandfather». We

[23] Y.M. Yakar, H.D. Yilmaz, *Çocuk Kitaplarinda Yaşli Karakterler* [*Elderly Characters In Children's Books*], «Zeitschrift Für Die Welt Der Türken / Journal Of World Of Turks», vol. 11, n. 1, 2019, pp. 165-83.

[24] E.G. Baykal, I. Veryeri Alaca, *Representations of intergenerational relationships in children's television in Turkey*, in V. Joosen (edd.), *Connecting childhood and old age in popular media*, Jackson, Mississippi, University Press of Mississippi, 2018, pp. 207-227.

[25] C. Avcı, G. Erhan, *Ageing versus active aging: how old age is represented in children's books*, «Educational Gerontology», vol. 48, n. 4, 2022, pp. 145-159.

searched for these words in the book titles, summary, and content. Our ultimate goal was not to define the characters as «old», rather we aimed to investigate the portrayals of the characters who are labeled «old». We also visited the Istanbul Book Fair and local bookstores (Remzi, D&R, Tırtıl Bookstore, etc.). We searched online blogs, websites, and Instagram and found books by referrals. We omitted translated books and instead focused on those that were produced in Turkey. As a result, we reached 160 picturebooks and selected 48 from among them. We excluded picturebooks according to our specific selection criteria that we will elaborate on below. Thus, we included in our selection picturebooks that have at least one visual of an old-age figure. We chose picturebooks that have an older adult as one of the leading character, and we excluded picturebooks mainly consisting of nonhuman characters and didactic content. We also excluded illustrated books, as we focused on picturebooks in which image and text have a balanced share in the story. Moreover, if the picturebook was a part of a series, we picked only one book instead of the whole series. Even though we studied over one hundred picturebooks for this article, our sample was to a degree limited due to the source channels and keyword search. Further studies in collaboration with publishers could help in broadening out to more picturebooks involving this specific content. Accessing picturebooks through special library databases seemed a necessary step to find the right children's books in a more systematic way. Libraries that have children's books with extensive keywords may be helpful, as research into this topic has been increasing rapidly in recent years, highlighting the significance of this issue.

We utilized an approach combining quantitative and qualitative content analysis. We initially benefited from McGuire's form[26] which she developed for evaluating old-age characters in children's books to set up our initial code sheet, which we then extended after the first round of reviewing the selected books. We sought diverse representations rather than just positive or negative ones mentioned in the existing literature, including in McGuire. We did not associate features such as gray hair, wrinkles, wearing glasses or illness with negative traits, as we considered these a neutral part of the course of aging and life. Here, we map whether these features are repetitively used or not as there are also older people who prefer coloring their hair or more healthier than some younger people. For personal and physical traits, we benefited from a measurement instrument used by Danowski and Robinson[27] which they formulated and adapted from Robinson and Anderson (2006)[28].

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[26] McGuire, *Growing up and growing older books for young readers*, cit., pp. 145-151.
[27] J. Danowski, T. Robinson, *The portrayal of older characters in popular children's picture books in the US: A content analysis from 2000 to 2010*, «Journal of Children and Media», vol. 6, n. 3, 2012, pp. 333-50.
[28] T. Robinson, C. Anderson, *Older characters in children's animated television programs:*

The stereotypical features which are mentioned by scholars to define old age are white or gray hair, wrinkles or sagging of skin, balding, use of a physical aid (e.g. a cane or wheelchair), or use of glasses[29]. If the character has two or more of the aforementioned determiners, the character is defined as old. Hence, if we trace two or more attributives in the book, we assign the character as having stereotypical physical features. We also consider the body posture and clothes as other indicators for being classified as old. For reliability, two independent coders (the first and second author of this paper) reviewed the picturebooks with the guidance of a coding sheet and discussed the evaluation results together to ensure objectivity.

The coding instrument helped us to analyze selected picturebooks under five major categories: 1) Role & environment, 2) Personal traits & lifelong experience, 3) Intergenerational relationships, 4) Physical traits, and 5) Illness and death. We started by making observations on the role, occupation, environment, and activities that old people are associated with. We then looked at personal traits and the reflection of lifelong experience in the respective picturebook. Third, we studied the aspects of intergenerational relationships as depicted in the picturebook. As a fourth category, we analyzed how physical traits are illustrated. Finally, we checked whether the narrative contains the issue of illness and death. We will reflect on our findings based on these five categories in the next section.

Results

For the results, we share the representation analysis of 48 picturebooks regarding old age. Our reflections are based on repetitive patterns that emerge and become visible in many picturebooks in our selection. We also point out unique strategies that present original means of representing old age in the following discussion section.

A content analysis of their portrayal, «Journal of Broadcast and Electronic Media», vol. 50, n. 2, 2006, pp. 287-304.

[29] Idd., *Older characters in children's animated television programs: A content analysis of their portrayal*, «Journal of Broadcast and Electronic Media», vol. 50, n. 2, 2006, pp. 287-304; J. Danowski, T. Robinson, *The portrayal of older characters in popular children's picture books in the US: A content analysis from 2000 to 2010*, «Journal of Children and Media», vol. 6, n. 3, 2012, pp. 333-350; J.M. Bishop, R.D. Krause, *Depictions of aging and old age on Saturday morning television*, «The Gerontologist», vol. 24, n. 1, 1984, pp. 91-94.

3. *Role & environment*

Since we used search terms «grand-, old, etc.», old-age characters have a significant active role in the picturebooks that we selected, except for two books. In these two books, the old characters are already dead in the course of the story and they are recalled by other characters. In rest of the books, we mainly see old-age characters in supportive roles for children. In 21 picturebooks (43%) old-age characters are the main protagonist of the story and 14 picturebooks (29%) focus on the old-age characters' life or their perspective specifically although most of the books were found via old age-related keywords search. In most picturebooks, we see old-age characters as grandparents which is expected as we have found many books via keyword search of grandmother, grandfather or synonyms of these words. We should also note that, in most picturebooks old-age characters are referred to as «grandmother» or «grandfather» even if they don't have grandchildren; these words can be used as adjectives to address older people in Turkish, as in many other cultures. Only 15 books (31%) present old-age characters who are not grandparents.

When we look at the roles, old-age characters are depicted often as grandparents (70%). Eight percent of the books presenting old-age characters as working people such as bird-food seller, hot-air balloon operator, hairdresser, or librarian. Although in these books three of these characters are dubbed «grandfather», in the story they are not a family member, rather the word «grandfather» is used as an adjective referring to their old age, as mentioned previously. Only one book depicts old-age character as «father» or «mother» rather than «grandparent» (2%). The rest of the books (29%) present an old-age character in other roles apart from family members or working people in the story.

Besides their roles, old characters are mostly 23 (49%) found in environments such as their home, garden, or neighborhood that they live in. In the remaining picturebooks, the reader comes across other environments as well, including the schoolyard, tennis court, museum, nature, public transportation, or library. Hence, environments could be varied rather than repeatedly taking the home or neighborhood as the location of the story.

Tab. 1. Activities older characters involved within their roles

Activities	percentage	number of books
Storytelling	35%	17
Cooking/kitchen/housework	33%	16
Animal care	29%	14
Playing games	20%	10
Gardening/Plant care/Farming:	18%	9

Teaching/ guiding	14%	7
Riding Motorbike/ bicycle	10%	5
Dancing& singing song	10%	5
Repair/ upcycle	8%	4
Sportive activities (including extreme sports)	6%	3
Playing music instrument	2%	1

In the selected books, when we examine activities [Tab. 1] storytelling is the most common activity among the old-age characters, followed by cooking and household chores. Another prevalent activity depicted in the books is interacting with animals. Additionally, gardening and farming tasks are present in almost one-fifth of the books. Playing games and teaching new things or finding solutions are the other common activities depicted in the picturebooks. The less represented activities are riding a motorbike/bicycle, dancing/singing songs, repairing/upcycling, doing sports (including extreme sports), and only one book depicts old age playing an instrument.

4. *Personal traits & lifelong experience*

Tab. 2. Personal traits of older characters in the selected picturebooks

Personal Traits	percentage	number of books
happy/content – friendly – loving/caring	83%	40
intelligent/wise	18%	9
lonely/recluse	12. 00%	6
helpless	12%	6
eccentric	8. 00%	4
angry/grumpy/stern	4. 00%	2
humorous	4. 00%	2

Upon analyzing the personal traits of old-age characters in the selected works [Tab. 2], we noted that a significant majority of the books depict positive characteristics. Specifically, the old-age characters are portrayed as happy, loving, and friendly in approximately 83% of the books, followed by those depicting their wisdom in 18% of instances. In contrast, characteristics typically viewed as negative in connection to old age, including helplessness, loneliness/reclusiveness, anger, or being an object of ridicule are less frequently depicted when compared to positive characteristics. Out of the 48 picturebooks, only four feature unconventional eccentric old-age characters engaged in activities

like extreme sports, enjoying solitude, or learning ballet. Hence, only two books introduced humorous older characters in their narrative.

In relation to personal traits, we also looked for transmission of the lifelong experience of older characters. In this, we were interested in knowing whether the readers could learn more about the characters' personal trajectory of life or not. One fourth of the picturebooks (12) reflected characters' previous life experiences such as their joyful moments, mastering of a certain skill, success or failures, and inherent preferences in their life.

5. *Intergenerational relationships*

Tab. 3. Depiction of intergenerational relationships in selected picturebooks

Nature of Intergenerational Relationships	percentage	number of books	notes
Positive	89%	43	
Negative	2%	1	
Not mentioned	8%	4	
One way share (Old > child)	27%	13	teaching, guiding, storytelling
One way share (Child> old)	6%	3	help (navigation, physical help, reading newspaper..)
Reciprocal share	8%	4	Child learns or gets support from old age, and old age learns or gets support from old age at different times
Mutual – (synchronous)	50%	24	Actions done together: playing together, dancing together, making together, etc.

We examined the nature of intergenerational relationships in these books [Tab. 3]. We first examined whether the entanglements between children and old-age characters are positive, negative, or not mentioned. We then continued our analysis by closely inspecting these bonds to see if they are one-way, reciprocal, or mutual (synchronous) relationships. Almost all books presented a positive intergenerational relationship. There was merely a single book depicting a negative relationship (not sharing pleasant moments together) and four books did not mention an intergenerational relationship due to the lack of child characters or interactions. When we look at the positive relationship in depth, half of the books depict a mutually shared activity which both parties enjoy synchronously, such as playing games, dancing, upcycling, or caring for animals together. There are also instances of one-way sharing and examples of reciprocal relationships that the story characters have via different activities. In four books, readers can witness a reciprocal relationship such as a child

delivering medicine to the old character and the old character preparing the child's favorite meal, or the child teaching how to somersault to the older character and the older character teaching the child knitting but at different times. Teaching one another is valuable, granting both generations knowledge and a sense of delight. In some books we see only a one-way transfer from the old character to the child or viceversa. In many cases, we see a relationship where the old character tells stories or recounts his/her memories to the child. In few books, we see a one-way relationship in which the child is the transmitter of information to the older adult in navigation or delivery of goods.

6. *Illustration of physical traits*

Tab. 4. Illustration of older characters in selected picturebooks

Illustration of Old age	percentage	number of books
Stereotypically illustrated: if the character carries at least two/three feature of listed ones, we define it as a stereotypically illustrated: white/grey hair, wrinkles or sagging of skin, balding, use a physical aid (cane or wheelchair), use of glass, not fit (roundy/extra thin), hatched over	72%	35
Hair		
white/ grey hair	89. 50%	43
other colors (blue-black, orange, pink-yellow, no color)	10%	5
Clothes		
Dressing tendency: pale or dark colors versus colorful, unfashionable outfits versus fashionable	46%	22
modern/sports outfit	35%	17
traditional clothes (wearing folkloric clothes or accessories)	10%	5

In the search for a plurality in the illustrations, it was critical to understand the stereotypical ones that we previously mentioned. Thus, we examined how older characters are illustrated physically [Tab. 4]. As such, we employed the aforementioned list of aspects used in literature to map old age in order to frame the stereotypical tendencies. We then looked at the stylistic appearance of the illustrations which was an additional aspect to reflect diversity.

We scanned these features in each picturebook and marked it as stereotypical especially if the character bore more than one of the following: white/gray hair, wrinkles or sagging of skin, balding, use of a physical aid (cane or wheelchair), use of glasses, or round/hunched over shape. In the vast majority of picturebooks, the illustrations of old age came with clichés. For instance,

as we examined each picturebook we found that almost all old-age characters had white or gray hair. When we examined the styles of clothing, we came across outdated clothes in almost half of the books. Modern or sports outwear is depicted in 35% of the books, a ratio that closely aligns with those portraying characters in unstylish clothes. Only five books depict traditional clothes of a specific regions in Turkey.

7. Illness/death

Tab. 5. Depiction of illness/death in relation to old age characters in selected picturebooks

Illness/ death association	percentage	number of books
Death	14. 50%	7
Serious Illness (who has to stay in bed, not standing)	2%	1
Mild cold	2%	1
Forgetfulness	12%	6
Immobility	2%	1
Total	33%	16

Of the selected books, 33% of them depict a difficult subject such as death, illness, or negative health conditions. An examination of the narratives concerning illnesses, excluding death, reveals that only one book portrays a significant illness necessitating the older character's hospitalization. Additionally, another book portrays a mild cold that the character eventually recovers from. Furthermore, there is a representation in one book of the older character as immobile, consistently in a seated position. Forgetfulness, which could be considered one of the stereotypical aspects of aging, is evaluated under a character's personal traits[30]. Hence, we analyzed this in tandem with illness and death due to its relationship with dementia, something that can be considered a serious illness especially in its latter stages. We note that in its earlier stages, we might see dementia as a condition that people can manage by themselves. In the selected books, we found that 12% of them depict older characters as experiencing memory loss, and some of these characters pass away following the onset of forgetfulness. Majority of the books depict old age healthy and active.

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[30] T. Robinson, M. Callister, D. Magoffin, J. Moore, *The portrayal of older characters in Disney animated films*, «Journal of Aging Studies», vol. 21, n. 3, 2007, pp. 203-213.

Discussion

In this section, we discuss the results in relation to the diversity of representations of old age via the patterns we found. In addition, we elaborate on possible strategies for achieving variety in picturebooks in order to promote awareness and understanding towards aging and support better intergenerational relationships in societies.

Diverse depictions of old age in picturebooks

As Bishop (1990) states, «Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books»[31]. She points out the importance of seeing one's self-reflection in the books. Do the representations reflect their grandparents or the old neighbor they often see? How do children react the first time they meet an old person who is not a grandparent? Do all old people have white hair and glasses?

The studies show that it is more difficult to change the perception of age after childhood[32]. The images used for representation in children's books provide meaning and play a pivotal role in forming attitudes towards aging and older adults. Therefore, how picturebooks reflect the real world is a serious issue that is worthy of attention from multiple perspectives. In a recent examination of depictions of old age in picturebooks available in Turkey, including translations, it was noted that the diversity in the physical attributes, roles, and experiences of older adults in real life was not adequately represented in the sample analyzed[33]. This finding aligns with our own, as we also observed that many books showed a lack of diversity. According to our analysis, the majority of the older characters (72% grandparents, 89% white/gray hair, and only 8% actively working) were not represented in unique circumstances but with commonly recognized features. In addition, the older characters in our selected sample were involved in eleven different activities, but these were some-

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[31] R.S. Bishop, *Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors*, «Perspectives», vol. 6, n. 3, 1990, pp. 9-11.

[32] D. A. Klein, Council, K. J., McGuire, S. L., *Education to promote positive attitudes about aging*, «Educational Gerontology», vol. 31, 2005, pp. 591-601; World Health Organization (WHO), Global Report on Ageism, 2021, <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/combatting-ageism/global-report-on-ageism> (last access: 20.05.2024).

[33] C. Avcı, G. Erhan, *Ageing versus active aging: how old age is represented in children's books*, «Educational Gerontology», vol. 48, n. 4, 2022, pp. 145-159.

what a commonality. As such, it was a weak possibility for a child to see an older adult playing an instrument (2%), practicing an extreme/outdoor sport (2%), or learning to dance (2%). There is an imbalance regarding the represented items, at least in our selection of picturebooks. Only one book [Pic. 1] depicted a grandmother engaged in extreme and outdoor sports like rock climbing, hiking, or swimming across the Bosporus Strait, revealing that these sports potentially can be done at any age. In this manner, children or other readers will not perceive it as unusual when they encounter it in real life. These aspects of tte book support the potential of taking pleasure in old age fighting against ageism[34].

Pic. 1. *Yırtılan fotoğrafın Epey Hüzünlü Hikayesi ya da Dondurmadaki Anneanne* [*The Sad Story of the Torn-Up Photo or the Grandma's Ice-Cream*] by Olcay Mağden, illustrated by Ceylan Aran, Çınar Publishing, 2022

Hence, most items create a pattern, and seeing these repeated patterns in picturebooks can narrow a child's vision of the capacities of old people. The picturebooks could present variety in terms of mapping the possible different reflections and avoid the stereotypical verbal or visual presets for depictions of old age. Additionally, if the coreader is an older adult, the child might build a stronger bond with the concept of old age, especially if that child had been exposed to a variety of examples.

In 23 books, we see old people living a fully independent lifestyle, either living by themselves or with their partners. In the rest of the books, they live with their large family. The majority of the books do not define old-age characters' specific occupations or their retirement status. In six books (13%) we see an old-age character actively working in the community. Only in one book does the character get another job after retirement, and in this book with fantasy elements, the grandmother is 240 years old and carries out research in a space laboratory at certain times of the year. She also teaches her granddaughter how to fly a space craft. We see them together piloting their individual air-

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[34] D. Couper, F. Pratt, *Learning for a longer life, in A guide for developers of K-12 curriculum and instruction materials*, National Academy for Teaching and Learning About Aging, 1999.

crafts [Pic. 2]. The rest of the books present characters as often dealing with household tasks or gardening.

Most of the old-age characters in our selection are depicted as active and healthy, running various errands in their everyday life, and few of them are depicted as living alone. For instance, *Eda the Jealous Frog* (2015) authored by Tülin Kozikoğlu and illustrated by Sedat Girgin presents Leyla Fonten, an eighty-six-year-old woman who claims to be La Fontaine's great-granddaughter, managing on her own [Pic. 3]. In this picturebook, she not only takes care of herself in her outmoded house but ends up taking care of various pets that end up here. This book belongs to a series that tells the story of each pet

Pic. 2. *Uzaydaki Renkli Orman* [*Colorful Forest in Space*] by Ilgım Veryeri Alaca, Koç Publishing, 2022

Pic. 3. *Kıskanç Kurbağa Eda* [*Eda the Jealous Frog*] by Tülin Kozikoğlu, illustrated by Sedat Girgin, Redhouse Kidz, 2015

and their problematic character traits that Leyla Fonten witnesses and tries to manage. Here Eda is a frog who is often very jealous of others and finally realizes her own powers with the support of the old-age protagonist. Here, Leyla Fonten ends up jumping on a trampoline to show how much effort it takes for others to jump as high as Eda, an ability that the frog innately has. In that manner, the old-age character here indirectly engages in a sportive activity unexpected from her stereotypical look, creating an ironic twist to her dark clothes, gloomy house, and wrinkles. As such, this book is a good example of presenting a wise old lady sorting out a problem without being didactic, to our surprise.

In contrast to *Eda the Jealous Frog*, *The Fish in the Hat* (Şapkadaki Balık, 2018) written by Melek Özlem Sezer and illustrated by Deniz Üçbaşaran (see Pic. 4) reveals a harmonious example where the old man lives with his family. The grandfather can be considered a leading protagonist who harmoniously lives with other family members and contributes to dealing with the issues wisely that come forth. As his hat falls into the sea, the family members rush to pick it up. Thus, a red fish comes back with the hat. As the family members want to keep the fish, their everyday life is disturbed by surreal occurrences that always relate to water, sea salt, and waves, as if the fish were attempting to turn their house into the sea. At the end, the grandfather, gently carrying the fish in his hands, remarks that the fish would be better off in its natural

Pic. 4. *Şapkadaki Balık* [*The Fish in the Hat*] by Melek Özlem Sezer and illustrated by Deniz Üçbaşaran, 2018, SEV Publishing

habitat. In comparison to the brainy Leyla Fonten, the grandfather figure here is much subtler and calmer. The images and text flow not only highlight the grandfather but perhaps show him as a strong member of the family. In both of these examples, we can witness the old characters at a later stage of their lives. In order to grasp the transition to old age, books that may shed light on lifelong experiences are noteworthy, as we will mention in the next section.

A deeper understanding of old age: focus on old age and lifelong experience in picturebooks

In the previous section we discussed the diversity of old-age depictions as handled in different books. Here, we discuss the importance of finding diversity within the picturebooks in terms of the depictions of old age in order to attain a profound understanding of this phenomenon. On one hand, it is favorable if the child protagonist has agency in the picturebook. On the other hand, the child reader often sees the protagonist as the main character, whereas characters from differing age groups could be mind-opening in order to grasp diverse circumstances. In our study, we selected the picturebooks according to old-age dominance, however less than half (43%) center the old-age character in the narrative. Among these books, those fully focusing on old-age characters without a child character come down to a smaller percentage (29%). This makes sense to an extent as the picturebooks target children. In that manner, the more the story capitalizes on old age, the more the picturebook has a chance to transmit information about the old-age character. In this way it becomes possible to grasp diverse aspects of old-age people through varied characters depicted in books. For instance, *Aunt Mumble* (Mıy Mıy Teyze, 2022) by Aytül Akal and illustrated by Zeynep Özatalay, presents a story with a full focus on an old-age character who lives alone and is content with that. The reader learns about her daily life in depth together with her changing moods. In many studies, being alone is frequently associated as a negative feature for older adults. However, in this book, the reader sees how she manages to spend time by herself, playing chess alone, reading books, or dining. Although she mentions getting bored of being alone, she still does not like guests or being disturbed by others at her home.

Another issue is the sharing of information regarding an old-age character's lifelong experiences. This aspect adds more value to their profound presence while allowing readers to understand them thoroughly. Some of the shortlisted picturebooks (25%) already reveal lifelong experiences of the old-age characters, shedding light on the traces of past years. Information on the old-age characters may help the reader to deal with hard topics like illness and death. As in *My Grandma's Photos* (Sunar & Urgan, 2019), the old character is de-

picted as immobile, forgetful, aloof from her family members. While these are the negative stereotypical features of old age, the story unfolds in such a way as to unearth her past experiences through memories coming to life with the aid of her photo album. We witness a metamorphosis as the grandchild starts to see the grandma empowered by her past experiences. Illustrations reveal her as a cheerful child climbing trees, a jolly traveler with a group of friends, and as a master seamstress. Even though the book presents an inevitable life course that captures some of the stereotypes about old age, it balances these with a penetrative look at her past, presenting aging as a cumulative experience. The book additionally succeeds in empowering the grandchild not only in finding innovative ways to keep communicating with the grandmother, but also as he discovers how to deal with the loss of her by making an installation at home with her photos.

A similar example could be *Büyükannemin Sarı Keçisi* (My Grandmother's Yellow Goat, 2021) by Şafak Okdemir, where the reader learns how the grandma has become a leading figure in the regional community through her past experiences [Pic. 5a-b]. While the final part of the book presents the child protagonist as a grandmother, the narrative sheds light on her masterful cooperation with the goats to find water in the mountains. In that manner, the old character's story builds up throughout the pages as we grasp the hardships she encounters together with her flock. Grappling with environmental problems enables her to attain wisdom and abilities, gain a unique ecological literacy, and help others around her.

The picturebook, *Old Man and The Mouse* (2023) by Sezin Mavioğlu and illustrated by Burak Akbay presents old age character with stereotypical physical characteristics. Visuals such as glasses, white hair, cane, with old style hat and verbal depictions on being slow and having difficulties in adjusting to a
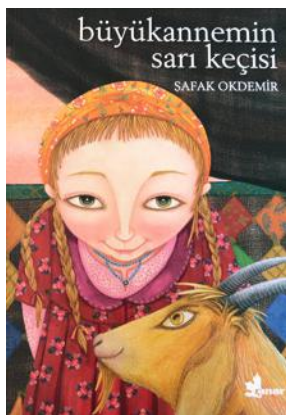
Pic. 5a-b. *Büyükannemin Sarı Keçisi* [*My Grandmother's Yellow Goat*] by Şafak Okdemir, 2021, Çınar Publishing

fast-paced world present a typical picture of being old. However, in the story these stereotypical features such as slowness help him in various ways. For example, he does not miss his granddaughter's tennis match. In [Pic. 6], the text mentions that his legs are not strong enough to run away like the younger people after seeing mice coming from underground. Hence, he stays back and calmly manages to go underground after the crowd runs away and arrives at his destination on time. Besides, due to being old and mature, he doesn't panic like others and welcomes support from the mice. The whole book focuses on the old age character and let the reader witness his daily experiences and his thoughts that is a chance to understand aging in a holistic way.

Another unique example is *Granny's Chest* (Ninemin Sandığı, 2021) by Sevtap Sarıca, which presents an angry, unhappy old-age character with some gloomy personal traits [Pic. 7]. The old-age character in *Granny's Chest* is especially dark as her bad mood is consistent throughout the story. The story also presents her death, which only makes the atmosphere presented even darker. Nonetheless, the story presents a retrospective look at her whole life, as the reader learns the reasons behind her sadness and frustration. Among the selected books, 83% percent of them introduce caring and friendly old-age characters, whereas only a few books present negative personality traits. Hence, the child reader might have a tendency to expect older adults to appear cheerful and affectionate, but this doesn't reflect reality. From this perspective, we find it meaningful to come across negative traits and understand the reasons behind these emotions. In *Granny's Chest*, the protagonist frequently appears sad and upset, and imposes all sorts of rules in her own house. When we learn more about her lifelong experiences, the hardships she had gone through, we start to empathize with her moody character.

We argue that adding details from the past or sharing traces of the lived experiences of older characters enables readers to comprehend the character in depth. Hence, constructing multifaceted old-age characters through hinting what they have gone through in time, can be a strategy to understand them genuinely and thoroughly.

Facing the reality of death and illness

Children's literature oftentimes tends towards cheerful narratives instead of difficult subjects like death, loss, illness, or mental health[35]. As such, these difficult topics can even be taboo or less-favored subjects, depending on the culture and era. When we look at contemporary adaptations of many fairy tales,

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[35] N. Tucker, *Depressive stories for children*, «Children's Literature in Education», vol. 37, n. 3, 2006, pp. 199-210.

Pic. 6. *Yaşlı Adam ve Fare* [*Old Man and The Mouse*] by Sezin Mavioğlu, and illustrated by Burak Akbay, 2023, Doğan Çocuk Publishing
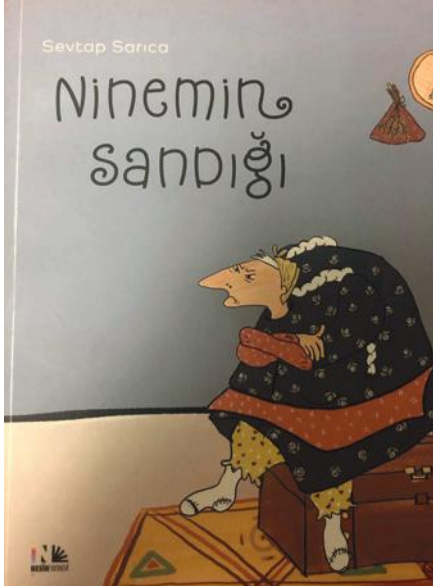
Pic. 7. *Ninemin Sandığı* [*Granny's Chest*] by Sevtap Sarıca, 2021, Nesin

they often depict happily-ever-after endings, adapting the cruelty or death into subjects like forgiveness and tolerance. As such, there can be cases where no villain or hero dies but rather everyone coexists together peacefully[36]. When we look at contemporary picturebooks, we see more of them dealing with hard topics. A comparative study of geographies where picturebooks encapsulate death or illness directly and indirectly can be studied further. In our study, seven books (15%) depicted death in the story. In four of these, the older characters were already dead and in the other two, the older characters faced serious memory issues leading to fatal ending. All of the old characters were grandparents, a common denominator of these picturebooks. In three books, the child narrator presented the death of the old character. Hence, the subject is depicted very gently and ambiguously in a way to expedite the issue. The reader does not see the character in a sickbed or in the grave but indirectly understands the loss of the character. Only in one example do we learn about a serious illness that needs to be treated at the hospital. While the old character does not die at the end, the curable disease informs the reader about a treatment process.

In our examination, forgetfulness comes across as an emerging topic (12%) in relation to old age, showing resonances to dementia. The picturebooks explaining hard subjects increase the child's awareness of the existing problems around memory loss, helping them make sense of dementia[37]. In total, 33% of the books dealt with either a physical or mental disadvantage, illness, or death. While McGuire criticized the frequent association of older characters with death and illnesses, we did not come across these topics frequently in our selection[38]. As discussed, this could make sense due to the reserved approach to these subjects in children's literature from Turkey. Yet, a thoughtful and reliable explanation of illness and death is helpful for a child in understanding these things as a part of life[39]. In our sample, only 14.5% of books depicted death. This could be due to the possible challenges while dealing with hard topics that authors, illustrators or publishers try to avoid in Turkey.

Hence, managing difficult topics in children's books needs substantial effort. According to children's book author and illustrator Kitty Crowther, showing the facts and brutality in a children's story requires careful work to engage the reader and create a positive, calm attitude, free from adult influ-

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[36] L.R. Gibson, L.M. Zaidman, *Death in children's literature: Taboo or not taboo?*, «Children's Literature Association Quarterly», vol. 16, n. 4, 1991, pp. 232-234.

[37] E.F. Caldwell, S. Falcus, K. Sako, *Depicting dementia: Representations of cognitive health and illness in ten picturebooks for children*, «Children's Literature in Education», vol. 52, n. 1, 2021, pp. 106-31.

[38] McGuire, *Growing up and growing older books for young readers*, cit., pp. 145-151.

[39] Gibson, Zaidman, *Death in children's literature: Taboo or not taboo?*, cit., pp. 232-234.

ences[40]. Picturebooks should reflect a variety of approaches incorporating realities as well, but the tone of the book requires special attention.

Illustration Strategies: Playing with stereotypical features for diverse representations

As discussed in previous sections, depictions of old age in our sample picturebooks benefit from even more diversity. We have already tracked many of the stereotypical visual patterns such as white/gray hair, glasses/cane, and a round or hunched posture in our results. Here, we would like to discuss how books can leap from stereotypical features into diverse interpretations via illustration strategies. We see that the physical traits in action can reveal different results. In that sense, looking at how these items – like a cane – are used is critical. Similarly, a character with a stereotypical look could perform a diverse activity. For instance, in the picturebook Here is *My Great-Great Grandmother* (İşte Benim Büyük Büyükannem, 2022) by Cansu Erkan, the old character is depicted as immobile, always sitting in her armchair a bent posture holding onto a cane. Surprisingly, the old great-grandmother uses the cane as tool to manage her tasks while seated, something which amazes the grandchild. Throughout the story, the old character actively performs various tasks that disrupt our understanding of her passive lifestyle. In short, a cane, something that is considered as a stereotypical item, in fact empowers the character.

Another example is *Mrs. Nanny* (Hanım Nine, 2022) by Sümeyra Ertürk, in which the old woman bears most of the stereotypical features of old age mentioned above. However, this old lady is content to be alone and enjoys her days cooking, reading books, exercising, gardening, and even learning how to perform ballet. She even wears a tutu on top of her dull clothes, which presents a funny yet unpredictable look. In the course of the story, she spends time with a child she does not know, as she learns from him how to do a somersault. If we evaluate the old-age character by her merely default static physical traits, this example falls under stereotypical representation. However, the author/illustrator plays with the stereotypical look and adds further facets to the character, resulting in a diverse approach. Hence, we can conclude that placing a twist on conventional perceptions can be a good strategy to achieve diversity in children's literature.

Apart from playing with stereotypical features, the way illustrators draw characters can also be a way to introduce novel, open ended approaches. For

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[40] V. Antoine-Andersen, *Conversation avec Kitty Crowther*, Arles, Pyramyd, 2016.

instance, in Colorful Forest in Space (Veryeri Alaca, 2022), the abstracted illustrations conceal some details such as hair color and open visuals to interpretation (see Pic. 2). It can be argued that the more the illustrations are abstracted, the elder age depiction could be free from stereotypical attributions. However, we should be aware of the pros and cons of this preference. For instance, via naturalistic/realistic illustrations, the reader may connect with the characters as unique individuals rather than generic ones, fostering a sympathetic involvement with them in the narrative[41]. Besides, in minimalist styles, the emotional distance increases[42]. Therefore, the artist should consider these aspects depending on the context of the story.

Towards kinship in intergenerational relationships

In our study, we also explored how intergenerational relationships are depicted in selected books, examining whether such relationships are presented and, if so, how they are portrayed. Most of the books (89%) present a positive intergenerational relationship between old-age and child characters. Only one book depicts negative relationships, and three books do not mention intergenerational relationships within the verbal and visual narratives. Since we were looking for diversity, these results reveal mainly monotone depictions regarding intergenerational exchanges, which might again narrow readers' perceptions. Repeatedly seeing old-age characters playing with or caring for the children could generate generic expectations. From this point of view, having more books which could depict adverse intergenerational relationships, or a lack of intergenerational relationships could be thought provoking and informative.

When we examine the existing positive intergenerational relationships, we noted that 27% + 6% of the books were based on one-way communication, i.e. one side is the active giver while the other side is the passive taker. In 27% of the books, we see older characters depicted as teaching or telling a story to a child character. In 6% of the books the child character is depicted as helping the old-age character. When we look at reciprocal intergenerational relationships, 8% of the books present a two-way exchange. Among these books, one book solely depicts a reciprocal relationship, whereas the other three also have mutual shared-time activities. In this type of relationship, a child can teach or support the older character and viceversa. Activities carried out together (50% of the books) seemed to be the most enjoyable that old and child character play, dance, make or care for animals together. The fact that the great majority

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[41] C. Painter, L. Unsworth, J.R. Martin, *Reading Visual Narratives: Image Analysis in Children's Picture Books*, Sheffield, Equinox Publishing, 2013.
[42] *Ibid.*

of picturebooks depict mutual shared relationships, is a good sign and supports kinship between children and adults rather than poor communication or indifference[43]. Both parties can enjoy the time and be involved as an active contributor. However, from the perspective of embracing variety, there could be more books presenting one-way or reciprocal relationships as a factual reflection of real life.

A practical guiding chart for diverse representations of old age

In the previous sections, we examined literature and discussed our results regarding diverse representations of old age in picturebooks. In this section, we turn our reflections into a table that may inspire picturebook makers. Our table presents ways to promote pluralistic representations of old age and thereby support child and adult readers to have a broadminded perspective about aging and old age at large. In children's literature, positive attitudes towards aging that come with varied depictions of old age are increasingly promoted. McGuire's (2003) literature-analysis form[44], promoted book lists, or the AGHE award all aim to increase awareness of the importance of intergenerational exchanges, enriched with valued old-age characters in children's books[45]. Differently from McGuire's approach, we aim to advocate diversity in multiple directions, portraying not only positive and idealized representations but also depictions that mirror the various realities of aging. Our approach is more holistic and intends to enhance readers' understanding of the sundry aspects associated with getting old. Actually, in our analysis we found certain authors having more than one book on our sample list. In seeking varied representations of old age, we first thought to delist other books by the same author/illustrator, but then we noted that each representation regarding old age was totally different. For example, Mavisel Yener wrote three picturebooks (two of them together with Aytül Akal) and in each of them, old age was depicted differently. In *Where is My Ball* (Topum Nerede, 2021) the old-age character is an athletic grandma depicted with blue hair and playing tennis with her grandson. In *Flying Dad* (Uçan Dede, 2020) written by Aytül Akal and Mavisel Yener, despite the old-age character's stereotypical features such

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43 M. Gubar, *The Hermeneutics of Recuperation: What a kinship-model approach to children's agency could do for children's literature and childhood Studies*, Jeunesse, Young People, Texts, Cultures 8, Project Muse, 2016, pp. 291-310.

44 McGuire, *Growing up and growing older books for young readers*, cit., pp. 145-151.

45 In 2009, the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) launched the AGHE Book Award for Best Children's Literature on Aging to motivate and trigger awareness of authors and publishers on how aging and older adults are represented and promote those books which convey a positive, diverse, and meaningful portrayal of aging.

as white hair, baldness, or wrinkles, he is an independent old man dressed in modern clothes looking for things to do and helping people around the city. In *Flying Nanny* (Uçan Nine, 2016) written by Aytül Akal and Mavisel Yener, the old-age character is an independent old woman in a farm dressed in traditional clothes. She is playing with children and possesses most of the stereotypical features of old age. As such, these variations and our analysis of different books inspired us to generate the following chart to list the myriad possibilities regarding depictions of old age in picturebooks.

Focus of the story	old-age character - focalisation: first person or third person ☐	old-age character - focalisation: the child's perspective ☐	intergenerational relationship (old-age person & child) - focalisation: multiple ☐
Role	grandparent ☐	parent ☐	individuals- not parent or grandparent ☐
Environment	home ☐	outdoor- garden/ park ☐	different location (circus, Olympics, factory, etc.) ☐
Status	working ☐	retired ☐	no mention or not working ☐
Personal Traits	happy, loving, caring, friendly, humorous, funny ☐	angry, lonely, sad -presented with reasoning, or transformative change ☐	transform in traits. negative to positive (ex: angry to happy) or hybrid ☐
Activities	mundane activities ☐	different activities (extreme sports, ski jumping, etc.) ☐	passive ☐
Intergenerational Relationship	positive: one way, reciprocal, mutual ☐	no mention ☐	negative -share reasoning or transformative capacity ☐
Lifelong experiences	whole life – aging process ☐	part of life ☐	details from the past ☐
Illness & Death	mild illness ☐	serious illness, in the process of dying ☐	death ☐
Illustration	stereotypical (white/grey hair, wrinkles or sagging of skin, balding, use a physical aid, use of glass, not fit, hatched over...) ☐	not stereotypical (different hair colors, modern/sportive outfits/ traditional clothes, fit...) ☐	twisting stereotypical features: merge with unexpected feature or abstract drawing ☐

Tab. 6. Towards multifaceted, plural portrayal: A guiding chart – check list for picturebook makers, children's libraries

This chart points out the basics of varied depictions of old age extracted from our findings based on our selected picturebooks. It may be helpful to

check how different picturebooks align with some of these dynamics that we have pointed out and can potentially be utilized by interested parties such as picturebook makers or libraries regarding old age depiction to extend variety and embrace diversity. For instance, children's libraries can evaluate their book collections using this checklist to assess the diversity of old age representations. Based on this assessment, they can expand their collections to provide a broader range of examples for young readers. Or picturebook makers can consider varied options when they work on constructing characters.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined depictions of old age in contemporary picturebooks from Turkey and pointed out the importance of diverse representations through our selection. We observed similar patterns for depictions of old age in the form of caring grandparents, mainly in mundane settings such as their home or garden. Oftentimes, their occupation or working status was not revealed but they were portrayed as storytellers, cooks, or playmates, i.e. stereotypical features associated with old age. Yet, the overall results present a positive attitude towards old age when we compare these picturebooks to older publications in which negative stereotypes were mentioned in many studies. However, in this study our main point that we want to highlight is embracing both negative and positive personal traits as long as these do not become repetitive to shape perceptions in one direction. Positive repetitive representations could also lead ageism and create expectations. Longer life spans and declining birthrates have led to significant demographic changes, resulting in older adults making up a growing share of the population in many regions around the globe. And this is not a homogenous group, in contrast very diverse due to varied life long experiences.

As Bishop (1990) states, books should act like mirrors reflecting varied realities in life in which readers may find their own reflections, possibly their future selves[46]. As we envision it, embracing and empathizing with the realities of old people living around the world in picturebooks could empower intergenerational relationships and raise overall well-being in society. Children can thereby learn that aging doesn't have to mean a decline but can be a time of growth and fulfillment in varied ways. This can motivate children to be part of age-friendly and age-inclusive societies when they become decision-makers[47].

Our study champions a plurality of depictions which cover the multifac-

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[46] Bishop, *Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors*, cit., pp. 9-11.
[47] McGuire, *Counteracting ageism: Promoting accurate concepts about aging in young children*, cit.

eted features of old age in order to avoid stereotypes. It can be misleading to consider the range of ages as a system set in stone as people – despite their age – may present similar characteristics. Hence, based on the insights gained through analysis and literature, we proposed a guiding chart in a checklist form to be considered in the production and selection of picturebooks to promote diversity in children's literature. In the chart we also share strategies for creating profound old-age characters via embedding lifelong experiences – for a deeper understanding or putting a unique twist on stereotypical features. The chart aims to increase awareness regarding plurality and multifaceted nature of older adults. As such children may embrace diversity of depictions in older adults granting affirmative intergenerational relationships.