

Document Analysis of the Film "Atlı Karınca" in the Context of Sexual Abuse and Incest

Cinsel İstismar ve Ensest Bağlamında "Atlı Karınca" Filminin Doküman Analizi

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ABSTRACT

Incest is defined as a situation in which an individual is subjected to sexual abuse by family members or close relatives who are prohibited by law from marrying. To safeguard the mental and physical health of society and the family, including children, it is important to have an understanding of sexual abuse and incest, and to subsequently promote awareness at the societal level. In this academic study, the concept of sexual abuse and incest, frequently encountered and concealed within society, is explored with reference to the film "Atlı Karınca". The study delves into the definition and characteristics of these phenomena, identifies the contributing risk factors, and analyzes the ensuing outcomes. This study is a research based on document analysis, one of the qualitative research designs. In the research, scenes from the film "Atlı Karınca", which met the criteria of originality, credibility and representation, and data including written field notes taken by the researcher while watching the film were used. In this study, based on the relevant academic literature, it was concluded that the scenes in the film "Atlı Karınca" concretely exemplify and explain the findings and results regarding the concept of incest.

Keywords: Incest, sexual abuse, Atlı Karınca film, film analysis

ÖZ

Ensest, bireyin yasalarca evlenmeleri yasak olan aile üyeleri veya yakın akrabaları tarafından cinsel istismara maruz bırakılması durumu olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Toplumun, aile dinamiklerinin ve çocukların psikolojik ve bedensel sağlığının korunabilmesi için cinsel istismar ile ensest olgusunun ne olduğunun bilinmesi gerekmektedir ve bu bilgiler ışığında toplumsal düzeyde farkındalık kazandırılmasına gerek duyulmaktadır. Bu çalışmada toplum içerisinde karşı karşıya kalınan ve çoğu zaman da gizlenen cinsel istismar ve ensest olgusunun ne olduğu, hangi durumların risk faktörü olduğu ve sonuçlarının neler olduğu 'Atlı Karınca' filmi temel alınarak incelenmiştir. Bu çalışma nitel araştırma desenlerinden doküman analizine dayalı bir araştırmadır. Çalışmada orijinallik, inandırıcılık ve temsil edilebilirlik ölçütlerini sağlayan "Atlı Karınca" filminin sahneleri ve filmin izlenmesi sırasında araştırmacı tarafından alınan yazılı alan notlarını içeren verilerden faydalanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada ilgili alanyazın temelinde Atlı Karınca filmindeki sahnelerin, çocuklara yönelik ensest/çocuk cinsel istismarı kavramlarının bulgularını ve sonuçlarını ortaya koyarak somut bir şekilde örneklendirdiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Ensest, cinsel istismar, Atlı Karınca filmi, film analizi

Introduction

In social life, as individuals' child-rearing styles differ from culture to culture, it is noticeable that there is no common definition of the child and childhood. Because of its cultural aspect, it is not entirely possible to make a single and generally valid definition of the phenomenon of the child (Öktem 2012). The childhood concept is considered to be a developmental transition period that has not yet entered adulthood for a long period of time and has difficulty in making decisions on its own. From this perspective, childhood is regarded as a transitory period, viewed as an incomplete state, and eventually leads to the emergence of a qualitatively inadequate system that is no longer an independent concept (Allison 2001). According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child put forward by the United Nations in 1989, every individual is defined as a child until the age of eighteen, except in the case of attaining the age of majority at an early date (UNICEF 2004). There are different definitions of "child"- "childhood" besides this definition of the United Nations. According to Karadoğan (2019), a child is an individual who has not yet completed the process of development and maturation in physical, psychological and social dimensions. In another definition, childhood is an important developmental stage that plays a critical role in preparing the individual for adulthood, where intensive care, protection and education needs are at the

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Received: 02.07.2024 | **Accepted:** 20.10.2024

forefront, and forms the basis of the future adulthood (Çöpoğlu 2018). When these definitions are explored, it is evident that the place of the child in society is very crucial and that it is one of the primary duties and responsibilities to protect the child's interests under all circumstances. Bağlı (2003), referring to the childhood definitions, points out that childhood has many characteristics different from adulthood and that the behaviors and reactions to be directed towards children should be different from those of adults. Children are the group with the highest need for protection and defense due to their unique characteristics. Beyond physical needs such as nutrition and shelter, they are deeply dependent on their caregivers due to their psychological and social needs (Hoşoğlu 2009, Taş 2017). Thus, to protect the best interest of the child, legal and international regulations have been enacted for the protection of children in Turkey as well as in many other countries in recent years (Ayrıl 2010). These regulations are intended to eliminate the situations of neglect and abuse that children may encounter in their family, environment or the society in which they live. Even though child neglect and abuse has been recognized as a phenomenon that has existed since antiquity, it is still a quite new issue for the society to deal with. In such cases, which are brought to the agenda by the society and the impact of which dates back to the past, it is the children who suffer the most damage and are ignored and neglected the most. As children are incapable of defending and protecting themselves, they are the group most exposed to neglect and abuse (Taş 2017, Aktu and Dilekmen 2019).

Child neglect and abuse involve actions or inactions by a mother, father, caregiver, or other adult that are deemed inappropriate or harmful according to social and moral standards, with the intent to hinder or limit a child's normal development.. One of the most striking differences between abuse and neglect is that abuse occurs in an active manner, while neglect occurs passively (Kaplan 1996, Taner and Gökler 2004). Children subjected to these actions or inaction may suffer enduring emotional, social, and behavioral harm both in the short and long term (Lundalh et al. 2006, Easton et al. 2017, Van der Kolk 2017, Güneş-Aslan 2020). As per studies conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), 3 out of every 4 children between the ages of 2 and 4 are regularly exposed to physical or psychological violence and punishment by their caregivers. In addition, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 13 men between the ages of 0 and 17 report having been sexually abused as a child (WHO 2022). In the context of these definitions and studies, maltreatments that negatively affect the development of children include physical abuse (WHO 2022), emotional abuse (Şahin 2006), neglect (Paavilainen and Tarkka 2003, Turhan et al. 2006) and sexual abuse (WHO 2022).

Child sexual abuse is a longstanding issue that has been widely recognized by society but kept silent for a significant amount of time. With the increased value and attention paid to children in recent years, more research has been conducted on child sexual abuse, paving the way for studies on child sexual abuse. Definitions of child abuse have also expanded parallel to the increase in research (Ovayolu et al. 2007). Nonetheless, the inability to develop an accurate definition may lead to errors in the verification and identification of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is defined as the performing a sexual act towards a minor by a perpetrator who is at least 6 years older than the victim for sexual stimulation and satisfaction of the perpetrator. Sexual acts include a wide range of damaging behaviors such as pornography, exhibitionism, genital touching and rape. The diagnosis of sexual abuse does not necessarily involve violence and the child's consent is not required (Bulut 2007, Ovayolu 2007, İşeri 2008, Kaytez et al. 2018). Masturbation and penetrative behaviors are the most common forms of sexual abuse according to studies (Kara et al. 2004, Bulut 2020).

The forms of abuse of sexual abuse victims differ significantly between genders. Sexual abuse types such as caressing, touching the genital area, vaginal or anal intercourse are three times more likely to be experienced by girls than boys (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011). On the other hand, types of sexual intercourse such as masturbation, oral or anal intercourse are more common in boys than girls (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011, Finkelhor et al. 2014). Finkelhor (1994) states that most of the sexual abuse victims are girls. However, boys may be less likely to disclose sexual abuse than girls (Finkelhor 1994, Martin and Silverstone 2013). An analysis of the perpetrators of sexual abuse indicates that 77% of the perpetrators are family members, 11% are relatives, 5% are people who are not involved in the care of the child, and 2% are other people who provide care to the child. The ages of the perpetrators generally range between 20 and 40. The majority of perpetrators in sexual abuse cases are men, while women come to the forefront in rare cases (Kara et al. 2004). Irrespective of the gender of the victims of sexual abuse, the majority of the perpetrators are male. Sexual abuse victims mostly know who their perpetrators are. Most of the abusers are either victims of sexual abuse in their childhood or have been exposed to domestic violence. There are common characteristics of families where frequent sexual abuse occurs, such as divorce, alcohol, violence and substance abuse, problems in sexual relations between spouses and oppressive parental model. Furthermore, these families mostly have low educational level and socioeconomic status (Tardif et al. 2005, Pérez et al. 2013).

Verification of sexual abuse is more difficult than other types of abuse. Physical examination is one of the most commonly used methods to detect sexual abuse. This method alone has a decisive role in diagnosis. In the absence of any evidence of physical contact in a case of sexual abuse, it is quite difficult to detect and prove the act of abuse. Under such circumstances, the most critical evidence is the testimony given by the sexual abuse victim. In order for this to happen, the child must be able to understand and explain what happened. Considering the age of the child, it is not always possible to know whether the child has such a level of consciousness. This makes it more difficult to clarify the sexual abuse incident (Yılmaz 2009, McElvaney et al. 2015). It is more troublesome for the child to recount the incident and not to be believed in what is said. In case the child is not trusted, the child's mood disorders such as helplessness, hopelessness and anxiety may increase and these disorders may become worse. Interested parties such as families, psychologists, social workers, police officers and judges who will take part in prevention activities should be sensitive concerning this issue. The persons who deal with the child should ensure that the child feels unconditional trust and a sense of being believed (Akdoğan 2005, Taş 2017).

The most significant impact and lasting effect on a child is sexual abuse by family members. Incest is a sexual relationship between two individuals who are legally and morally prohibited from marrying (Ekşi 1999, Akdoğan 2005, Akduman et al. 2005, Ovayolu et al. 2007). It is one of the most prevalent forms of abuse that impairs the emotional and developmental well-being of the child (İbiloğlu et al. 2018). Incest can occur with a person who assumes the role of a parent (such as a parent, close relative or stepfather) (Johnson 2008). Moreover, as incest takes place in the family, an environment where the child feels the most secure, and by the closest relatives, the child both trusts the perpetrator of incest and sees him or her as a source of danger amid feelings of guilt (Şahin and Taşar 2012, Soner and Aykut 2017). As incest is considered shameful by the society and is mostly committed by the closest relatives, it can be kept secret (Akduman et al. 2005, Dokgöz and Kar 2017). Incest-victim children may hide the abuse because of fear of the reactions of family members and the thought that they will not be believed and trusted. At the stage of repressing the abuse, children often tend to give up on disclosing the situation due to family pressure and their own internal processes (Topçu 2009, Nasıroğlu 2014). Besides, due to the threats made by the perpetrator in incestuous relationship, the victim hesitates to tell what happened. Most victims are threatened by the perpetrator to kill themselves or their loved ones (Soner and Aykut 2017).

Risk factors contributing to incest typically include an alcohol-dependent father (Erkoç 2023), a mother working late hours while the father assumes childcare responsibilities (Polat 2006, Gürhan 2015, Lum et al. 2015), a mother in poor health and frequently absent from home, rapid physical maturation in children (Erkoç 2023), parental sexual impotence, a daughter living separately from the father (Taş 2017), sharing a room and bed with the child, psychological disorders among family members, the presence of a young girl aged 6-8, and a history of incest within the family (Ovayolu et al. 2007, Öztürk and Demirdağ 2011, Lum et al. 2015). Fathers who perpetrate incest have a patriarchal understanding and an authoritarian personality. The relationships of such fathers with their spouses do not work well in their marriages. Furthermore, they have irregular or premature sexual intercourse with their spouses and family conflicts that persist at regular intervals. Mothers in such families may be more passive, dependent and timid in contrast to the fathers (Davies and Jones 2013, Kardam and Bademci 2013). The mothers in incest families are generally more likely to be economically or otherwise dependent on the father. Yet, there are studies showing that the opposite is also the case (Polat 2006, Yılmaz and Eryılmaz 2016). Groff (1987), who disagreed with most of the studies in the literature depicting the mother as someone with a low level of education, inadequate and economically dependent on the father, noting that they are not based on objective results, stated that incest can also occur in families that appear otherwise healthy from the outside. Besides, contrary to previous studies, in a study with 26 wives of incest perpetrator fathers, the personality traits of the mothers were at a level that can be considered normal, they did not show depressive symptoms and most of them achieved their economic freedom (Alpaslan 2014).

There are many other individual and environmental factors that may lead to incest in addition to the risk factors. However, the presence of these risk factors in a family does not necessarily result in incest. Therefore, extreme caution should be exercised during the investigation, the effects on the child should be well analyzed and the family should not be labeled (Taş 2017). The impact of incest on the child varies according to the child's relationship with the abuser, the use of violence, the extent of physical harm, the child's cooperation, age and developmental stage. The family's reaction to the situation also plays an important role. Negative behavioral disorders such as depression, hyperactivity disorder, enuresis, encopresis and fear can be seen in the child's life in response to incest (Elliot and Peterson 1993). Studies in this regard indicate that feelings of insecurity, fear and anxiety emerge in incest victims. Moreover, incest can also lead to sleep disorders in children, attention deficits, decreased academic success and withdrawal from school. Behavioral disorders such as regression in skills, urinary and fecal incontinence, head and abdominal pains, finger sucking and nail biting can be observed

(Gültekin et al. 2006, Topçu 2009). Their social relations with their environment are disrupted and their relationships with other people deteriorate. They feel guilty or betrayed after abuse. Beyond these negative behaviors, the incidence of psychological problems such as phobias, tics, depression and fear may increase. Children also have difficulty coping with the situations that arise following the abusive experiences. Particularly in incest incidents caused by the most trusted people, there is a decrease in the sense of confidence in the other party, and their psychological depression deepens as they do not want to seek help from anyone and experience it within themselves. In long-lasting and recurrent incest cases, the child remains powerless and stuck in the face of abuse. Most children blame themselves for this and think that they are bad (Şahin and Taşar 2012, Soner and Aykut 2017).

Incest victims have difficulty in explaining the abuse they have experienced and are afraid of this exposure. However, a careful observation might reveal incest through some changes in the child's behavior. These behaviors can be listed as the child perceiving themselves as nasty and disgusting, blaming themselves for the abuse they have experienced, having an intense sense of self guilt, having an intense sense of hatred towards themselves and their body, and thinking that they will lose their family and the affection shown to them (Kemerli 2000, Yiğit 2005). Children should not be condemned for these behaviors; on the contrary, should be supported. While working with the child and his/her family in detecting incest and after the discovery of incest, it is essential to scrutinize the individuals within their own systems without disrupting the family functions and integrity. Support systems for the child and his/her family should be evaluated and strengthened in the subsequent processes, and work for the reconstruction of the family system should be prioritized (Taş 2017). However, there are hardly any institutions that can protect children and defend their rights. Faced with this reality, incest-victim children tend to keep the abuse secret as they do not find the power to protect themselves after the event of incest. In a few cases brought to the judiciary, the perpetrators of incest were found not guilty due to lack of evidence. With this outcome from the judiciary, the child is forced to live with the incest perpetrator under the same roof again. In another case, when the offender is sentenced, after being released from prison without any sanction, without any monitoring decision or without any guidance to therapy, he/she continues his/her life under the same conditions with the child victim (Yiğit 2005).

It is difficult to reach quantitative data on incest because of concealment of incest and inadequate national records. The nationally representative "Research on Domestic Violence against Women 2009" is the first statistical data on sexual abuse in Turkey. According to the survey data, 7% of women were sexually abused before the age of 15. 30% of the perpetrators are close relatives. An analysis of the proximity level shows that 2.4% of the perpetrators were fathers, 1.7% were brothers/brothers and 0.6% were stepfathers (Jansed et al. 2009). These findings show that it is of great importance to protect and support the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of children who are victimized especially in cases of domestic abuse. It is also essential to raise awareness in the society, take protective measures and develop effective policies to prevent such cases.

Developing individuals from many points of view and primarily benefiting the field of psychology, films are also used in different disciplines affecting the individual and society, contributing to people's self-improvement in these fields (Berk 2009). The films that evoke emotional reactions in the audience and help the audience develop empathy are used as a powerful tool in raising awareness (Kağnıcı 2015). Visual presentation of events is also an outstanding advantage offered by films. The impact of films on people, which provide access to large masses, is indisputable (Atasoy 2013). The presentation of events that affect the individual and society through films offers the opportunity to experience and mobilize individuals' knowledge and exploration areas visually and auditorily (Koch and Dollarhide 2000). In recent years, visual tools such as films, videos and documentaries have been used extensively to concretize various concepts and phenomena (Morsünbül 2015, Boyacı and İlhan 2016, Aktu 2018, Yam 2021, Mert and Arslantaş 2022). In the national literature, there are also various examples of studies in which concepts related to child abuse and neglect are analyzed in depth through films (Aktu and Dilekmen 2019, Uzun Çiçek et al. 2021, Gezen 2023, Türk 2023). However, there are no examples where films were analyzed through the concepts of incest and sexual abuse. Studies on sensitive issues such as incest and sexual abuse are critical in terms of raising awareness and supporting the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of individuals, as well as generating knowledge for the solution and prevention of these problems. In this context, in order to contribute to the pool of knowledge on sexual abuse and incest against children and to provide a different perspective to researchers working in this field, the film 'Atlı Karınca' (The Carousel) was analyzed and the concepts of incest/sexual abuse against children were tried to be concretized.

Method

This research is a descriptive study that aims to analyze the film "Atlı Karınca" within the framework of the

concepts of incest/sexual abuse against children. Document analysis method, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in this study. Data are obtained by examining documents and records in document analysis. It includes processes such as finding, reading, evaluating, taking notes and recording sources for a specific purpose (Karasar 2005, Büyüköztürk et al. 2017). Briefly, document analysis is a systematic way to examine and evaluate printed and electronic (computer-based) materials (Bowen 2009). In line with the reasons mentioned above, in this study, document analysis method was applied to analyze and concretize various scenes in the film “Atlı Karınca” in the context of incest/sexual abuse against children.

Procedure

The purpose of this study is to examine and concretize the concepts of incest/sexual abuse against children through film analysis and to support them with examples. Document analysis method was used to analyze the film “Atlı Karınca”. In the document analysis method, the process is carried out in the following five stages: 1) access to the document, 2) verifying the authenticity of the document, 3) understanding the content of the document, 4) detailed examination and analysis of the document, 5) appropriate use of the data (Forster 1994). These stages were followed as a guideline during the analysis process. In this direction, firstly, the film “Carousel” was accessed for the purpose of the study. Then, the film was previewed to evaluate its suitability in terms of the concepts of sexual abuse and incest. The preview concluded that the plot of the film, the interaction between family members and the power imbalances within the family were indicators of incest and sexual abuse. Finally, the film “Atlı Karınca” was deemed to meet the criteria of authenticity, credibility and representativeness (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2016), and the analysis phase was started by examining the studies in the literature. In the analysis phase, scenes that could visually represent the basic concepts of sexual abuse and incest in the film were identified, these scenes were analyzed, and the findings obtained were integrated with the literature. The data obtained from the analysis were exemplified and concretized in the results section and these results were discussed by comparing them with the other findings in the literature. Since this study did not qualify as a research requiring ethics committee authorization, ethics committee approval was not obtained.

Analysed Film Data

In this study, *Atlı Karınca*, a drama film directed by İlksen Başarır, which received many national awards and was produced in 2010, is analyzed. The dialogues in the film and the written private notes kept by the researcher while watching the film were used as data in the research (Bowen 2009). The synopsis of the film “Atlı Karınca” is presented in Table 1.

Director	İlksen Başarır
Screenwriter	Mert Fırat
Type	Drama
Players	Mert Fırat, Nergis Öztürk, Sema Çeyrekbaşı
Year of Production	2010
Duration	93 minutes
Award	Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival 2010 (Best screenplay, Behlül dal jury special and best film), Istanbul International Film Festival 2011 (Best original music, radical public award) Turkish Film Critics Association (SIYAD) Awards 2011 (Best woman and promising artist).

Reference: IMDB 2010

Data Analysis

Scenes from the film “Atlı Karınca” were analyzed in depth with the content analysis method in order to explain and concretize the concepts of incest/sexual abuse against children. Content analysis is a qualitative method for analyzing the content of information and communication tools (films, photographs, advertisements, etc.). To apply this method, the set of material to be analyzed is first selected and then a coding system is created to systematically record certain aspects of the content. Within this system, the frequency with which certain words or themes emerge is recorded. After recording the findings in an orderly manner, they are grouped systematically under various categories in line with the theoretical framework (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2016), visualized through graphs or tables, and analyzed in depth (Alanka 2024). In this context, the scenes that

exemplify the concepts of incest/sexual abuse against children analyzed within the framework of the current research were categorized and assessed by considering the symptoms of these behaviors.

Results

The film *Atlı Karınca* is a 2010 Turkish origin drama film directed by İlksen Başarır and starring Mert Fırat, Nergis Öztürk and Zeynep Oral, which received many national awards. İlksen Başarır's theme in the movie is "People forget what you do, but never what you make them feel". The film deals with the concept of incest, which is widely witnessed today, but is silenced at the same time. The movie *Atlı Karınca* does not remain silent about the incest phenomenon that society is voiceless about and reveals the problem of incest within the family in the tenuous relationships of a financier mother and a poet father stuck in their home. When the characters in the film are examined, Erdem is a father figure who loves to write poetry and shows his love for poetry by naming his son Edip, and a father figure who is so meticulous and authoritarian that he does not allow his children to eat the food from the neighbors. Sevil is a loving, loyal and successful mother who chooses to remain silent most of the time and even has to adapt in order to be a family that seeks peace through silence and calmness. The grandmother, who joins the family later, is paralyzed and unable to speak. The grandmother, who witnesses and knows all the events that take place in the family, is thought to reflect the general attitude of the society towards incest. In addition to Erdem, Sevil and the grandmother, the film also includes the problems experienced by Edip, the older child of the house, and his younger sister Sevgi as a result of abuse. The themes of the prominent and analyzed scenes of the film are listed in detail in Table 2.

Themes of the Scenes	Screening Times of Scenes
Erdem's obsessive behavior	1.06', 2.30', 6.49', 7.34', 18.51'
Erdem and Sevil's sexual life	6.01', 21.13'
Sevil's role in the family	2.10', 14.00', 24.05', 35.35'
Edip's behavior as a result of abuse	4.30', 5.15', 5.41', 10.12', 12.20', 1.13.43'
Edip's anger towards Erdem	15.35', 18.10'
Non-closing bathroom door	21.26', 22.09'
Sevgi's increased responsibilities	37.10', 38.00'
Sevgi's behavior as a result of abuse	41.00', 41.50', 43.18', 43.27', 47.49', 49.40', 55.37', 57.00', 1.01.31', 1.09.41', 1.16.01', 1.15.40', 1.20.21'
Sevgi's behavior towards Erdem	46.00', 49.40', 50.46', 55.37'
Sevil's realization of abuse	48.14', 52.30', 56.00', 1.04.22'
Sevil's reactions after witnessing the abuse	58.39', 1.00.44'
Sevil's behavior towards Erdem after the abuse	1.00.21', 1.06.40', 1.24.51'
Sevil and Sevgi's confrontation	1.07.23'

The family structure in the film reveals that although some of the behaviors of the father character Erdem (not wishing the family members to communicate with the others, his negative reaction to Sevil's promotion in her job, his obsessive behaviors (1.06', 2.30', 6.49', 7.34', 18.51') and his desire to establish authority over Sevil with his harsh attitudes) are shown in a patriarchal structure, there are no scenes involving major arguments, being an authority figure or violent behaviors in the film, except for minor arguments with his wife in general. Moreover, no deviations or problems are evident in the sexual life of the mother and father characters in the film (6.01', 21.13').

The mother character in the film Sevil is a successful mother who is economically independent, fulfills her responsibilities and cares for her children. Yet, she plays a subordinate role against the father figure to maintain family peace (2.10', 35.35'). Sevil, estranged from home with the mounting intensity of her work life, is also unaware of the incidents (14.00', 24.05'). Given this background, the film reveals that incest can also occur in families with a high socio-economic and educational level, contrary to the previous studies suggesting that there are arguments within the family, sexual problems between couples and economically dependent mothers and fathers (Polat 2006, Yılmaz and Eryılmaz 2016).

Another character in the film is Edip, the eldest child of the house. The incest phenomenon, more covertly handled in the film, is first observed to take place between Erdem and Edip. Edip is introverted and anxious over the abuse he has suffered (4.30', 5.41', 10.12'). Edip cannot sleep at night. Since he is fearful that his sister Sevgi will experience the same situation, he goes to Sevgi's room at night and attempts to sleep there (12.20'). Erdem gave Edip a wooden horse as a gift to prevent him from telling what he went through. Edip does not let anyone on that horse, including himself (5.15'). Later, while moving to Istanbul because of their grandmother's stroke, Edip breaks the wooden horse (15.35'). While traveling to Istanbul, Edip wants to lead his father, who is driving

the car, to an accident by closing his eyes, but he fails (18.10'). Afterwards, Edip goes to boarding school and distances himself from these events for a long time.

Edip feels intense anger towards his father and even tries to cause an accident by closing his father's eyes while he is driving. Edip is also likely to reflect this anger by breaking the carousel that his father had given him as a gift. In addition, Edip does not communicate much in the film, experiences feelings of fear and anxiety as he does not predict his father's reactions when he gets home, and at the end of the film, it is noticeable that Edip has a harmful substance habit (smoking scene with his sister (1.13.43')).

The scenes in which incest is clearly depicted and made the audience think about it are the scenes of Erdem and Sevgi. The character of Sevgi is portrayed in the film as someone who is withdrawn, poor in communication and hesitant to express herself. Sevgi is also the daughter of Erdem and Sevil, who, despite her young age, takes on many responsibilities at home because of her mother's work, takes care of her paralyzed grandmother and continues her education in the meantime (37.10', 38.00').

Another detail of the film is the 'bathroom door that never closes' (21.26', 22.09'). Although the abuse scene is not shown in the film, Erdem's attention is drawn to the bathroom door that does not close while Sevgi is taking a bath. The abuse takes place on a day when Sevil goes on a business trip. The abuse of Sevgi by Erdem is realized when Sevgi goes to the bathroom and vomits, and when the paralyzed grandmother looks at the open bathroom door (41.00', 41.50'). Following the abuse, Sevgi has a crying fit and trembles. Withdrawn and unhappy, Sevgi has trouble sleeping (43.27', 49.40'). Unable to ask for help from anyone, Sevgi feels intense anger towards her father. While pouring water for her father, she imagines that her father is hurting her by sticking the pencil into her hand (50.46'). She tries not to be alone with her father (49.40', 55.37'). After the abuse, Sevgi is observed to be distracted in the scene where she goes to school on the weekend (43.18'). Erdem, who did not want the abuse to be revealed, gave Sevgi a musical set as a gift like the wooden horse he bought for Edip, but Sevgi did not use the gift given by her father like Edip (46.00'). Sevgi hears her father's voice even after his death and feels the emotions she experienced as a result of abuse again (1.15.40', 1.20.21'). Sevgi, who is as angry with herself as she is with her father, cuts her hair (1.16.01'). Taken into account the above information, it can be stated that the character Sevgi feels intense anger and even directs this anger towards herself, has sleep problems, has communication problems and becomes withdrawn.

In the later scenes of the film, Sevil notices the change in Sevgi and starts to question some events (48.14', 52.30'). When Sevil witnessed the abuse, she remained silent (56.00'). The studies reveal that incest is condemned by the society and that it is usually committed by close relatives and therefore kept secret. Apart from the incest victim and the perpetrator, silent witnesses who remain outside the incident or want to remain silent do not want to disrupt the family order by not speaking out against the incidents. These individuals may ignore the situation in line with their interests. Incest is seen as a shame of the family and is kept secret in order not to be criticized and pressured by the society with the logic of "What happens in the family, stays in the family" (Soner and Aykut 2017). In the film, this reality is not reflected out of fear that Sevgi will reproach herself and that her family will find out and criticize her.

Sevgi is very uncomfortable with the situation she is in and feels the need to tell someone about it. Sevgi cannot hide her situation any longer and tells her grandmother about it in tears while reading a book. Sevgi has revealed her feelings of guilt, anger, helplessness and resentment. However, although the grandmother witnesses everything, she cannot react because she is paralyzed (1.01.31'). Sevil, on the other hand, secretly witnesses these moments in the doorway (1.04.22'). Sevil feels intense anger, sadness and guilt as she realizes what happened (58.39', 1.00.44'). Sevil killed Erdem by hitting him with a car, but no one knows this (1.24.51'). Sevil's anger towards Erdem is evident on the day of the funeral (1.00.21', 1.06.40'). Sevil and Sevgi confront each other after Erdem's death. Sevil expresses her regret and inability to intervene, while Sevgi shares her helplessness and sadness (1.07.23'). Sevgi does not want Edip to learn about what she went through (1.09.41'). Mothers have a great importance in the dynamics of incest. However, mothers are also victims in child abuse. While mothers want to help their children get out of the abusive situation they are in, they also experience the regret and anger of not being able to protect their children. Many mothers do not think that their spouses might abuse their children. When they discover the incest, they feel a murderous rage against the abuser and wish to take revenge (Kemerli 2000, Yiğit 2005).

In the confrontation scene between mother and daughter in this part of the film (1.07.23'), the moment when Sevil confesses that she could not see and realize the events sufficiently appears as an emotionally intense turning point. During this confrontation, Sevgi's feelings of helplessness, desperation and powerlessness come to the fore. Sevgi is afraid of being misunderstood and misinterpreted by those around her. This situation makes

it difficult for her to cope with this intense emotional burden and causes her to feel helpless in expressing herself to her mother. Children who are incest victims experience feelings of guilt and regret, fear of distancing themselves from their parents and fear of losing them after the abuse is revealed. They also experience emotional and behavioral disorders based on the idea that the peace and well-being of their families will be negatively affected (Nasıroğlu 2014). Children who are aware of this victimization feel helpless, desperate and powerless due to the high probability that they will be harmed and that they will be hurt and that they cannot alter the situation even though they realize that their private areas have been violated. The feelings of powerlessness and helplessness can be exacerbated when the child thinks that he/she will not be believed if he/she tries to stop the abuse and when he/she faces many obstacles including threats by the abuser. Stigmatization of the child occurs when the abuser exposes the child to manipulative discourses that make the child feel helpless and guilty. This situation may also result in negative discourses and attitudes from the environment reinforcing the perception that the child is responsible for the abuse. (Finkelhor and Browne 1985, Freeman and Morris 2001).

Discussion

Films are recognized as an excellent tool for understanding and concretizing psychological disorders or issues that are the subject of current debates (Morsünbül 2015). From another perspective, films have the potential to provide extensive case studies that can enable a better understanding of theoretical approaches and conceptual frameworks in psychology (Hankir et al. 2015). A review of the psychology and counseling literature reveals many film analyses in which various concepts are exemplified and concretized (Şenol and Fışiloğlu 2007, Türküler and Gençöz 2010, Tümlü et al. 2014, Morsünbül 2015, Boyacı and İlhan 2016, Çalğıcı 2016, Derin and Voltan Acar 2016, Burcu 2023). Based on these film analyses, this study aims to examine and concretize the concepts of incest/sexual abuse against children through film analysis and to support them with examples. In this context, the concepts of incest/sexual abuse against children were explained, and then the sampling scenes were analyzed and exemplified by taking into account the symptoms of these concepts. The incest phenomenon in the film was examined from the perspective of the victim and the family, and the concepts addressing the effects on the family and the child were examined. At the end of the analyses, it was concluded that many scenes in the movie *Atlı Karınca* are related to the basic concepts of incest. The film includes scenes that explore the phenomenon of incest in depth and reflect the effects of this situation on the family and the child.

As can be seen in the movie *Atlı Karınca*, incest is defined in the most general definition as acts involving all kinds of sexual intimacy between relatives who may or may not be related by blood, who are forbidden to marry, and those who have parental ties without making a distinction between own or step (Bozbeyoğlu et al. 2010, Şahin et al. 2012, O'Carroll and Arthur 2017, Cambridge Dictionary 2023). In families where father and daughter incest occurs, if there is another sibling at home, the incest situation shifts from the older child to the younger child. Sexual abuse victims in incest are usually girls. The most common type of incest is known as father-daughter incest. However, boys can also be victims of sexual abuse within the family (Polat 2006, Bozbeyoğlu 2009). The film has scenes that concretely exemplify father-son (Williams 1988) and father-daughter incest (Siegel 2019, Putri et al. 2020, Middleton 2022).

The family, as the cornerstone of society, has an essential role in the growth and development of the individual by affecting his/her psychosocial life. The family is the first social environment where cultural values are preserved and transferred. In a healthy family milieu, the individual matures with love and understanding in harmonious relationships and their personality is shaped. As the individual is beloved by family members, their sense of trust develops, and as they receive support, their self-esteem increases (Yörükoğlu 2000, Güçlü 2016, Temurturkan 2016). In line with this information, when the nuclear family consisting of Erdem, Sevil, Edip, Sevgi and the grandmother who joins the family later on is analyzed, it gives the impression of a healthy family consisting of parents with a high level of education, where healthy communication is established, harmonious relationships develop and family members are responsible. However, contrary to this impression, incest, the most severe form of sexual abuse, is experienced throughout the film. Studies on sexual abuse and incest cases show that the families in which sexual abuse cases are common are generally composed of single-parent families (Tardif et al. 2005) and the perpetrators from these families usually have low education and socioeconomic status (Erkoç 2023). Despite the fact that incest cases are more common in families with low socioeconomic status, incest may occur in families of any socioeconomic status (Yılmaz et al. 2016). While low socioeconomic and educational level was expected to be among the risk factors of sexual abuse and incest in line with the information in the literature, in contrast to this situation, a family with a high socioeconomic and educational level was depicted in the film, underlining that abuse may not be restricted to certain factors.

Some traditions and customs that are at the very foundation of Turkish society facilitate neglect and abuse against children. In particular, the continued existence of a patriarchal structure in the society, the devaluation of girls who have no say in the family, economic problems, excessive number of children, lack of education, early marriage of girls, the discrimination between boys and girls in continuous education, stereotypes such as “beating is from heaven, he who does not beat his daughter beats his knee” and “your meat is your bone is mine” pave the way for the facilitation of abuse against children in Turkey. These ideas and value judgments have been stereotyped by the society. Based on the logic of “what happens in the family stays in the family”, incest is seen as a disgrace to the family and is kept silent and unresponsive in order not to be subjected to criticism, pressure and reproach by the society. For example, a daughter who is forced and subjected to incest by her own father may be kept secret by her mother in order to protect her and not to announce this situation to her neighbors and people around her (Yiğit 2005, Yüksel and Yüksel 2014, Soner and Aykut 2017). However, Sevgi wants the abuse she suffered from her father to be heard, but she tells this situation to her grandmother, who cannot speak and is paralyzed. On the one hand, Sevgi wants incest to be heard, on the other hand, she tells it to her grandmother from whom she cannot get help. This reveals how Sevgi is caught in a contradiction and unable to find a solution. The movie *Atlı Karınca* demonstrates the effect of the pressure created on the family by the society's understanding of honor and its attitude in favor of the protection of family integrity on the lack of reaction to incest as the grandmother's lack of reaction. An analysis of the abuse incidents shows that incest victims are afraid of disrupting the order of their families if they report the assault to someone else. The social perception and pressure in the society that marriage should be continued regardless of what kind of violence is experienced causes the lack of intervention despite the disclosure of incest (Bozbeyoğlu et al. 2010).

Incest-victim children may experience some negative issues such as alienation from school, decline in academic achievement, basic insecurity, sleep problems, disturbances in communication with the environment, dissociative disorders and suicidal tendencies (Soner and Aykut 2017). Incest victim children who develop low self-image may experience emotional and behavioral changes. They develop feelings of hostility, resentment and anger due to fear and sadness. In father-son incest, the son has intense negative feelings towards the father and lives with the desire to kill. However, in none of the families does the son blame the mother for not being protective. Boys who are victims of incest are frequently encountered with expressive behavioral problems such as violent tendencies and substance abuse (Dixon et al. 1978, Ertur and Yaycı 2011). Behavioral disorders such as tendency towards addictive substances such as cigarettes and alcohol, increase in sexual behaviors that may be considered inappropriate or having random sexual relationships, running away from home, criminal behavior and being dragged into prostitution can be observed in older children (Freeman and Morris 2001, Romano et al. 2001). Accordingly, when the scenes in the film are analyzed, Edip shows intense anger towards his father, tries to cause an accident while his father is driving and reflects this anger by breaking the merry carousel bought by his father. Edip also avoids communicating, is afraid of his father when he comes home and uses harmful substances at the end of the movie. These scenes are similar to the concrete examples of the research results.

As reported in studies on incest, the mother coming home late because she is working, leaving the children alone, and sudden physical and behavioral changes in children are among the risk factors for incest. In addition, the presence of a previous incest relationship in the family's past is considered among the reasons leading to incest (Karan 2001, Polat 2006, Ovayolu et al. 2007, Gürhan 2015, Erkoç 2023). Considering the situation of the character Sevgi, working mother and her late arrival at home are thought to expose Sevgi to these risk factors and the message the film wants to give is thought to coincide with the scientific data. Edip and Sevgi, who, like every child, have the right to grow up in a family full of love and compassion, are seen to live in a family environment that is ostensibly unproblematic but behind the scenes insecure and full of uncertainties. In the film, we witness the deep scars left on the children by the abuse perpetrated by the father in the setting where they should feel the safest.

This study, which seeks to analyze the themes of incest and sexual abuse against children as depicted in the film *Atlı Karınca*, is grounded in document analysis. The study's data and findings are limited to the film *Atlı Karınca*. The notions of incest, child abuse, and child neglect discussed in this study are limited to the current literature. Attention should be paid to these limitations when comparing or generalizing the results derived from this study.

Considering the facts and constraints of this study, some recommendations might be proposed. This study studied the film *Atlı Karınca*, focusing on a restricted set of issues related to sexual abuse and incest. Future research may enhance the literature by examining films that depict alternative notions of child neglect and abuse. Consequently, societal challenges like child neglect and abuse, which are often difficult to discuss, can be materialized and included into educational and training contexts. As incest instances persist in secrecy, they will

perpetuate a detrimental cycle that is challenging to address within society. As this detrimental cycle endures, children, the future adults, will remain subject to physical, emotional, and sexual trauma. Consequently, it is imperative that every individual, beginning with the family—the fundamental unit of society—be educated and made cognizant of child neglect and abuse. Furthermore, essential social support for families, particularly for children, must be provided, and measures should be implemented to avoid incest. Future research can enhance and diversify existing literature by including books, videos, and other resources. This study is a research conducted through document analysis. Future research should incorporate qualitative, survey, or quantitative methodologies, akin to case studies, to elucidate concepts such as sexual abuse, incest, and child neglect and abuse from diverse perspectives within the counseling and psychology literature, rather than relying solely on document analysis.

Conclusion

Incest is acknowledged as a prevalent form of abuse that profoundly disrupts a child's developmental and emotional integrity (İbiloğlu et al. 2018). This form of abuse can inflict lasting harm on a child's mental health and significantly disrupt family dynamics. This situation might undermine the child's self-esteem and irreparably damage the trust and loyalty within the family unit. The themes of incest and sexual abuse against children were examined in the film "Atlı Karınca."

Based on the literature regarding sexual abuse and incest, the experiences of Erdem, Sevil, Edip, and Sevgi indicate that the scenes in the film *Atlı Karınca* illustrate the findings and ramifications of incest (Polat 2006, Ovayolu et al. 2007, UNICEF 2016, Taş 2017, WHO 2022). The film's sequences explore the phenomenon of incest in depth. These scenes vividly illustrate the significant impact of this scenario on both the familial framework and the youngster. This study attempts to demonstrate the symptoms and behavioral patterns associated with incest and child sexual abuse, thereby enhancing the current evidence basis. The application of this thorough study and sampling as a tangible example in classes on incest, particularly in universities, will enhance comprehension of the subject and facilitate students' understanding of this delicate issue.

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Authors Contributions: The author(s) have declared that they have made a significant scientific contribution to the study and have assisted in the preparation or revision of the manuscript

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest was declared.

Financial Disclosure: No financial support was declared for this study.