

Birlesik Dünya Arastırma

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Innovasyon ve Yayıncılık Merkezi

# Contemporary Educational Researches Journal

Volume 10, Issue 1, (2020) 007-020



[www.cerj.eu](http://www.cerj.eu)

## An evaluation of the news about people with disabilities published in the written media

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### Suggested Citation:

Davulcu-Yesilyurt, G. & Tezer, M. (2019). An evaluation of the news about people with disabilities published in the written media. *Contemporary Educational Researches Journal*. 10(1), 007–020.

<https://doi.org/10.18844/cerj.v10i1.4610>

Received from July 12, 2019; revised from September 21, 2019; accepted from February 2, 2020.

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Deniz Ozcan, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Turkey.

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### Abstract

The rights of people with disabilities remain a topic that is frequently mentioned by the media, and the media is often criticised for their lack of sensitivity to this issue. The purpose of this study is to analyse the content of the news on people with disabilities in the newspapers published in Northern Cyprus, in order to determine the trends and frequencies of the news published in the newspapers and to provide data based on written documents for awareness. This research uses a descriptive survey model. In this study, the acquisition and analysis of data were conducted through content analysis from qualitative data. It has been determined that these three major circulation newspapers in Northern Cyprus have included disability and special needs news at a certain rate although it has been reported that the news about disability and special needs is rarely published and the amount of news about disabilities is relatively inadequate.

**Keywords:** Disabled, special needs, written press, content analysis.

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## 1. Introduction

Newspapers are considered to be one of the most important mass communication media instruments in modern society. People can learn the most objective, up-to-date and accurate information on all events that occur nationally and internationally from newspapers. Citizens can follow many aspects of life, such as the economy, sport, education, death notices and job advertisements. Newspapers ensure that people are knowledgeable about current affairs and that citizens are aware of the events happening around them. The quality of news in newspapers can make people aware of the issues, but can also sometimes be misleading. The importance of qualified news in the written and visual media is further emphasised when the media are concerned with influencing the society and reaching more people. The media includes a wide range of communication tools, including verbal, written, printed, visual texts and images (books, newspapers, magazines, brochures, billboards, radio, film, television, Internet, etc.) that can reach many people (Nalcaoglu, 2003). In general, the media is a term that encompasses, communication mediums, communication tools, mass media (TDK, 2013) and covers all major communication and broadcasting organs. The media has three dimensions (Kejanlioglu, 2004): 'Technology production and use presentation processes', 'The relationship between social relations, institutions, professionals, media organisations and the internal functioning of the media industry and other organisations and social institutions' and 'Cultural forms and products of newspapers, programs, etc. The processes of reception by readers and audiences.'

When public opinion regarding the role of journalism in society is analysed, the following statements can be made; 'In the enlightenment of societies, journalists have an important role in reacting,' 'It meets people's need to get news,' 'Any kind of innovation ensures that the change reaches the collection,' 'It ensures full and proper fulfilment of public duties', 'It allows your opinions to spread,' 'The events that society must know, the situations are not hidden from the people, the newspaper provides this explanation,' 'It informs the public about the internal and external events and raises awareness,' 'Those who do things that are contrary to the interests of society are exposed,' 'It contributes to ensuring justice,' 'It creates the public opinion,' 'Provides language association,' 'Journalism is a cultural workplace where cultural, artistic and literary news can be easily accessible to literary products,' 'Written and visual media are regarded as one of the areas in which social representations have emerged and spread' and 'Concepts, suggestions and practices that emerge on a daily basis during interpersonal communication can be described as social representations' (Godovnikova, Gerasimova, Galchun & Shitikova, 2019; Moscovici, 2001).

Social representations socialise objects, persons and events by making them well known and help social groups build social reality (Nikolaevna, Buslovskaya, Kovtunenka, Klimova & Ryzhkova, 2019; O'Connor, 2017). Representation in the media is also regarded as a concept related to what is described in the media, how the issues or problems are explained to the public and how the cause-effect relation is established. In the media in general, colour selection is important and meanings taken from images are all related to the concept of representation. Within a media program, what the media describes, how explains/conveys issues or problems and all of the questions about the functions of the discourses established in the program concern the representation of the media (Gokalp, Ergul & Cangoz, 2010). Representations established in the media are important because they reflect the role of the person, institution or object in social life (Tanriover, 2007).

The assumption that the mass media builds and reproduces the social reality fundamentally suggests that the media determines our priorities regarding issues and public attention is directed by the interpretation of certain topics or issues with the language and news patterns used (Nisco, 2014). It has long been understood that the media has various influences on individuals and needs to be investigated. Boutwell (1958) argued that an average adult person engages with the mass media for 4–5 hours a day that it is impossible to change people's media consumption, but that life can be taught and that it is possible to distinguish between right and wrong. It is generally considered that the media also has an educational function in general and this function is to inform the public.

The media is seen as an effective social institution in the formation of behaviour and attitudes, which facilitates the socialisation of the masses by means of connecting the masses in a broad sense in terms of word meaning and roots (Berkant & Comert, 2013; Macionis, 2001). Newspapers, which have an important place in the media in terms of social care, can be generally described as daily news tools in which all kinds of news items are presented in written format in order to inform society. In different cultures, there are newspapers that appeal to different segments, media that are trusted by the public and continue to be updated (Oktay, 1987). Journalism can also be used to acquire values, such as respect, responsibility, caring, honesty, tolerance, courage, justice, citizenship at home and at school (Underwood, 2013). The quality of the newspaper content related to people with disabilities and news on people with special needs is also important in this context.

In this research, the distinguishing and important aspect of the study is that the newspapers with the largest circulation have been selected as the study material regarding dissemination of news on people with disabilities. It is also an important detail that such a study has not been conducted before in the context of North Cyprus.

### **1.1. Research model**

This study is a descriptive study that uses a survey model. In this study, a descriptive survey model was used because three newspapers with circulation in the Northern Cyprus were analysed in relation to the news on 'people with disabilities and special needs'. The survey model is a research approach used to describe previous or existing situations as they exist (Karasar, 2008, p. 77).

### **1.2. Population and sample**

The sample of this study is a total of 943 reports on people with disabilities published in three newspapers in Northern Cyprus. The sample was chosen to reveal how frequently the newspapers in Northern Cyprus bring the issue of disability to the agenda as well the specific subject matter. The study was conducted on three national newspapers, Havadis, Cyprus and Yeniduzen, which are all published in Northern Cyprus. The study was limited to the news related to 'disability and special needs' published in the above-mentioned newspapers published between January 2014 and May 2017.

### **1.3. Data collection tools**

In this study, the collection and analysis of data was conducted through content analysis using qualitative research methods. In total, data were collected according to five categories. The content of the disability and special needs news was taken into consideration in the creation of the categories. Reports on disability in the newspapers were collected in five categories according to the publication section in the newspaper. Subsequently, special categories were defined within the themes determined as social, political, sports, exclusive and legal news.

### **1.4. Analysis of data**

After the data were collected according to the abovementioned categories, the frequency of news articles according to each theme was determined. The numbers from this analysis obtained are reflected in bar charts and pie charts. Finally, the content of the news was analysed.

## **2. Findings**

Figure 1 contains the total number of news published each month related to disabilities based on the content analysis conducted on the Havadis newspaper for 2014. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 3, with 3 in February, 2 in

March, 12 in April, 2 in May, 7 in June, 2 in July, 7 in August, 6 in September, 5 in October, 8 in November and 18 news articles in December.

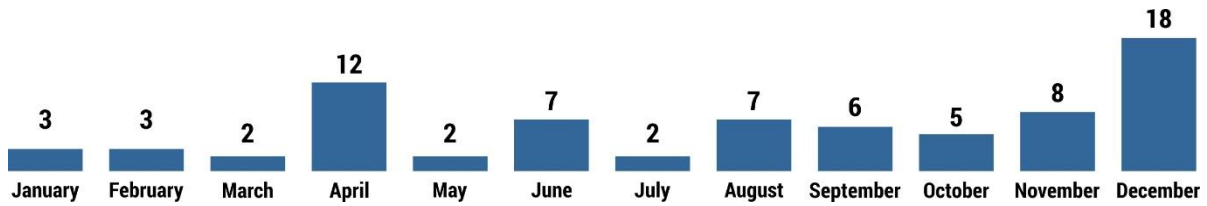


Figure 1. The total number of news items related to disabilities in Havadis in the year 2014

When in the data in Figure 2 is analysed, it can be seen that in 2014, the Havadis Newspaper published a total of 75 news items in total on disabilities. When these items regarding people with disabilities according to the sections published in the newspaper are categorised in terms of themes, it can be seen that 60 of in the articles published were related to social news, 6 were political news, 6 were sports news, 2 were exclusive news and only 1 was related to judicial news.

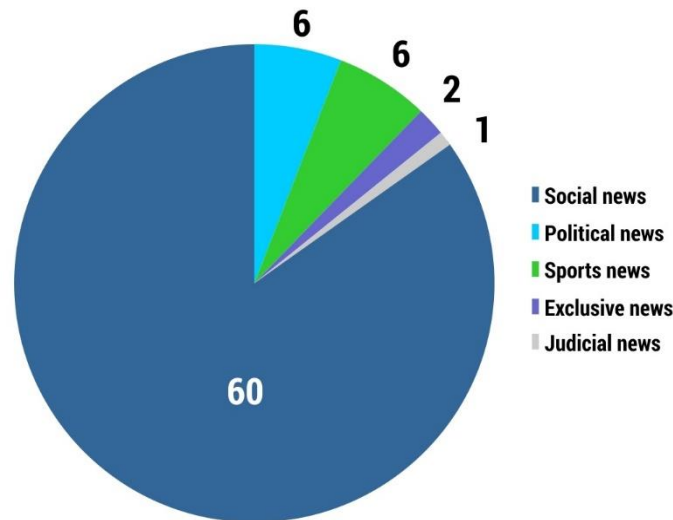


Figure2. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to the people with disabilities published in sections of the Havadis Newspaper in 2014

Figure 3 contains the total number of news articles per month related to people with disabilities according to the content analysis conducted on the Havadis newspaper in the year 2015. According to the findings, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 2, with 4 in February, 1 in March, 5 in April, 14 in May, 4 in June, 4 in July, 0 in August, 2 in September, 5 in October, 2 in November and 16 in December.

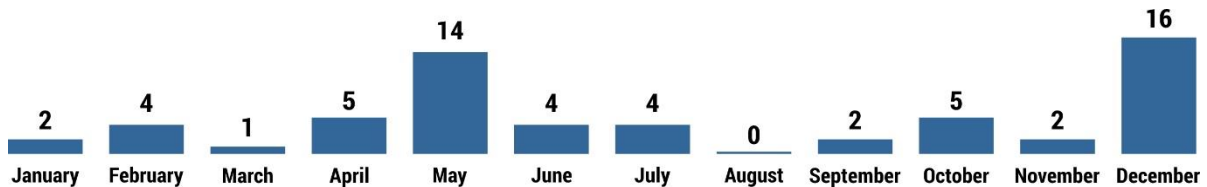
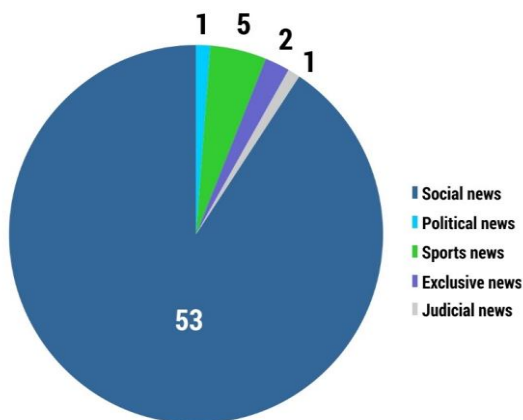


Figure 3. The total number of news items related to 'people with disabilities' in Havadis in the year 2015

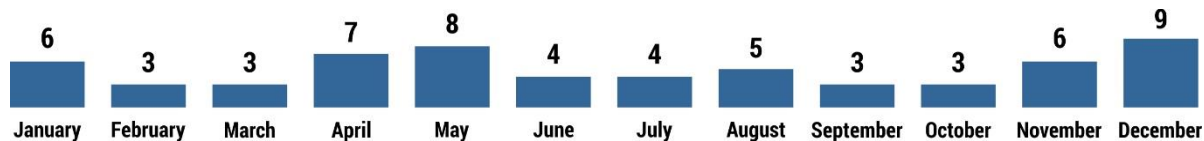
When the pie chart in Figure 4 is examined, it can be seen that in 2015, the Havadis Newspaper published 62 reports in total on people with disabilities. When these news items regarding people with disabilities are categories according to the sections of the newspaper they are published in, it can

be seen that 53 of them were published in social news, 1 was in political news, 5 were sport news, 2 were in exclusive news and only 1 was in judicial news.



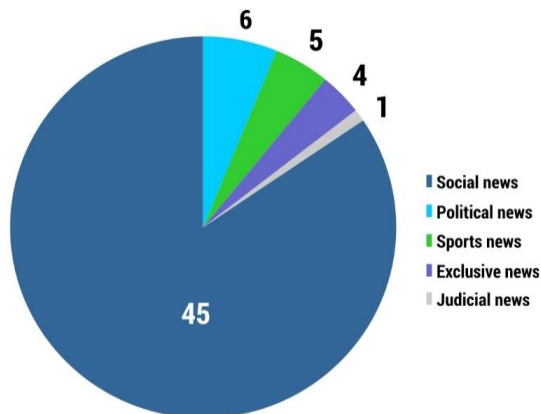
**Figure 4. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to the disabilities published in sections of the Havadis Newspaper in 2015**

Figure 5 contains the total number of news items per month related to people with disabilities based on the content analysis conducted for the Havadis newspaper for the 2016. According to this analysis, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 6 in January, with 3 in February, 3 in March, 7 in April, 8 in May, 4 in June, 4 in July, 5 in August, 3 in September, 3 in October, 6 in November and 9 in December.



**Figure 5. The total number of news items related to people with disabilities in Havadis in the year 2016**

When the pie chart in Figure 6 is analysed, it can be seen that in 2016, the Havadis Newspaper published 61 reports in total on the subject of disabilities. When these news items regarding people with disabilities are categorised according to the sections of the newspaper they were published in, it can be seen that 45 of them were published in social news, 6 were in political news, 5 were in sports news, 4 were in exclusive news and only 1 was in judicial news.



**Figure 6. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to people with disabilities published in sections of the Havadis Newspaper in 2016**

Figure 7 contains the total number of news items published per month related to people with disabilities based on the content analysis conducted on the Havadis newspaper in the year 2017. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 3 in January, 4 in February, 6 in March, 1 in April and 3 in May.

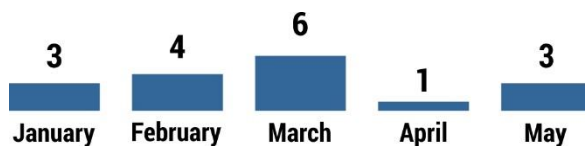


Figure 7. The total number of news items related to people with disabilities in Havadis in the year 2017

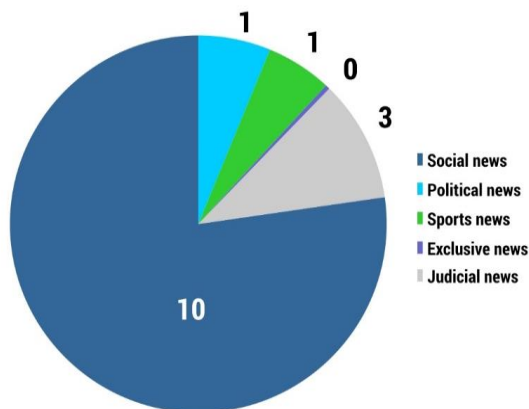


Figure 8. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to the people with disabilities published in sections of the Havadis Newspaper in 2017

When the pie chart in Figure 8 is examined, it can be seen that in 2017, the Havadis Newspaper had 15 published reports in total on people with disabilities. When these news items about people with disabilities are differentiated according to the sections of the newspaper in which they were published, it can be seen 10 of them were published in social news, 1 was in political news, 1 was in sport news and 3 of them were in judicial news.

Figure 9 presents the total number of news items per month related to people with disabilities based on the content analysis conducted for the Kibris newspaper in the year 2014. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 6, with 8 in February, 6 in March, 11 in April, 9 in May, 8 in June, 3 in July, 3 in August, 5 in September, 4 in October, 8 in November and 14 news in December.

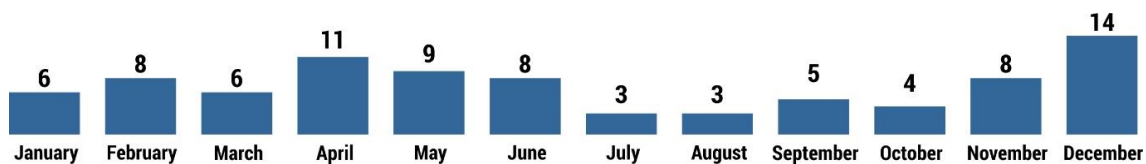
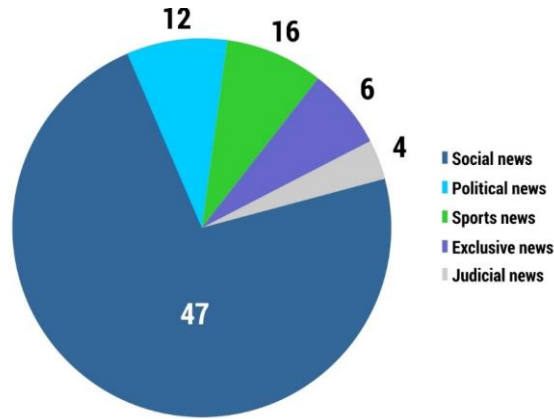


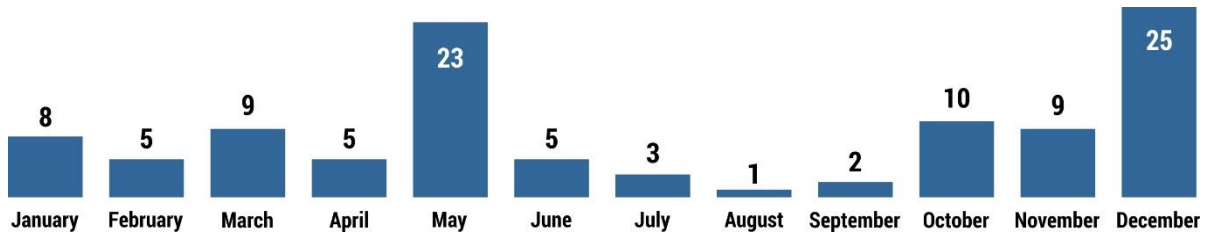
Figure 9. The total number of news items related to people with disabilities in Kibris in the year 2014

When in the pie chart in Figure 10 is analysed, it can be seen that in 2014, the Kibris Newspaper published 85 news reports in total on people with disabilities. When these news items about people with disabilities are differentiated according to the sections published in the newspaper, it can be seen that out of the total news reports 47 of them were published in social news, 12 of them were in political news, 16 of them were in sport news, 6 of them were in exclusive news and 4 of them were in judicial news.



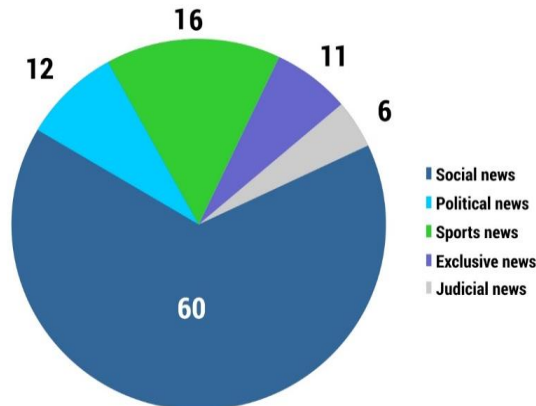
**Figure 10. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to the people with disabilities published in sections of the Kibris Newspaper in 2014**

Figure 11 contains the total number of news items published per month related to people with disabilities according to the content analysis conducted for the Kibris newspaper in the year 2015. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in was 8 in January, 5 in February, 9 in March, 5 in April, 23 in May, 5 in June, 3 in July, 1 in August, 2 in September, 10 in October, 9 in November and 25 in December.



**Figure 11. The total number of news items related to people with disabilities in Kibris in the year 2015**

When in the pie chart in Figure 12 is analysed, it can be seen that in 2015, the Kibris Newspaper published a total of 105 reports on ‘people with disabilities’. When these news items about people with disabilities are categorised according to the sections of the newspaper they were published in, it can be seen that 60 of them were published in social news, 12 were in political news, 16 were in sport news, 11 were in exclusive news and 6 were in judicial news.



**Figure 12. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to the people with disabilities published in sections of the Kibris Newspaper in 2015**

Figure 13 contains the total number of news items per month related to people with disabilities based on the content analysis conducted for the Kibris newspaper in the year 2016. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 12, with 10 in February, 15 in March, 11 in April, 48 in May, 13 in June, 10 in July, 14 in August, 8 in September, 15 in October, 10 in November and 15 in December.

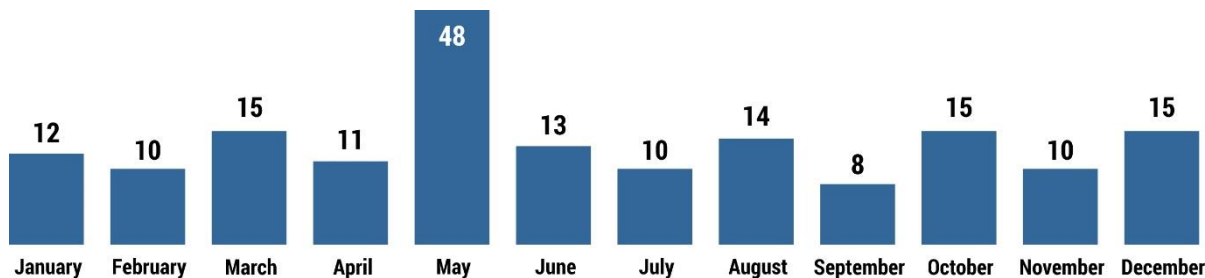


Figure 13. The total number of news items related to people with disabilities in Kibris in the year 2016

When the pie chart in Figure 14 is examined, it can be seen that in 2016, the Kibris Newspaper had 181 published reports in total on the subject people with disabilities. When these news items about people with disabilities are differentiated according to the sections published in the newspaper, it can be seen that 93 of them were published in social news, 48 of them were in political news, 16 of them were in sport news, 20 of them were in exclusive news and 4 of them were in judicial news.

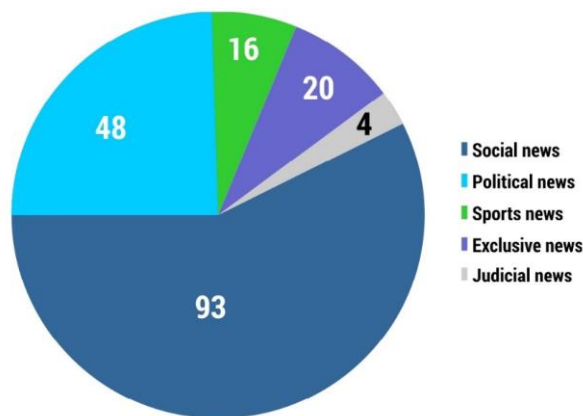


Figure 14. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to people with disabilities published in sections of the Kibris Newspaper in 2016

Figure 15 contains the total number of news items published per month related to people with disabilities based on the content analysis conducted for the Kibris newspaper in the year 2017. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 2, with 2 in February, 2 in March, 1 in April and 10 in May.

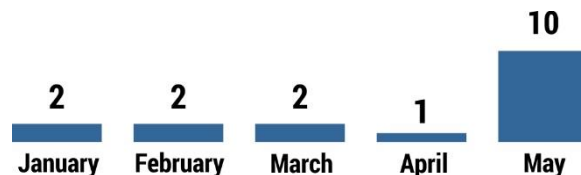
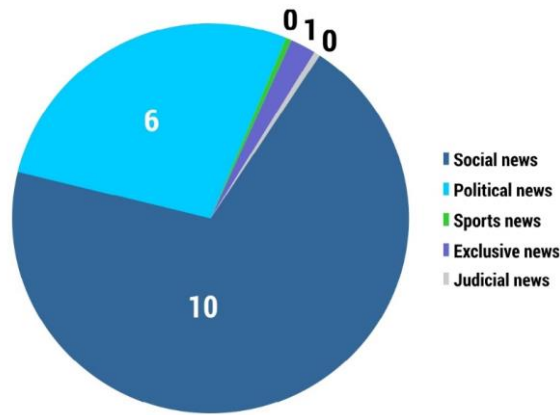


Figure 15. The total number of news items published related to people with disabilities in Kibris in the year 2017

When the pie chart in Figure 16 is examined, it can be seen that in 2017, the Kibris Newspaper had 17 published reports in total on 'people with disabilities'. When these news items about people with

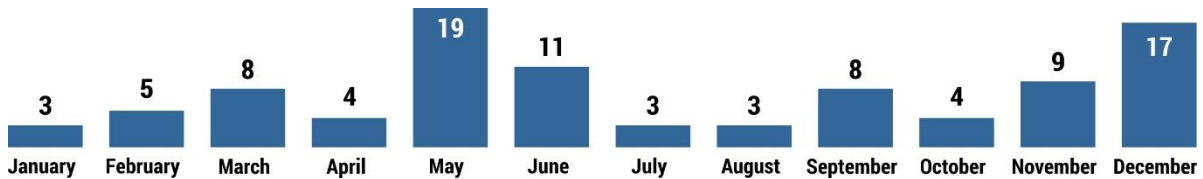


disabilities are categorised according to the sections published in the newspaper, it can be seen that out of the total reports, 10 of them were published in social news, 6 of them were in political news and 1 of them was in exclusive news.



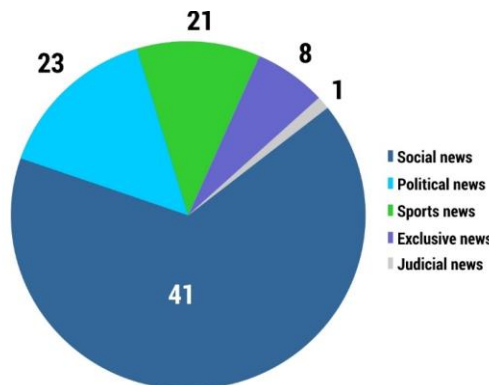
**Figure 16. A pie chart that displays the number of news related to people with disabilities published in sections of the Kibris Newspaper in 2017**

Figure 17 contains the total number of news items per month related to people with disabilities determined after content analysis conducted for the Yeniduzen newspaper in the year 2014. According to this, the total number of news items related to ‘people with disabilities’ in January was 3, with 5 in February, 8 in March, 4 in April, 19 in May, 11 in June, 3 in July, 3 in August, 8 in September, 4 in October, 9 in November and 17 news in December.



**Figure 17. The total number of news items related to ‘disabled’ published in Yeniduzen in the year 2014**

When the pie chart in Figure 18 is analysed, it can be seen that in 2014, the Yeniduzen Newspaper had 94 published reports in total on the subject of people with disabilities. When these news items about people with disabilities are differentiated according to the sections published in the newspaper, it can be seen that 41 of them were published in social news, 23 of them were in political news, 21 of them were in sport news, 8 of them in were exclusive news and 1 of them was in judicial news.



**Figure 18. A pie chart that displays the number of news related to people with disabilities published in sections of the Yeniduzen Newspaper in 2014**

Figure 19 contains the total number of news items per month related to people with disabilities based on content analysis conducted for the Yeniduzen newspaper in the year 2015. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 5, with 8 in February, 15 in March, 9 in April, 19 in May, 8 in June, 8 in July, 5 in August, 9 in September, 9 in October, 5 in November and 19 in December.

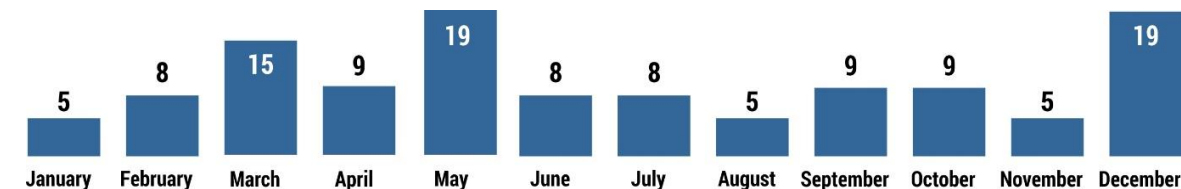


Figure 19. The total number of news items related to 'people with disabilities' in Yeniduzen in the year 2015

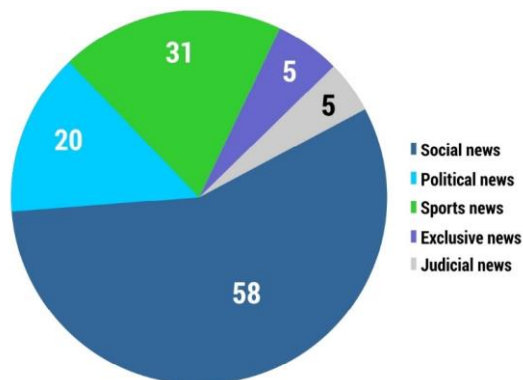


Figure 20. A pie chart that displays the number of news related to people with disabilities published in sections of the Yeniduzen Newspaper in 2015

When the pie chart in Figure 20 is examined, it can be seen that in 2015, the Yeniduzen Newspaper had 119 published reports in total on people with disabilities. When these news items about people with disabilities are categorised according to the sections published in the newspaper, it can be seen that 58 of them were published in social news, 20 of them were in political news, 31 of them were in sport news, 5 of them were in exclusive news and 5 of them were in judicial news.

Figure 21 contains the total number of news per month related to people with disabilities according to content analysis conducted for Yeniduzen newspaper in the year 2016. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 3, with 6 in February, 4 in March, 4 in April, 11 in May, 7 in June, 5 in July, 5 in August, 10 in September, 4 in October, 15 in November and 31 in December.

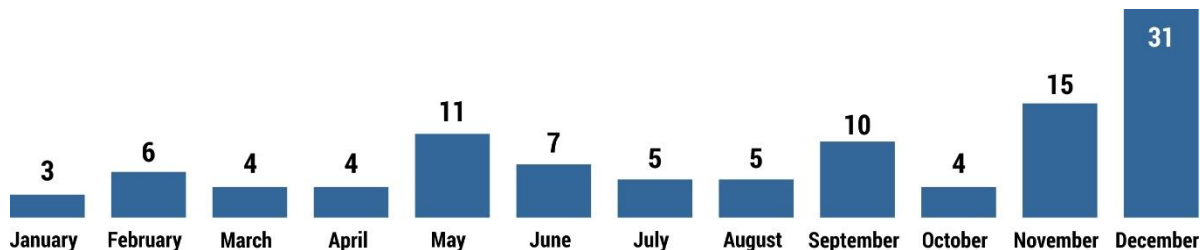
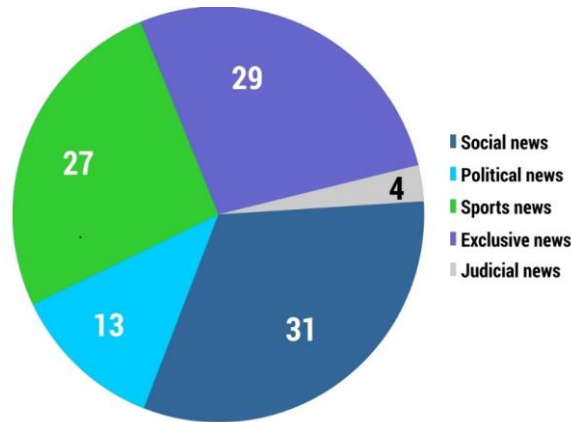


Figure 21. The total number of news items related to 'people with disabilities' in Yeniduzen in the year 2016

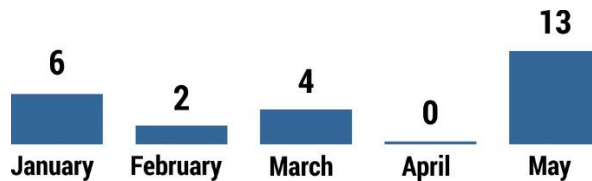
When the pie chart in Figure 22 is examined, it can be seen that in 2016, the Yeniduzen Newspaper published 104 reports in total on people with disabilities. When these news items about people with disabilities are differentiated according to the sections published in the newspaper, it can be seen that

31 of them were published in social news, 13 of them were in political news, 27 of them were in sport news, 29 of them were in exclusive news and 4 of them were in judicial news.



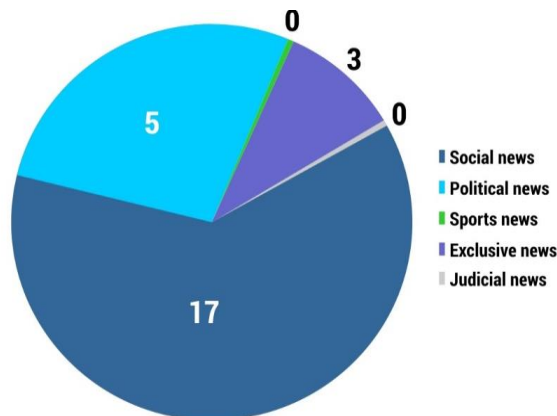
**Figure 22. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to people with disabilities published in sections of the Yeniduzen Newspaper in 2016**

Figure 23 displays the total number of news items per month related to people with disabilities based on content analysis conducted for the Yeniduzen newspaper in the year 2017. According to this, the total number of news items related to people with disabilities in January was 6, with 2 in February, 4 in March, 0 in April and 13 in May.



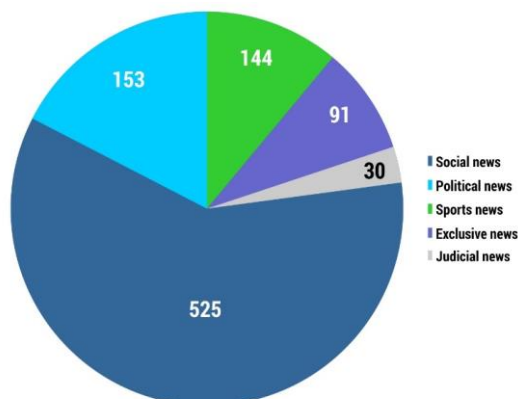
**Figure 23. The total number of news items related to people with disabilities in Yeniduzen in 2017**

When the pie chart in Figure 24 is examined, it can be seen that in 2017, the Yeniduzen Newspaper had 25 published reports in total for people with disabilities. When these news items about people with disabilities are categorised according to the sections published in the newspaper, it can be seen that 17 of them were published in social news, 5 of them were in political news and 3 of them were in exclusive news.



**Figure 24. A pie chart that displays the number of news related to the disabled published in sections of the Yeniduzen Newspaper in 2017**

As can be seen in Figure 25, the three newspapers with the highest circulation reported a total of 943 disability reports between 2014 and May 2017. According to this, while there were 943 articles about people with disabilities in total over a period of 3 years and 5 months, 525 of them were given in social news content, 153 were in political news, 144 were in sports news, 91 were in special news and 30 were in judicial news content.



**Figure 25. A pie chart that displays the number of news items related to people with disabilities published in sections of the Havadis, Kibris and Yeniduzen newspapers between 2014 and May 2017**

### 3. Discussion

When the results of the research are examined, it can be seen that in Havadis newspaper, there were 75 disability news items in 2014, 62 in 2015, 61 in 2016 and 15 disability reports in the first 5 months of 2017.

In the case of Kibris Newspaper, it can be seen that there were 85 news articles in 2014, 105 articles in 2015, 181 articles in 2016 and 17 articles of disabled news in the first 5 months of 2017. Yeniduzen, on the other hand, published a total of 94 articles in 2014, 119 in 2015, 104 in 2016 and 25 disability reports in the first 5 months of 2017. Havadis Newspaper had 213 news items over the same period of three and a half years, Kibris Newspaper 388 and there were 342 news items in Yeniduzen. In terms of the total amount of news items on people with disabilities in all of the newspapers it can be seen that 943 reports were published between January 2014 and May 2017.

Presenting news about disabilities in a broader context rather than just the same news on the agenda will allow newspaper readers to obtain information about disability, so the journal will go beyond just telling you (O'Sullivan, Fortunati, Taipale & Barnhurst, 2017). Regularly creating pages in newspapers about disabilities and special needs can play an effective role in addressing the needs and problems of people with disabilities (Ellis, 2016).

In the same way, separating sections in newspapers for people with disabilities can also raise awareness. This study covers disability and special needs reports in the newspapers with the highest circulation in North Cyprus over the past about three and a half years. When it is considered that there are 5,350 people with disabilities in North Cyprus (Havadis, 2016) according to the results, it can be said 943 news articles in total over a period of three and a half years is insufficient.

### 4. Conclusion

Although it has been determined that the three newspapers with the largest circulation in Northern Cyprus have included disability and special needs news to a certain extent, such news items are relatively infrequent and the amount of news about on disabilities is relatively inadequate.

The necessity of following the news agenda and the demand for journalists to delivering news on certain topics to the readers causes them to give more weight to these issues. This, of course, can cause news on disabilities to be disregarded and leads to appear in a vicious cycle, with repetition of the same news.

It has also been determined that although the newspapers examined have included news on people with disabilities at a certain rate, there was almost no news on this subject for a certain period and the amount of news about the disability is relatively inadequate. It is seen that the majority of news articles published in the newspapers are produced by news agencies and that the (special) news items related to people with disabilities are rarely included in the newspapers.

## 5. Recommendations

The following suggestions can be made based on the results obtained from the study, in terms of future applications and research that can be conducted:

In the study, it was determined that the amount of news about people with disabilities and special needs in the newspapers is relatively inadequate. According to this, it can be suggested that the news about people with disabilities in the newspapers should be increased in terms of quality and quantity. Disability news in newspapers should not only give information about the agenda but should also be written with journalists who themselves have disabilities, which is important to increase readers' awareness of people with special needs.

When the distribution of news in general is examined, it is obvious that there are more news items on social events, and there a lack of news on real situations and problems. It is important not to forget that when a country develops, the manner in which it addresses the needs of people with disabilities in the country must be developed in parallel.

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