



## Sia's music film on the relationship of music and autism: what do the families think?

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### Abstract

Families with children with autism face many sociological, psychological, socio-psychological, economic, and educational problems, especially trauma. Families living in a very fragile affect complain about the society's point of view towards them and that these perspectives cannot be explained correctly by many branches of science and art, especially literature. However, every right and appropriate step taken is very important to them, and they become unhappy and hopeless when faced with a contrary situation. Autism has been the subject of numerous films. Some of them have had a great impact, while others have disappeared into popular culture. When it comes to the relationship between music and cinema, as much as the scenario, the actors and the characters they reflect, it is also important whether the verbal or non-verbal music reflects the problem to be told. Especially the lyrics have a different meaning and importance. In film analysis, it is emphasized what the film tells, how and why? How does the film present itself and does this presentation match the problem to be told, but it can only be answered with a serious film analysis. One of the main questions of this research is whether the movie "Music", which has turned into a very colourful, visual feast, and most importantly, was shown in the cinemas with the claim that it reflects autism, could really cure those who are suffering. In the study, sociology, perception, autism, aesthetics, criticism, film analysis, cinema and music were mentioned, and the film "music" was tried to be analyzed sociologically and semiotically. The data in the study were obtained from the members of the "Autism and Music Society", who came together for the first time in our country, through a structured interview form from families whose children have autism and who want to participate in the study voluntarily. Content analysis technique was also used in the study based on qualitative, descriptive, scanning model. It is thought that the study will be a source for related research, is original and will contribute to the field.

**Keywords:** Autism, criticism, perception

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Autism

It is known that autism begins in early childhood, repetitive and stereotyped behaviours are seen throughout life, and the most obvious diagnosis is social communication disorder. Not being able to communicate easily, not knowing why and how to respond, not making eye contact while talking, preferring to be alone, not being aware of the people around, not participating in games, constantly holding certain items, engaging in repetitive behaviours, being indifferent to questions, speaking with echolalia, speaking aimlessly, not being able to answer questions based on interpretation, not knowing how to behave in different social environments, not being able to understand thoughts and therefore not knowing how to behave are among the first features that come to mind.

“Autism appears before the age of three, which is one of the critical stages in early life. Since children with autism do not develop the skills to socialize and communicate at the same time, they are closed to their inner world and do not establish social communication with other people. The concept of autism refers to a spectrum of disorders ranging from mild to severe, the defining feature of all of these disorders is difficulty communicating with other people. Individuals with autism have poor ability to communicate (both verbally and nonverbally) and interact, moreover, they are limited in what they are interested in. These barriers to communicating with others deeply affect their social behaviour” (Kandel, 2020: 45-46).

When it comes to autism, the most frequently mentioned issue is social communication disorder.

“Many reference books on autism emphasize that people with autism are not social individuals. These individuals cannot empathize with their environment or even care about them. They prefer to be alone and avoid making eye contact. You may observe that many of them have impulses that they cannot suppress. They line up things, repeat sentences or swing back and forth endlessly and hate change” (Wagner, 2022: 56). Wagner expresses a lack of society and says the following. “In our opinion, children with autism lack empathy. But no, it is we who are deprived—we deny it to them” (2022: 173).

Discovered by two unaware scientists, Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger, in the 1940s, autism was introduced to the clinical literature by Eugen Bleuler. (Kandel, 2020: 53). It can easily be said that the number has increased rapidly since those days. Today, “doctors encounter a case of autism in every 5,000 people. According to the data of the American Health Agency, this ratio is observed as 58:1” (Wagner, 2022: 21)

The reason is still unknown. Autism, which is defined as "a neurodevelopmental disorder whose symptoms begin to appear in early childhood" (Mukaddes, 2019:1), has not been fully clarified yet, although it is said that genetic or environmental factors are effective. The increase in the number of autisms around the world in recent years is another well-known and frequently mentioned reality.

### *1.2. Normality and abnormality*

“Individuals who learn, behave, and exhibit different attitudes can sometimes be described as abnormal. This has often resulted in marginalization and divisions among individuals have occurred. The boundary separating “normality” and “abnormality” has changed according to different societies on various geographies throughout history. Although those who seem mentally different from other people are sometimes regarded as "special talent" or "sacred", they are often treated as "deviant" or "crazy", stigmatized and subjected to terrible persecution” (Kandel, 2020: 19-20).

Normality and abnormality are more pronounced when it comes to autism. There are many families who say, "My child is not normal". Of course, these two words become more pronounced when he encounters an individual in the society that he is not accustomed to and has no knowledge of. “About 10% of individuals with autism have low IQs, but most of them have special abilities such as writing poetry, learning a foreign language, making music or painting, calculating, or knowing that any date in the calendar will coincide with the day of the week” (Kandel, 2020: 58).

Wagner's thoughts are quite remarkable. “Unlike a normal child, a child with autism should grow up in a filtered and sheltered world, and his life should be dominated by calm and predictability. No computers, no televisions, no bright colours, no surprises... Surprises can be painful. It is engraved in the memory and our memories shape our lives. While forgetting is a difficult act even for ordinary people, it is much more difficult for individuals with autism” (2022: 194).

### *1.3. Film and criticism*

In the Turkish dictionary, criticism is explained as criticism (2011:786), the work of examining a person, a work, a subject in order to show their right and wrong sides. When it comes to criticism, works of art and productions come to mind. Literature, architecture, film, music are the ones that come to mind the most.

As Kabadayı mentioned, “the universe that movies bring to the screen invites the audience to share different stories. These stories are multi-layered and allow readings of meanings and sub-meanings that we cannot identify even though we see. Film criticism, which is a tool for reading, plays an important role in making sense of what we see on the

screen. For this reason, film criticism makes it necessary to apply and research many fields of social sciences. Criticism envisages writing by acquiring the knowledge to analyse movies. In this direction, every criticism offers new possibilities for film-oriented readings” (2020:11).

“Many considerations can be put forward about the need for film criticism. But the most basic thought that can come to mind may be the desire to better understand and explain the film as a work of art and cultural product, its filmic expression, filmic discourse, and place it in cultural memory” (Özden, 2020: 9). Kabadayı states that “film criticism draws attention to the fact that cinema is not just a means of entertainment based on watching. Criticism emphasizes that cinema is an art suitable for investigation, to connect with other arts and social sciences, to reach new meanings as it analyses” (2020: 117).

#### *1.4. Film and music*

According to Kabadayı, one of the most important features of cinema, which is accepted as the seventh art, is that it is related to other branches of art” (2020: 33). Music takes an important place among the disciplines that come to mind first in painting, literature, photography, theatre, sculpture.

“The relationship between music and cinema is another study together with movie soundtracks. This relationship is not only established through music. The scenario that can be said about the movie, the adaptations or the characters, melodies and of course the lyrics of the actors combine with the problem to be told (Eslek, 2017: 157).

“When we say movie soundtrack theory, it is because of how “audible” the soundtrack should be during the viewing experience, we are talking about a wide area ranging from evaluating the relationship between the image and the image entirely through the image, from the fact that the soundtrack is an element that helps the already existing meaningfulness of the image, to an element that speeds up or slows down the storytelling.” (Gürbuz, 2017:129).

#### *1.5. How can it be explained? in other words, can the one who does not live know?*

According to Özden, films are “effective tools that have the function of providing artistic expression and entertainment, carrying information within and between cultures, informing us about ourselves, society and our social roles, and guiding and guiding us in line with this information” (2020: 58). “Seeing ourselves as others see us is one of the most useful gifts. The capacity to see others as themselves is no less valuable. But what if these others are of a completely different species and live in a completely alien universe? For example, how can the wise know what it really means to be crazy? If we are not born

a visual, intuitive or musical genius, can we step into the worlds where Blake, Swedenborg and Johann Sebastian Bach lived? (Huxley, 2014:11).

Nacakçı emphasizes the importance of the role of music in what is meant to be told. “Imagine an emotional moment or a battle scene with two people, how would you watch that movie without music! Or how do you get the feeling that something bad will happen to a woman walking alone in an episode of a horror movie? What is the most important factor affecting us in these scenes, apart from visuality? The answer to these questions should be music” (2013: 273). Nacakçı states that “The power of music, soundtracks, visuality and our perception of music etc. Some composers and music critics who participated in the debates also criticized the fact that film music compositions are not pure music made for the purpose of making and listening to music, and that they do not have much meaning if they are not supported by visual elements” (2013: 274).

It should not be forgotten that music, with the effect of developing technology and media today, is a more effective force in society than ever before. For this reason, music has been an effective stakeholder and element in the formation of the film and has become a more persuasive force in the marketing of the film with its original music and song albums. (Nacakçı, 2013: 300)

### *1.6. Social psychology and music*

Hortaçsu's views on social psychology, which deals with individuals in society, also support the research topic. According to him, “The best examples of social psychology are seen in literature, theatre and cinema products. Social psychology is a versatile entertaining field that is useful in explaining tragic as well as funny situations and can explain the sometimes irrational behaviour of ordinary people and human societies” (2012: 17-18). The film, which is discussed in the research, is tragic in one aspect and funny in another aspect on the basis of music and autism.

The rate of encountering individuals with autism in daily life is increasing day by day. Social psychology is a science that examines the interactions between the person and society in a broad sense (Tutar, 2012: 21). One of the most important words that can express why the study is handled belongs to Cüceloğlu. According to Cüceloğlu, social psychology is “the science that examines how an individual's behaviour, feelings or thoughts are affected or determined by the behaviour and/or characteristics of other people” (2007: 514).

### *1.7. Perception*

One of the most important disadvantages of individuals with autism is undoubtedly their misunderstanding and perception. The lack of information about

individuals with autism brings with it the result that individuals who encounter them cannot make sense of the situations they encounter for the first time. “We categorize or stereotype other people” (Hayes, 2016: 100). Our perceptions lead to this, and sometimes undesirable situations are encountered.

Cüceloğlu asks a good question and answers: “Why is perception important? Because human beings can only give meaning to the events they perceive, that is, phenomena have meaning, not events. One of the most important findings in the field of perception that should not be overlooked is that we humans are not aware of the ground, although it determines our perception, that is, we are aware of what we perceive, but we are not aware of the factor that determines that perception (2002: 32).

### *1.8. Films about autism and music*

When it comes to autism, the first movie that comes to mind is Rain man, perhaps due to the influence of the lead actor. It is also known that more than 50 films have been made.

A Child Is Waiting-1963, Being There-1979, The Boy Who Could Fly-1986, Rain man – 1988, The Wizard-1989, A Is For Autism-1992, What's Eating Gilbert Grape – 1993, House Of Cards-1993, Forrest Gump – 1994, Nell-1994, Silent Fall – 1994, Cries From The Heart-1994, David's Mother-1994, Shine-1996, Under The Piano-1996, Journey Of The Heart-1997, Mercury Rising-1998, Molly – 1999, The Other Sister-1999, I Am Sam – 2001, Elling-2001, Radio – 2003, Hear The Silence-2003, Napoleon Dynamite-2004, Miracle Run-2004, Mozart And The Whale – 2005, Marathon-2005, Filder's Choise-2005, Snow Cake-2006, After Thomas-2006, Bukelamun (Chameleon)-2006, I am X – 2007, Autism: The Musical – 2007, The Black Balloon – 2008, Chocolate – 2008, God's Ears-2008, The Horse Boy – 2009, Son-Rise: A Miracle Of Love-2009, Technotise-Edit I Ja-2009, Hadi Be Oğlum (Come on my son)-2009, Adam-2009, Mary And Max-2009, Temple Grandin – 2010, My Name is Khan – 2010, Ocean Heaven – 2010, Dear John-2010, Burning Bright-2010, Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close-2011, Fly Away-2011, A Mile In His, Shoes-2011, The Story Of Luke – 2012, Joyful Noise-2012, White Frog-2012, Stand Clear Of The Closing Doors-2013, A Brilliant Young Mind-2014, X+Y-2014, I Am Me-2015, The Accountant-2016, The A Word-2016, Life, Animated-2016, El Faro De Las Ocas-2016, O Boy Called Po-2016, Atypical-2017, Please Stand By-2017, Tully-2018, Tut Yüreğimden Anne (Hold my heart, mom)-2018, Music-2020 (Retrieved from <https://Onedio.com> and <https://otizm.com> websites)

Nur Özdemir's words at the end of the movie Temple Grandin: Different But Not Incomplete are very meaningful. “Temple Grandin movie is a qualitative material that deals with the coping strategies developed by individuals with autism against the

difficulties they encounter in their daily lives, which is thought to contribute to the literature sociologically and should be investigated and examined in terms of autism. The film, inspired by real life, conveys to the audience what individuals with autism can achieve with a regular life. In addition, it has a quality that can help us to make sense of, interpret and evaluate individuals with autism, by addressing the difficulties faced by a woman with autism in her daily life and her struggle despite the intimidating attitudes of society towards her. First of all, and most importantly, the film conveys the difficulties that autistic people face in daily life, by improving the ability of individuals with autism to "establish empathy" through their different meanings and experiences than normal individuals. Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that the film aims to raise awareness" (2021: 82-83). Are all movies like this? Can they be partners in troubles?

## **2. Method**

In the study, which is based on the qualitative, descriptive, scanning model, in which the data were collected with structured interviews as well as content analysis and analysed according to qualitative techniques, especially the thoughts of families with children with autism were included in the film. Films can be used in qualitative research. Content analysis is applied on "written texts (books, magazines, newspapers, posters, slogans and radio broadcasts, interviews, films, TV programs)" (Gökçe, 2004: 85).

### *2.1. Problem statement of the Research*

Kabadayı's observations on film criticism are important. Regarding the starting point of film criticism, the "What is it?" and "why?" questions arise. The curiosity that creates these questions in mind stems from the critic's interest in the narrative, structure, signs, characters, genre, and the apparent bond between this film and the director's other films.

Based on this thought, our research has been to Sia's music movie, could it be a partner in trouble? Does the narrative of this movie describe autism correctly? Why is an individual with autism portrayed in this way in the movie and what do families think about this portrayal? Has been determined.

## 2.2. *Sia's music film*

The movie "Music" starring Kate Hudson and Maddie Ziegler was the subject of criticism and news. Sia, who appeared as a Grammy-winning singer, songwriter, screenwriter, and most recently, a director, was the focus of criticism. The title of the movie, which is about the story of an autistic half-sister and a young woman, is another subject of criticism, Maddie Ziegler, who does not have autism.

Image 1. <https://www.imdb.com/> 10.30.2022-12:04 O'clock



A colourful movie emerges. Autism is explained by turning it into a visual feast. The movie attracts attention with its music clips. Each clip is concerned with expressing an emotion. So, was the director able to understand and perceive autism despite being a musician?

Image 2 Scenes from the movie. <https://www.imdb.com/> 10.30.2022-12:04 O'clock







More than 60 thousand people signed a petition to ban the movie, *Music*. It is criticized that a character with neurodiversity gives life to a character without a neurodevelopmental disorder. Scenes showing this character being confined in a physical position that could lead to physical injury or even death in real life were condemned. In addition to the digital platforms showing the film, the two people described as "autistic" and "friends with autism" called on the sponsors of the film to stop the film immediately. It is also asked to cancel the movie's Golden Globe nomination. The film was nominated for Best Picture in a Comedy/Musical at the Golden Globes and Best Actress in a Comedy/Musical for Hudson.

The petition states, "When portraying people with autism, listen to people with real autism, not just social workers, parents, and organizations." "Only we know what is best for us and what it is like to be us" is also included in the petition. The petition also ends with the words, "We urge the actors to apologize and distance themselves from the film. Our silence is louder than you think. Finally, we invite YOU to sign this petition, share it, demand justice, be a friend of people with autism, and listen to the autism community. Let's make history together!". Sia, whose petition was signed by 66 thousand people, apologized and said, "I listened to the wrong people and this is my responsibility, obviously my research was not comprehensive and extensive enough." There are also the words "I'm sorry". <https://www.ntv.com.tr/yasam/sianin-otizm-hakkinda>

On another site, a different situation arises. Sia has a harsh criticism, let alone apologizing. "*Sia did not neglect to oppose the criticism,*" the article says. It has been stated that Maddie Ziegler, who plays the autistic individual in the film, does not have

autism, and even the absence of an autistic actor in the film has caused criticism from the disabled communities. It is also very interesting that an autistic actor made the following comment from his social media account. *“Many autistic players, including myself, have responded to these tweets. We all said we could play the character. These are just excuses. The truth is, zero effort was made to include a truly autistic individual in the film.”* Sia called her followers *“maybe you are a bad actress”* and *“why don't you watch my movie before judging?”*. <https://www.beyazperde.com/haberler>

The different flow of information continues. In another report, it is stated that Sia regrets her response to the criticism. Sia said, *“Looking back, I should have just shut up. I'm aware of that now,”* she says, adding, *“Even though it's my rule that I don't do anything emotional after midnight, this time I screwed up.”* <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/cadde/sarkici-sia>

On another site, the reactions of those who describe themselves as “autism rights activists” were included.

*“As an autistic individual, I want this movie cancelled. Quite disturbing for myself and other autistic individuals. Sia must regret her wrong and hurtful betrayal of society. This movie is not going to have a big impact on history. To cancel it would mean that our intolerance of differences is unacceptable in today's society. Sia and her partners have alternative ways to fund, even if they make money from this movie, they will survive/Hannah Marshall.”*

I found the things the autistic woman in the movie did to be extremely antipathetic. Also disappointed that the woman included the packaged criticism/Letitia Yates”

Sia's words are quite remarkable. *“Until now, I have always been on the side of autistic individuals. The film is also a love letter to both the caregivers and the autism community. I have my own unique views of the community and I think the community has not been adequately represented so far. I felt compelled to undertake this task myself. If that makes me a scumbag, I'll admit it, scumbag, but my intentions are great”* <https://filmhafizasi.com/otizm-haklari>

### 2.3. Sia's tweets:



(<https://variety.com/2021/music/news/sia-music>)

On another site, there was an interesting headline “Sia's upcoming movie "Music" missed the mark of representing autism.” The introduction of the article is also quite remarkable. “Once again, neurotypicals don't trust us to tell our own stories” There is also some unusual information in the article. It's not impossible. As a result, many famous and beloved actors “turned out” as autistic, including Dan Aykroyd, Daryl Hannah, and Sir Anthony Hopkins. In fact, Aykroyd said that without his special interest in ghosts and law enforcement, the movie Ghostbusters might never have existed. Autistic actors have the potential to enrich a character and add something special to the role. They bring a level of accuracy and precision that all sciences can never hope to achieve. (<https://ichi.pro/tr/sia-nin-yaklasan-filmi>)

In the news of Barbaros Tapan, Sia's humanitarian role was highlighted. Adoption and motherhood of two 18-year-old boys, songwriter, screenwriter, singer and director are mentioned. We learn from this article that the film has a history of 15 years. Sia also expresses her attitude towards disabled people with these words. “*I tweeted and told the casting agency what I was looking for. I've discovered a lot of people with disabilities or, to put it right, "special talents"*”. (<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr>)

The film of Sia, who also wrote/composed 10 songs for the film, was the subject of many news and websites. The following are a few examples;

[https://stringfixer.com/tr/Music\\_\(2021\\_film\)](https://stringfixer.com/tr/Music_(2021_film))

<https://www.haberts.com/tv-ve-sinema/unlu-sarkici-sia-nin-music-filmi-yasaklanacak-h208056.html>

<https://sozlukhaberleri.com/sianin-otizm-hakkindaki-filmi-musicin-yasaklanmasi-icin-60-bini-askin-imza-toplandi/>

<https://www.dergy.com/sianin-filmi-musicin-yasaklanmasi-icin-60-bin-imza-toplandi/>

<https://filmloverss.com/ilk-bakis-sianin-kate-hudsonli-ilk-uzun-metraj-filmi-music/>

<https://playtusu.com/haber/2020/05/sia-ilk-kez-yonetmen-koltuguna-oturdugu-filmin-soundtrackinden-bir-sarki-paylasti/>

<https://upost.info/tr/jimmy-kimmel-muzik-yildizi-kate-hudson-a-sia-nin-tartismali-oyuncu-kadrosu-hakkindaki-sorusunu-soruyor-31383436333134363938>

<https://bantmag.com/sianin-ilk-uzun-metraj-yonetmenlik-tecrubesi-music-ve-eslikcilerinden-togethera-dair-bilmeniz-gerekenler/>

<https://tr.blueridgebookfest.org/reviews-are-critics-would-rather-we-watch-cats-instead-sia-s-ableist-film-music-that-everyone-tried-warn-her-about>

<https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/tr/pejachkata-sia-snima-film-so-koj-ke-im-oddade-pochit-naliczata-so-autizam-i-na-nivnite-negovateli/>

[https://tr.abcdef.wiki/wiki/Music\\_%282021\\_film%29](https://tr.abcdef.wiki/wiki/Music_%282021_film%29)

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/movies/2021/02/15/sia-new-movie-music-angers-autism-community/6735331002/>

<https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-features/sia-music-movie-review-controversy-1125125/>

<https://variety.com/2021/music/news/sia-music-warning-label-apologizes-autism-community-1234900277/>

<https://time.com/5942094/sia-music-disability-representation/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jan/20/music-review-sias-controversial-film-about-autism-lacks-coherence-and-authenticity>

### **3. Findings**

“Music Film on the Relationship between Music and Autism: What Did the Families Think?” The answers and comments given to the structured interview form prepared to obtain data for the question are shown below.

Six of the families who attended the second Autism and Music Summer School organized by Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University State Conservatory between 18-24 July 2022 voluntarily participated in the research.

Three of the participants are men and three are women.

Participants stated that they watched the movie as a family.

Among the movies on Music and Autism, the films that the participants are most familiar with are as follows.

<b>Name of the Film</b>	<b>Views</b>
Rain Man – 1988	<b>6</b>
Forrest Gump – 1994	<b>6</b>
Temple Grandin – 2010	<b>6</b>
Hadi Be Oğlum (Come on my son)-2009	<b>5</b>
My Name is Khan - 2010	<b>4</b>
Music-2020	<b>4</b>
Mercury Rising-1998	<b>3</b>
Mozart and the Whale – 2005	<b>3</b>
Ocean Heaven – 2010	<b>3</b>
Atypical-2017	<b>3</b>
Nell-1994	<b>2</b>

Shine-1996	2
I am Sam – 2001	2
Tut Yüreğimden Anne (Hold my heart, mom)-2018	2
The Wizard-1989	1
A Is for Autism-1992	1
Under the Piano-1996	1
Snow Cake-2006	1
I am X - 2007	1
Chocolate – 2008	1
Adam-2009	1
The Accountant-2016	1
A Child Is Waiting-1963	-
Being There-1979	-
The Boy Who Could Fly-1986	-
What's Eating Gilbert Grape – 1993	-
House of Cards-1993	-
Silent Fall – 1994	-
Cries from the Heart-1994	-
David's Mother-1994	-
Journey of the Heart-1997	-
Molly – 1999	-
The Other Sister-1999	-

Elling-2001	-
Radio – 2003	-
Hear the Silence-2003	-
Napoleon Dynamite-2004	-
Miracle Run-2004	-
Marathon-2005	-
Filder’s Choise-2005	-
After Thomas-2006	-
Bulelamun (Chameleon)-2006	-
Autism: The Musical - 2007	-
The Black Balloon - 2008	-
God’s Ears-2008	-
The Horse Boy – 2009	-
Son-Rise: A Miracle of Love-2009	-
Technotise-Edit i Ja-2009	-
Mary and Max-2009	-
Dear John-2010	-
Burning Bright-2010	-
Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close-2011	-
Fly Away-2011	-
A Mile in His Shoes-2011	-
The Story Of Luke – 2012	-

Joyful Noise-2012	-
White Frog-2012	-
Stand Clear of the Closing Doors-2013	-
A Brilliant Young Mind-2014	-
X+Y-2014	-
I Am Me-2015	-
The A Word-2016	-
Life, Animated-2016	-
El Faro De Las Oecas-2016	-
O Boy Called Po-2016	-
Please Stand by-2017	-
Tully-2018	-

The name of the movie that is not on the list but suggested by the participants is “As we see it (amazon prime) – Love on the spectrum (Netflix)-Good doctor”

The answers given by the participants to the question: Do you think that movies play an important role in raising the awareness of the society?

Yes (2)

“It's notable even for at least ear-plumping about autism. In addition, it causes negative as well as positive perceptions and generalizations.”

“I mean, maybe a little bit, but I think that in general, the work is done with commercial concerns. Probably only people who are in contact with autistic children in some way watch these movies.”

“Yes/ Especially the TV series “Hadi be oğlum” and “Miracle doctor” got a response in the society.”

“I think that the awareness of the audience increases in a movie where all kinds of differences are handled. But how the subject is handled is important to me, whether it's about exploiting emotions or whether it's a movie with details to raise awareness.”



Responses of the participants to the question: "How do you find the use of the term "individual with neurodiversity" instead of "with autism" in the articles about the film?

"I don't find it right."

"Autism is known in society as a mental retardation, as a disease, and considering that it is ossified by this established name or the word autistic, the neuro-diverse gem has a new connotation, and actually meets it in terms of meaning. It's been a long time since I got stuck with definitions and names. But I have already embedded the expression neurodiverse into my language."

"I'm not one for expressions, but it's a nice definition."

"The word autistic is better understood in society."

"I think it's appropriate."

"I don't care much about what the conditions and diagnoses are called. I'm always looking for results. I witness that people who describe them as autistic are corrected as no autistic. Autistic, neuro divergent, whatever you say, does not change the result. Yes, neurodiversity seems to be a much broader expression that emphasizes that we are all different, but as I said, I think we should fill in instead of getting stuck in these terms."

Responses of the participants to the question: What does "individual with neurodevelopmental disorder" mean to you instead of "with autism" in the articles about the film?

"It is a brain function that affects the brain and memory of an individual with a neurodevelopmental disorder, with limited communication skills, mood disorders, inadequacy in motor skills, learning difficulties, lack of social skills."

"Any description with disorder is very antipathetic and extremely disturbing. A person who does not hear is not called a deaf person, or a person with a runny nose has a bad ear."

"I'm not one for expressions, but the negative word (disorder) in an expression that is not a good definition makes people feel demoralized."

"It refers to an individual with impaired brain development."

"The individual who establishes the diversity of communicating differently."

"It refers to a term that is not pathological, emphasizing the differences in all of us."

Respondents' answers to the question are allegedly scenes that show Sia's character in the movie being confined to a physical position that could lead to physical injury or even death in real life. Did it catch your attention?

"No" (2)

"Yes, it did, those scenes are not very realistic."

"It didn't."

"Yes, problem behaviours that occur during the seizure."

"It didn't. I don't understand exactly which scenes you are talking about. On the contrary, when the autistic girl goes for a walk, the journalist, neighbour, etc. in the neighbourhood. he keeps an eye on her unnoticed until she returns home. These scenes showed how a neighbourhood takes responsibility for a special friend in a very sweet way, which I really liked."

Did it bother you that the participants portrayed Sia as "mute" as the individual with autism in the movie? Is this a common occurrence?

"It didn't bother me. Yes, it is a common situation, there are many autistic people who cannot speak."

"No, it didn't bother me. As autism is a very broad spectrum, language development also progresses within this spectrum with more education. When looked at, at least in our country, the fact that education is proportional to accessibility and money also points to the existence of many autistic people who cannot speak. In addition to these, it is important not to talk anymore, but to speak qualitatively, especially in autism. Alternative communication methods can be tried in any case."

"I don't think she is mute."

"The individual with autism spoke, albeit a few sentences. I didn't think you were mute. She even told her sister "don't go" in the last scene of the movie and changed the lives of all of them.

"No, it didn't bother. Autism is a phenomenon that should be evaluated in a wide spectrum. There are many autistic people around us who have language problems, this is a common and seemingly normal condition."

"It didn't bother me. Autism is a very broad spectrum. I also met young people with autism who could not speak at all. I also met people who spoke a few words and body and sign language. There are those who accompany autism with MR, and they may be more disadvantaged in terms of communication."

Responses of the participants to the question: 66 thousand signatures were collected for the banning of Sia's film. Do you think the movie should be banned?

"No" (3)

"I am against bans"

"No, I think a different and common side of autism has been explained"

"I don't think she deserves to be banned. It was uploaded about why she didn't cast someone with autism in the movie, the movie is her movie, and she doesn't have to cast it. The important thing is the way the movie is handled. Not offending individuals with autism and their families in any way"

Responses of the participants to the question: Do you agree with the opinion of an individual with autism that "When painting people with autism, listen to people with autism, not just social workers, parents and organizations"?

"No"

"I would love it and I would defend it. I wish individuals with autism who can express themselves would express themselves by speaking or writing or through a different communication. I'd rather take them for reference."

"I agree."

"Unfortunately, every autistic individual cannot express themselves. If they can talk, of course they should rest."

“It may be difficult to get feedback from individuals with autism from time to time, and it is difficult and sometimes impossible to ask different private individuals to express their opinions, but I am sure that different thoughts will be rich, at least I can get positive feedback and different requests from my own child.”

“There are many movies that deal with the subject of autism. Or an autistic character from a movie. Of course, if the producer or director of the film works with families with autism, it will be more striking about the fiction and reality of the film. But if I were a far-flung audience, I wouldn't want to watch a movie that was too agitated.”

The answers given by the participants to the question: An actor with autism wants them to act in the movie. “*Only we know what is best for us and what it is like to be us*” Can each individual with autism express himself as in this statement?

“Yes”

“Temple Grandin told me, why not. Maybe not in Turkey, but there are examples of these in the world. The question of why we don't have it should be answered. I attribute it to the continuation of special education in a vicious circle. One type of dress does not fit all sizes.”

“Ultimately, just like in the drama 'Life Goes On', autistic actors just need training and time to play themselves and even other characters. But until then, we're standard people, standard actors are going to get into those roles.”

"No."

“While this is somewhat utopian, I hope it is not impossible.”

“Of course, she can't tell. For example, my son.”

Responses of the participants to the fast: Should only people with autism portray people with autism in films?

“Yes”

“Isn't that what acting is for? So the butcher should play the butcher? Of course, I disagree with that.”

“Autistic actors just need training and time to play themselves and even other characters. But until then, we standard people, standard actors will get into these roles.”

"No"

“No, it can be mixed”

"No way. This applies to the film shot for each disability group. Should people from this disability group be cast in a movie in which a visually impaired or walking disabled person is featured? The important thing is acting. If the person portrays the role well, if the director conveys what is wanted to be told in the script well through this actor, there is no problem.

The answers given by the participants to the question: Did it bother you that there were no autistic individuals in the movie Music?

“Yes”

"Absolutely no. But if there was, I would be happy.”

“No” (3)

“She didn't. While watching the movie, I don't see if the person playing this role has autism. I'm checking to see if the person in the story plays the role well.”

In response to the questions of the participants, the producer of the film, Sia, said, “*I listened to the wrong people, and this is my responsibility, obviously my research was not comprehensive and extensive enough*”. What do you think of the “*I'm sorry*” apology message?

“Yes, she could spend more time with individuals with autism and conduct more comprehensive research. The character in the movie also reflects an individual with autism very well.”

“She did the right thing by considering the pressure and criticism. But I did not find the movie unsuccessful. While there are so many neurodiverse in the world, I thought one of them was in Sia's movie. The environment and people she lives in. There is no such thing as impossible.”

“I love Sia. I watched many clips. When I first watched *Chandelier*, Maddie was a kid back then, I thought to myself, is this girl normal? She is a very good artist, to be different, people sometimes do things that attract the reaction of others. Criticism never ends, so much was said in *Chandelier* at that time. Not everyone has to like it.

I think Sia has done what she can, Cinema is a completely different field for her. Write, direct and sing... difficult.”

“Self-criticism is always good. However, I did not see any major faults to criticize in the film.”

“Obviously Sia built the movie on the only autistic person she observed, although there were occasional unrealistically optimistic scenes, it wasn't a bad movie.”

“I think it's a word spoken in the face of so many negative petitions and reactions.”

Respondents' responses to the question, The Independent described the film as "a colossal failure." What do you think?

“I found it successful”

“I am not a movie critic. I can't do the technical and artistic evaluation because it focuses on that. She had a different autism and her life for me. Everyone around her had a test. I didn't look at the movie that way.”

“IMDB also exploded. I would give 5-6. She got 3.2.”

“I didn't think so. Of course, I watched good movies on this subject, but I did not find this movie as unsuccessful as it was said.”

“I think it's relative”

“I am writing as a mother of a child with autism. The movie had a different plot. She expressed emotions through music and dance. Sometimes I wish I could understand how she feels even though I'm in Ahmet's head in some situations. Anytime when you laugh pointlessly or get tense in a small situation. In the movie, such situations are conveyed in the form of a musical, for example, I liked it.”

Responses to the question of the participants: What do you think about the definition of “*special talent*” instead of “*disabled*” among the words “*I have discovered a lot of "disabled" or "especially talented" people*” in an interview with Sia?

“For me, the word disabled is also a labelling that negatively affects people. The definition of special talent is also not very accurate. Not all individuals with autism are gifted.”

“A disability is not a special talent. Not every disabled person has to be a special talent. Special talents are not disabled when it is generalized. Weird explanation. She must have been surprised.”

“She said it right.”

“Unfortunately, not every disabled person is especially talented. That's why these two words don't always define/complement each other. However, AUTISM is a different situation. Individuals with autism may have both a disability and a special/superior talent.”

“I totally agree. The term gifted is appropriate.”

“You should not get hung up on descriptions. Yes, it is a naiver approach to say that they are gifted instead of disabled. When my son is called a special child, I already know that he has autism, but I like it when he is called a special child.”

The answers given by the participants to the question: “*What Do You Say About the Opinions of Two Autism Activists?*”

A1. “*As an autistic individual, I want this movie cancelled. Quite disturbing for myself and other autistic individuals. Sia must regret her wrong and hurtful betrayal of society. This movie is not going to have a big impact on history. To cancel it would mean that our intolerance of differences is unacceptable in today's society. Sia and her partners have alternative ways to fund, even if they make money from this movie, they will survive/Hannah Marshall.*”

A2. “*I found the things the autistic woman in the movie did to be extremely antipathetic. Also disappointed that the woman included the packaged criticism/Letitia Yates*”

“I did not see anything disturbing. Among the films I have watched, autism is described in the most realistic way. I found the woman with autism in the movie very successful.”

“Because of the perspective of an autistic individual, there is a possibility that she is right. We have never looked at the world through their eyes.”

“Not everyone has to like it. I think Sia has done what she can, Cinema is a completely different field for her. We watched a lot of Sia clips, after all, the musical is the genre of this movie. Okay, he doesn't have the experience to do LALALAND in LA (by the way, why would he shoot there in Australia).”

“I disagree with both criticisms. I did not see intolerance to different individuals in the movie.”

“The activists who commented on the film shared what they saw from their own windows, and I'm sure we would have encountered more comments if the families of individuals with autism were asked to comment on their comments.”

“Activists will make extreme statements so that they will attract attention. I couldn't see any detail in the movie that would offend the autistic teenager or her family or make them look negative.”

Responses of the participants to the question: Sia responded harshly to the criticism and said the following. “*Looking back, I should have just shut up. I'm aware of that now,*” she says, and adds, “*Although my rule is that I don't do anything emotional after midnight, this time I screwed up*” Can she be forgiven for using these words?

“She can be forgiven.”

"I can't comment as I still don't understand her crime."

“She can be forgiven. Don't worry about it."

“I did not see a situation that should be forgiven in the movie. Frankly, I had a doubt about whether I didn't know how to criticize.”

“I think not only Sia, but anyone who writes films and books about autism can only have a slice because, although each individual with autism seems similar, all of them are actually a movie, all of them are a book, except for those with severe autism.”

"I don't understand exactly what she meant."

Responses of the participants to the question: Sia said, “*Until now, I have always been with autistic individuals. The film is also a love letter to both the caregivers and the autism community. I have my own unique views of the community and I think the community has not been adequately represented so far. I felt compelled to undertake this task myself. If that makes me a scumbag, I'll admit it, scumbag, but my intentions are great*”, what do you say?

“I also think that the intention is correct, there may be shortcomings. This community is not really well represented.

“Considering that a very limited group of people have a hard time making their voices heard, I find it meaningful. He tried to raise awareness and showed sensitivity. Despite his shortcomings, he acted bravely”

“Just don't worry about it”

"I don't think Sia was malicious while making this movie either"

“I think she was right”

“If it is sincere, first of all, intent is important...”

The participants' answers to the question “Could the movie be a partner in your troubles?”

“Yes, it could. It is not clear where and what people with autism will do, and it is very well emphasized in this movie.

“It is obvious that I suffer from the same problem. In fact, the movie started by pointing directly to the concerns we experienced with the death of the grandmother. Sia's movie has a happy ending. We continue shooting, but it is difficult to find extras, so to speak. God knows how the movie will end.”

“No, it was demoralizing. Our biggest fear is what will happen to these children after us. If you ask anyone or any family, you will get the same answer. The movie was already hard in the head, from the head to the head. Then we watched it, I said, oh, here's the movie, and looked at the artistic part or something.”

“I've seen much better movies on the subject. But after watching this movie last night, I said, “I'm glad there are good people/neighbours/family members in the world.”

“This is a bit of a complex situation, a certain section has been explained the important thing is that the whole society learns from such films, empathizes and contributes to reintegrating the autistic people into society. ”

“I am looking to see if our feelings and situation as a family with autism can be reflected in a film about autism. Yes, the death of the grandmother in charge of the child's care in the film reflected the feeling of what will happen after me for many families. Or, from the eyes of an autistic individual, the feelings and crises experienced by the girl when she is happy or unhappy are tried to be reflected so that every family experience similar situations very closely.”

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

When it comes to autism and movies, it is a natural result that the participants bring to mind movies such as *Rain Man*, *Forrest Gump*, *Temple Grandin*, *Hadi Be Oğlum*.

The participants stated that the films play an important role in raising the awareness of the society, that they are not too attached to the definition of "individual with neurodiversity" instead of "autistic" in the articles about the film. They were not bothered by the fact that they were portrayed as "mute", they did not want the film to be banned, they agreed with the idea that "When portraying people with autism, listen to really people with autism, not just social workers, parents and organizations", An actor with autism wanted them to act in the movie, but a family said that They thought that it would not be possible, they were not bothered by the absence of any autistic individuals in the movie *Music*, they were satisfied with Sia's apology message, they found the movie successful despite the criticism, that Sia performed as a special talent instead of a disabled person. They stated that they liked the fact that the activists said that they did not agree with the views of the activists, that Sia's statements in her apology message and subsequent statements could be forgiven, and that other families, except one family, could share their problems with the film. As in Sia's film, it is thought that studies on autism and artistic productions specific to music will increase social sensitivity and awareness.

Although the film was criticized, it received worldwide attention. Families generally liked the movie. However, they expressed their criticisms on some issues in general. As in this study, the results, discussions and suggestions to be obtained in similar studies may also guide other productions. These and similar studies can also be a source for graduate studies. The perception of individuals with autism is an important problem worldwide. It is thought that the studies on films are as important as the films in raising the awareness of the society, informing and especially in the correct establishment of the perceptions, and it is recommended to support the studies.

Branches of science such as sociology and social psychology are thought to be important auxiliary disciplines to these studies. It is thought and recommended that conducting studies together with these and similar disciplines will be positive in obtaining effective and productive results. It has been seen during the study that it is

important for the people who live in this and similar films to provide counselling and guidance. Especially in artistic productions, taking guidance from families will be beneficial in obtaining positive and effective results.

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