

Social, Cultural and Economic Integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey¹

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Abstract

There's an ongoing ambivalence about the future of Syrian refugees in Turkey as well as their legal status, and the projections on their return keeps weakening day by day. This study tackles the social, cultural and economic integration of Syrian refugees living in the Küçükçekmece province of Istanbul, which host the highest population of Syrians in Turkey. According to the findings, while the historical, geographical and cultural bounds between Syrian refugees and Turks enable the cultural and economic integration of Syrian refugees, the social distance between the Syrian refugees and the Turks, along with the alienation of refugees is an obstacle in front of their social integration. This situation is conceptualised as non-interactive integration and the possible consequences are discussed. Küçükçekmece is one of the districts that host the highest number of Syrian refugees in Istanbul. Drawing on the theoretical framework of social, cultural and economic integration, the data obtained is expected to reveal this gap between the discourse and reality, demonstrating how the Syrian refugees experience the "hospitality" and "harmony" in the 9th year of the crisis and contribute to the research on the integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey by taking a detailed picture of their recent status.

Keywords

Turkey • Syrian • Refugees • Social Integration • Cultural Integration • Economic Integration

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Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Mültecilerin Sosyal, Kültürel ve Ekonomik Entegrasyonu²

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Öz

Türkiye'deki Suriyeli mültecilerin geleceği ve yasal statüleri konusunda süregelen bir kararsızlık bulunmakta olup, geri dönüşlerine ilişkin tahminler her geçen gün zayıflamaya devam ediyor. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de en yüksek Suriyeli nüfusuna ev sahipliği yapan İstanbul'un Küçükçekmece ilçesinde yaşayan Suriyeli mültecilerin sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik entegrasyonunu ele almaktadır. Elde edilen verilere göre, Suriyeli mülteciler ile Türkler arasındaki tarihi, coğrafi ve kültürel bağlar Suriyeli mültecilerin kültürel ve ekonomik entegrasyonunu sağlarken, Suriyeli mülteciler ile Türkler arasındaki sosyal mesafe ve mültecilerin yabancılaşması, sosyal bütünleşmeleri için Türkiye'nin önünde engel teşkil etmektedir. Bu durum etkileşimsiz entegrasyon olarak kavramsallaştırılmakta ve olası sonuçları tartışılmaktadır. Küçükçekmece, İstanbul'da en fazla Suriyeli mülteciye ev sahipliği yapan ilçelerden biridir. Sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik entegrasyonun teorik çerçevesinden hareketle elde edilen verilerin, söylem ile gerçeklik arasındaki bu uçurumu ortaya çıkarması, krizin 9. yılında Suriyeli mültecilerin “misafirperverliği” ve “uyum”u nasıl deneyimlediğini göstermesi ile Suriyeli mültecilerin son durumlarının ayrıntılı bir resmini çekerek Türkiye'deki entegrasyonuna ilişkin araştırmalara katkıda bulunması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Türkiye • Suriyeli Mülteciler • Sosyal Bütünleşme • Kültürel Bütünleşme • Ekonomik Bütünleşme

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Introduction

As a result of Syrian refugee mobility, integration recently emerged as a subject of research and debate in Turkey. However, the use and the meaning of the concepts of integration and refugeehood are still not clear. Although the Syrians do not own an official refugee status, this study adopts the concept of refugee in a sociological sense, like many other studies in the literature. It tackles the integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey in the context of their identity and cultural features.

At the beginning, the mass migration of Syrians towards Turkey was expected to be short term, the refugees were considered temporary “guests” and long term policies were not considered. However, recently, criticism and evaluations of policies regarding the refugees and integration keep increasing and the debates mostly revolve around their permanent stay.

A mass migration like that of the Syrians’ has never been seen in the entire history of Turkish Republic. This extraordinary migration experience has changed the perspectives and policies towards migration, as well as casting doubt on the discourse of multiculturalism, which dominated the last few decades. The idea of West as a pioneer of human rights as well as the Western conception and implementation of human rights were questioned. While immigrants in general, and Syrians, the leading actors of the mass migration, in particular, immigrated as a result of security concerns, the target countries began to develop new migration policies with other “security concerns”. On the other hand, Turkey exhibited a different attitude towards the mass migration caused by the Syrian crisis. Although Turkey was globally appraised for this attitude, a mass migration at this extent opened a whole new episode in Turkey, with a broad range of social, political and economic implications.

Integration is an interactive process that takes place between the immigrants (incoming group) and the host (natives) society (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006; Castles et al., 2002; Ager & Strang, 2008). It represents a social environment in which the isolation of individuals is overcome, and can be defined as the process of becoming an accepted part of society (Penninx, 2004), as well as the development of a shared sense of belonging and identity (Bartram, Poros, & Monforte, 2017, p.183). Social integration can be defined as the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p.11). Social integration includes four basic forms as structural integration, cultural integration, interactive and identificational integration.

This study is based on the survey conducted between January-August 2019 with Syrian refugees living in the Küçükçekmece province of Istanbul, which host the highest population of Syrians in Turkey. It investigates the refugees’ integration to Turkish society through ethnic and religious aspects, in order to find out if common cultural characteristics as well as geographic and historic bounds between the Syrians and Turks are enough to facilitate integration or are there other factors that create a discrepancy between the discourse and reality.

Turkey and Syrian Refugees

As an arrival point for mass migration and asylum mobility, Turkey has opened its doors to immigrants as well as being a source country throughout the history. Great population exchanges took place around the foundation years of the Turkish Republic, yet the number of immigrants that fled from Syria after 2010 are much higher than the number that came in the last 88 years (Kaya & Erdoğan, 2015, p.12). Thus, Syria originated immigrant mobility has an exceptional place in Turkey’s history of migration, both in quality and quantity.

Although, the history of immigration from Syria to Turkey can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. it reached its peak after 2011, when an internal turmoil started in the Arab Republic of Syria and a group of 260 Syrians fleeing the arm conflict have entered Turkey for the first time in April 29, 2011 from the province of Hatay, Yayladağı (AFAD, 2017, p.11). The inflow continued afterwards increasing wave by wave and as of February 20, 2020 there are 3,587,566 Syrians in Turkey.

Turkey's initial response to this crisis was an open door policy towards the Syrians that fled from the armed conflict. This policy was based on the assumptions that Bashar al-Assad would soon be overthrown and a new government that could provide stability would be established. Then, Syrians would be placed in camps and kept under control, and those who came would return to their country. However, these assumptions were not realised and as the armed conflict in Syria grew wider and wider, waves of Syrian refugees kept entering in from the South-East border of Turkey. While some of them stayed in South East cities with huge refugee camps, like Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Adana, many moved to big cities in the West, like İstanbul, which hosts the highest number of refugees in Turkey at the moment.

Migration of Syrian refugees in Turkey to İstanbul is mostly carried out through their social networks. Migration networks, which are "sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin." (Massey, 1988, p.396) opened up the way for the refugee settlements in Istanbul and affected their experience. Once these networks have formed, more individuals migrate (Portes& Boron, 1989, p.607-608) and governments have great difficulties in controlling these new migrations, and this also has been the case with Syrian refugees. More than 92% of refugees now live in urban centers as "urban refugees", yet the municipalities have limited legal and administrative duties (Erdoğan, 2017). Under these circumstances, the mobility of Syrian refugees to İstanbul and other big cities is expected to continue in the future.

Although we use the terms "refugee" and "integration" in this study, as many other studies in the literature, neither the Syrians have a legal refugee status, nor the integration term is officially used in the Turkish asylum system. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2014) prefers the concept of "harmonization" rather than "integration", while the definition and scope of 'reception' includes various material conditions including housing, food and clothing as well as covering matters of education, basic health care and accommodation which ought to be provided during the period of reception (Kaya, 2020a, p. 11). As well as an open-door policy for all Syrians; the temporary protection granted no forced returns to Syria (non-refoulement); and unlimited duration of stay in Turkey. Although the officials first approached the Syrians as temporary guests, their return became a remote possibility in time and Turkish government was obliged to work on the integration of Syrian refugees due to a population of over three million refugees (Şimşek and Çorabatır, 2016). However, the government's discursive shifts emphasising the permanent nature of the issue, along with the possibility of granting Syrian refugees citizenship created a public discontent which led to the weakening of integration discourse at the agenda of the government. Yet, considering the constantly growing urban tension, a strong integration discourse has become an urgent need (Kaya, 2020b).

The rise in the number of Syrian refugees and its implications for Turkish society and government also led to a growing interest in the field. Various articles, reports and theses introducing the legal frame of the Turkish asylum regime, discussing the living conditions of Syrian refugees, pointing out to the problems expected in the future and underlining the need for comprehensive integration policies are available in the literature (Yılmaz, 2013; Erdoğan, 2015; İçduygu, 2015; İçduygu and Şimşek, 2016; Şimşek and Çorabatır, 2016; Çetin, 2016; Göksel, 2018; Kaya 2020a; Rottman 2020).

The facilitating effect of common religion and historical background in integration is tackled in a few studies. Kaya (2016) points out that the historical, cultural and religious forms of affinity, especially for the Sunni-Muslim-Arab-Syrians from Aleppo, had a positive effect on the refugees' lives in Istanbul. Sense of security is one of the main highlights of the study. Balcıoğlu (2018) investigates the experiences of Syrian refugees and the role of social networks in the daily lives of refugees and host communities and expresses the importance of common religion while pointing out to the language problem as a big obstacle in front of successful integration.

Reports also explore Turkish society's thoughts, expectations and problems about Syrian refugees as in Erdoğan's 2018 study, which focuses on the current state of Syrians in Turkey, their characteristics, satisfaction levels, problems and approaches to sustainability.

Analyzing the legal and public discourses on Syrian refugees in Turkey, Göksel (2018) claims that the legal discourse of harmonization based on right and the public discourses of generosity and hospitality based on a perception of refugees as "guests" creates serious barriers to Syrian refugees' integration to Turkey.

Rottman points out to the fact that narratives that characterizes migrant inclusion in Turkey in official discourses, such as "guest," "charity," "hospitality" and "social harmony" each has its has not fully been able to promote meaningful inclusion (2020, p. 81). Also, field studies show that the discourse does not match reality when it comes to the interaction between the host and guest communities (Koca, 2016 ; Saraçoğlu & Belanger, 2019). Due to lack of government control, there's a discrepancy between the legal ground and reality (practice) in granting of basic provisions, and how the existence of such provisions is overestimated by the Turkish society lead to the rise of urban tensions (Tosun & Ayaslı, 2020). This was evident in 2019 elections, when the discontent among the Turkish people vis-à-vis the government's policies towards Syrian refugees led to AKP's declining vote share primarily in major cities (Esen & Gumuscu, p. 5).

The sample of this study, Küçükçekmece is one of the districts that host the highest number of Syrian refugees in Istanbul. Drawing on the theoretical framework of social, cultural and economic integration, the data obtained is expected to reveal this gap between the discourse and reality, demonstrating how the Syrian refugees experience the "hospitality" and "harmony" in the 9th year of the crisis and contribute to the research on the integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey by taking a detailed picture of their recent status.

Methodology

The main problem of the research is how Syrian urban refugees are socially, culturally and economically integrated into the Turkish society, with a special focus on their interactions with the host community. Considering the discussion in the literature given above, answers to the following questions were sought;

- 1) What are the individual, social, economic and cultural characteristics of Syrian urban refugees living in the Küçükçekmece district of İstanbul?
- 2) Do ethnic and religious commonalities facilitate the refugees' integration into Turkish society?
- 3) What are the obstacles in front of the social integration of Syrian refugees in the Küçükçekmece district of İstanbul?

In this study, where quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques are used together, a questionnaire is conducted while data collected by interview and observation technique were analyzed with interpretive approach. The population of the study is Istanbul; the sample was determined as Küçükçekmece district; 384 questionnaires and 30 semi-structured interviews were applied to Syrian urban refugees through face-to-face interviews. In this research, which is based on a mixed methodology, the findings from qualitative data were analysed and Syrian refugees' integration with Turks is conceptualized as non-interactive integration.

In the quantitative method research of this study, the screening pattern was preferred. Participants were reached through snowball sampling. 384 structured questionnaires were processed in the SPSS program and the data obtained were analyzed with descriptive statistics. In the qualitative method research, the phenomenology pattern was preferred. 30 semi-structured interview forms were applied to the participants, who were reached with the purposeful sampling technique. Data diversity was ensured by making use of observation techniques. Semi-structured interview forms and data from observations were analyzed through descriptive analysis.

The findings of the quantitative data of the research, present information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, migration processes, identity, language, belonging, social interaction and perception of discrimination. The findings of qualitative data present information about social bridges, social ties and connections, education, health and spatial segregation as social integration findings; and belonging, types of belonging, grammar and cultural practices as cultural integration dimensions. Finally, findings on employment, unemployment rates, income levels and home ownership rates regarding economic integration are presented.

Research Findings

Quantitative Findings

69.5% of participants included in the sample are men; 30.5% are women. 32% between 23 and 29; 23.4% between 30-39; 22.9% between 18-22; 14.1% between 40-49; 5.5% between 50-59; 2.1% consists of 60 and over age groups. 68% of them are married; 30.2% are single; 0.5% of them are divorced and 1.3% of them are widowed. 34.6% are primary school graduates, while 26.8% are secondary school graduates and 20.6% of them are illiterate. 12.8% of the participants are high school graduates; 0.5% have an associate degree; 4.7% of them have an undergraduate degree.

Men participated more than twice as much as women. One of the reasons for this situation is that male participants are more involved in employment. Early marriages are common in Syria and this cultural tendency seems to continue in Turkey. The majority of Syrians that participated in the survey has a low level of education. Early marriages and low education levels can be seen as factors that can complicate the integration process.

22.7% of them are textile workers; 30.5% are housewives; 15.5% are shoemakers; 7.8% of them are construction workers; 6.5% are tradesmen; 3.6% are cook; 2.9% are students; 2.6% of them are waiters; and 2.1% are auto repairers. Other occupations, which are 9.9%, include jobs such as courier, porter, furniture shop, car wash, and cleaner. 64.1% of these take part in active business life.

41.9% of the group has income between 1001-2000 TL. This rate is followed by the group with income between 33.6% with 2001- 3000 TL. The group with an income of 3001-4000 TL constitutes 12.2% of the participants. While those who have income below 1000 TL constitute 10.9% of the participants; 1% of the participants have an income

of 5000 TL and above; and the group with an income between 4001-5000 TL constitutes 0.3% of the participants.

Most of the participants are individuals with low educational level. Their professions are also in line with their education level. The low employment rate of women is another factor that makes the integration process more difficult. Most of the participants are in the lower income group. When the refugee status is added to this, economic life becomes even harder for them. Economic life is an important and functional area in terms of integration process. Therefore, problems in the economic field will also be experienced in the field of integration.

Participants with children one child born in Turkey constitute 21.9% of the sample while 2 children 17.7%; 3 children 2.6%; 4 children 1.3%. 1% have five or more children born in Turkey. 1.3% of participants had a child that was born and have lost their lives in Turkey. 45% of the refugees had at least one child in Turkey. While the children of 20.1% of Syrian refugees were born in Syria; 34.1% do not have any children. 17.4% of the participants have 1; 18%; have 2; 23.6% have 3; 1% have 4; and 0.5 % have 5 children with and active school life in Turkey. The rate of those who told they had no children going to school is 25.3.

Considering the data obtained on the number of children, it can be said that the issue of the education of Syrians will be discussed frequently in the coming years. When the number of children born in Turkey is taken into account, it will be better understood that the integration process is inevitable.

45.1% of the participants are Arab; 29.9% of them are Turkish; 25% are Kurdish.

78.9% of the participants stated that they never went to Syria after immigration; 6.8% stated that they went every two or three years. The rate of those who go once a year is 6% and the rate of those who go more than once a year is 1.8%. The rate of those who state that they have gone only once since their arrival is 6.5%.

The majority of Arabs is parallel to the ethnic structure of the country's population. Due to the ongoing war in Syria, the rate of participants returning back to their countries is very low. The continuing war in Syria affects their permanence in Turkey. This is another important factor that affects the integration processes.

26.8% of the participants immigrated to Turkey in 2014; 21.9% in 2015; 15.9% in 2013; 12.2% in 2012; 10.9% in 2016; 7.6% of them in 2011; 3.6% in 2017; 0.5% in 2018; and 0.5% of them immigrated to Turkey in 2019. The majority of the participants stated that they came from the city of Aleppo in Syria with 63.8%. Those coming from other cities, respectively, constitute; 13% from Idlib; 11.7% from Damascus; 3.6% from Raqqa; 2.9% from Latakia, 2.3% from Hama; 1.6 of them from Hummus; and 1% stated that they came from Deyrizor.

In 2014, the escalation of armed conflict in Syria led to an increase in forced immigration. Since Aleppo was one of the Syrian cities where the war was most intense. The number of people coming from the city was higher. The houses and neighborhoods where the refugees lived had been seriously damaged. This situation reduced the possibility of their return while once again putting a spotlight on the need for urgent integration policies.

59.1% of the participants stated that they do not intend to return to Syria; 23.7% of them think they are going to return to Syria; 14.1% of them stated that they sometimes thought to return to Syria. 57.8% of the participants stated that they did not think about immigrating to another country. Also, 78.6% of the participants stated that they want to get Turkish citizenship if possible. A decrease in the Syrians' tendency to return back to their homeland will increase the possibility of their permanent stay and debates over integration will become more frequent.

59.6% of the participants identify themselves primarily as Muslim; 15.9% as Kurdish; 10.2% of them as Syrian; 8.6% as Turkmen; and 5.7% stated that they define themselves as Arabs. The majority of participants defining themselves as Muslim facilitates their integration with the Turkish society.

28.6% of the participants stated that they are good at speaking Turkish. 22.1% stated that they are very good; 21.9% of them replied that they speak intermediate and 13% speak very little Turkish. 45.6% of the participants stated that they follow the Turkish broadcasts once a week; 40.6% every day; 13.8% stated that they did not follow any Turkish broadcasts. These rates are not enough. While language learning is the most important component of the language integration process, it does not happen in a short time.

45.6% of the participants stated that they do not think that their Turkish neighbors discriminate against them. 37.5% of them think they are discriminated; 16.9% stated that they sometimes faced discrimination. 43.2% of the participants state that their Turkish neighbors care about them; 41.7% of them stated that they do not. These rates can create problems for social bridges. Therefore, practices that strengthen relations with local people will be of extreme importance.

78.9% of the participants disagreed about participating in social environments where Turks are concentrated. On the other hand 41.1% of the participants stated that they felt at home in Istanbul. Social interaction with local people is weak, but the feeling of belonging to the city is high. In other words, there is both a facilitating and a difficult situation for integration.

39.8% of the participants stated that they are very satisfied with the education provided; 20.6% stated that they are satisfied, 18.2% stated they are not satisfied, and 12.2% responded that they are moderately satisfied. The rate of those who are not satisfied with the education service is 9.1%. 47.9% of the participants are very satisfied with the health service provided; 17.2% are satisfied; 17.2% are not satisfied; 4.4% replied that they are moderately satisfied. The rate of those who are not satisfied with the health service at all is 13.3%. 54.2% of the participants are very satisfied about the Turkish government's policies towards Syrian refugees.

Health service and education are the most fundamental rights for every human being. When it comes to refugees, these rights become even more important. The positive perception of the government is another facilitating factor for the integration process. It reduces feelings of exclusion and discrimination.

Qualitative Findings

Out of 30 participants included in the sample of the qualitative research; 25 of them are married; 5 are single. 24 of them have temporary ID cards. However, there are also participants whose residence permits are outside Istanbul but who live in Istanbul.

24 of them entered Turkey from the official border point; 6 had entered Turkey from an unofficial border point. All of them migrated for security reasons. The majority of participants stated that the most important reason they preferred Turkey is geographical proximity.

The houses of 22 of them in Syria were completely destroyed; 8 of them are moderately damaged. All of the participants live in an apartment in Istanbul. Some houses have stoves and some have natural gas. Rental income varies according to these qualities of the house.

24 of them do not plan to return to Syria; 6 of them stated that they plan to return in case the war in Syria ends. 23 stated that they don't think of emigrating to another country other than Turkey. All participants settled in Istanbul via social networks; 19 of them via their acquaintances; 10 job opportunities and one of them preferred Küçükçekmece district due to the cheap rents.

As for the most important problems experienced in Turkey, male respondents answered respectively rents and low income while female participants (except for Turkmen) stated that they had language problems. The common issue of both groups is that they are perceived as temporary (guests) by the Turks. Most of the participants stated that they want to settle in Turkey, and they have frequently expressed that they have no ideas of returning.

Most of the participants who demand Turkish citizenship prefer to acquire dual citizenship. 19 of them perceive Turkey as a country that could be lived permanently due to religious; 6 of them cultural; 3 of them historical; and 2 of them due to geographical factors. 22 does not think that there are serious differences between Turkey and Syria; while 8 of them think that there is a legal and political difference. The rate of male participants who think there is a difference is higher than female participants. According to the findings obtained from the data of the study, the social bridges of Syrian urban refugees are weak while their social ties are strong.

As a result of the observations, it was found that the communication of participants in the sample of the study with their Turkish neighbors or other local people were extremely weak. This observation was supported by the answers given to the questions in the interview form. The social bridges of Syrian urban refugees are almost exclusively limited to the landlords. It is generally Syrians that they establish dialogue and come together; most of the places where they shop, eat and go are Syrian businesses. This is one of the factors that hinders the interactive aspect of integration.

It was also observed during the interview processes of the study that Syrian urban refugees came together with other refugees in their daily lives. Another point in terms of social ties is that Syrians come together as small groupings among themselves.

Arab Syrians usually visit the Syrian Arab restaurants; Kurdish Syrians usually go to the Syrian Kurdish restaurants. This is a fact that applies to most immigrants / refugees / refugees who have migrated to a country other than their home country. Because cultural affinity has an effective role in establishing and maintaining social relations.

In-group interaction in restaurants and similar businesses differs in market-type businesses. In Syrian market-type small businesses, Syrians of all ethnic groups do shopping. Male refugees usually come together in shops with Syrian owners; women refugees mostly come together at home and with their relatives. The participation of male participants in active business life facilitates and speeds up their communication with other refugees. It also contributes to learning the culture and language of the host community. The female participants almost have no relationship with other refugees other than their own relatives.

During the data collection process, it was found that Syrian urban refugees mostly expressed positive opinions about the host government. However, it was observed that criticism increased with the new policies initiated in Istanbul in the summer of 2019. Other than that, the Turkish government's policies towards Syrians are generally welcomed. While opinions on general government policy are positive, criticism on local policies are more intense.

All the participants in the sample of the study, especially the group consisting of married participants have stated

that they are satisfied with the education services provided for children. Children in this group are mostly primary school level. Some of the single and young participants were critical of getting Turkish education only. Arab and Kurdish female participants have also frequently expressed the issue of not being able to reach language education. Participants who are married with a child stated that they found the education service provided in Turkish schools for their children positive, especially in terms of the future of their children and this education would provide the conditions for children to work with better earnings in better professions in the future.

The majority of the participants included in the sample of the study stated that they were satisfied with the health services they are provided. The data obtained in the research shows that health is one of the areas where the satisfaction level of the participants is highest. Although the general trend about the health services offered to Syrian refugees is positive, some troubles are also mentioned.

Spatial segregation, which is one of the indicators of social integration, is one of the situations identified for Syrian urban refugees. It is known that urban refugees settled in the places where the lower income groups of Istanbul are located.

The majority of the participants included in the study expressed a positive opinion about the feeling of belonging to the society. According to the data obtained from qualitative research findings, female participants compared to male participants; married participants compared to single participants have more sense of belonging. In terms of ethnic origin, the Turkmen group's sense of belonging was higher than the Arab and Kurdish participants. The reasons of the participants, who expressed negative views, stem from the difficulties encountered in social and spatial belonging. One of the findings obtained from the qualitative data of this study is that the ethnicity factor has a positive effect on the belonging of Syrian refugees. This situation has been frequently expressed especially by Turkmen participants.

Another finding from the qualitative data is that the religion factor has a positive effect on the belonging of Syrian refugees. Religion factor is one of the most frequently given answers to questions regarding belonging. It is concluded that it is a determining factor especially in the belonging of Arab groups. This factor is determinant among Turkmen and Kurdish Syrian groups. However, this factor was found to be slightly higher among Arabs in three ethnic groups than in other groups.

Belonging is a matter that has various dimensions for individuals who have migrated / had to migrate. Each of its sub-dimensions affects the degree of belonging. The responses of Syrian urban refugees regarding spatial belonging have led to the conclusion that there is an incomplete belonging to this area. Social and spatial belonging can be seen as complementary factors of belonging for Syrian city refugees.

The data obtained shows how the Syrian refugees' relationship is limited to their in-groups when it comes to social networks, friendships and partnerships. Their relations with the host community were limited only with their landlords while friendship or neighborly relations with Turks are very weak. Although marriage of Turkish man with Syrian woman is not a rare phenomena (AA, 2016; Aksu Kargin, 2018; Yaman, 2020), there has never been an encounter with those who married the Turks in this study. The findings reveal that very few of the participants in the sample have a regular social relationship and interaction with the Turks, other than the time they spend in their workplaces.

A vast majority of Syrian refugees stated that they could easily maintain many of their cultural practices in Turkey. While this can be interpreted as a factor that could facilitate their integration, the lack of the interactive aspect hinders the process.

The Turkmen group included in the sample of the study has no language problems compared to the Arab and Kurdish groups. In the Arab and Kurdish groups, most of the male participants can speak Turkish enough to communicate in their daily work, but none of the female participants (except Turkmen) can speak Turkish. However, another noteworthy and frequently mentioned issue is that Arab and Kurdish participants frequently follow Turkish broadcasts so that their children can learn Turkish.

Economic issues come first about which the participants in the sample of the research bring the most criticism and experience problems. Outputs such as original occupational statistics, number of self-employed immigrants and refugees, number of successful immigrants and refugees, unemployment rates, income level compared to the majority population of immigrants and refugees or home ownership are some of the indicators of economic integration (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002, p. 131). Considering these indicators, the majority of participants in this study maintained their professions in Turkey.

Unemployed male refugees were very few in number while the women refugees we interviewed were individuals who continued their lives as housewives in Syria. There were no female participants in the sample, who had an active working life in Syria and stopped working in Turkey. However, a small number of male respondents stated that their spouse had to do some craft work at home because of their financial problems.

The income level of the majority of the participants is in the lower income group. The participants' economic class in Syria were not different compared to Turkey, yet the economic difficulties that were not experienced by the participants when they were in Syria. Being the source of cheap labor, rental prices and low income are the main problems encountered in the economic field. The participants expressed the details of these problems as follows:

A very few number of the male participants in the sample were unemployed. While none of the female participants included in the sample have an active worklife. Generally, there seems to be no problem with participation in the workforce for male participants. The reason for the absence of employment in this group is that they do not have a temporary identity document. However, the conditions of their employment are not considered sufficient for economic integration. Although participation in the workforce is an important factor, it does not have the mechanisms to expand the urban life opportunities of urban refugees and to facilitate their participation in the social and cultural life of the city.

The level of income, which is one of the indicators of economic integration, is one of the most serious issues for Syrian urban Refugees included in the sample. Refugees involved in working life complain about the wage they receive for their work and exploitation of their labor.

Among the participants of our research, there are no individuals who own a house in Turkey. Housing ownership is one of the indicators of economic integration, but there are some difficulties for Syrians to own a house in terms of timeframe, urban living opportunities and legal status. However, having a temporary protection status is not only the only factor preventing them from owning a house, there are also some legal restrictions.

Evaluation of Field Data Within The Context of the Main Problems of the Research

As a result of this study, it is found out that Syrian urban refugees have ethnic and religious factors that facilitate their social and cultural integration into Turkish society, while factors such as cheap labor, low income and lack of women's employment pose difficulties in economic integration. It is also found that there are deficiencies in

social integration as far as the social bridges are concerned. In addition to this, it is predicted that the lack of interactiveness in the integration of the Syrian urban refugees will pose one of the main obstacles in front of the successful integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey in the future.

According to the findings regarding the structural integration, the participation of men participants in the labor force is quite high. However, most of them frequently stated that they had financial difficulties. While all of the male participants are in employment; None of the female participants are employed. The reason of this is women's unwillingness to participate in the workforce and willing to remain housewives as they were in Syria.

The concept of social belonging is not tackled in a macro-scale but micro and mezzo levels in this study. Syrian urban refugees feel a high level of belonging to Turkish society, especially in terms of religious and ethnic characteristics, but there are serious obstacles and lack of belonging in their interactions and relations at the community / group / individual level. The field research findings of this study reveal a process that we conceptualize as "noninteractive integration". Noninteractive integration points to the lack of immigrant refugees' social interaction and relationships with the locals of the host country.

In terms of ethnic origin, the Turkmen group's sense of belonging was higher than the Arab and Kurdish participants. Religion factor has a positive effect on the belonging of Syrian refugees. Religion factor is one of the most frequently given answers to questions regarding belonging. It is concluded that it is a determining factor especially in the belonging of Arab groups.

The most striking finding of the study is the state of non-interaction occurring in the interactive dimension of the integration. Most of the participants stated that they did not have any problems in their cultural lives since they have a common identity with Turks. Here, the commonality of the Muslim identity is seen as the most important factor.

Interactive integration means the acceptance and inclusion of immigrants in the primary relationships and social networks of the host society. Indicators of interactive integration include social networks, friendships, partnerships, marriages and membership in voluntary organizations. Certain core elements of cultural integration, particularly communicative competencies, are preconditions for interactive integration. Identificational integration – is indicated by feelings of belonging to, and identification with, groups, particularly in ethnic, regional, local and/or national identification (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, s. 10). The precondition of cultural integration is the interaction of all forms of integration. Cultural integration is affected by identificational, while economic integration is affected by social. It's highly important that the immigrants have respect for the culture of the society they immigrate to while the host society avoids discrimination, and the practice of integration policies are fair (Adıgüzel, 2016, s. 192).

Interactive integration is as important as other integration dimensions. The lack of this dimension will also pose an obstacle to a successful integration process. One of the most important difficulties faced by the participants in the study is the social relations and interactions that cannot be established with the "host" community. The lack of interactive integration, which we can also call the lack of social relations and interaction, may pave the way for some social problems in the future. Almost all of the participants included in the study frequently stated that they were unwilling to "go back to Syria". The lack of their tendency to return makes the policies to be implemented on interactive integration even more urgent and important.

As a result of the study, it was determined that the most important difficulty faced in the social integration of Syrians into Turkish society is the interactive nature of the integration. The social bridges of Syrian urban refugees are almost exclusively limited to the landlords. This situation also indicates the difficulties that may be encountered

in Turkey's integration policy in near future. It is not possible for the integration to progress as a successful process without the mutual interaction of both communities. Integration without interaction will always carry serious problems that might cause ruptures in any moment. The visibility of phenomena such as marginalization, alienation and exclusion affecting the social life spheres of Syrians will increase. Thus, the projections of this study must be tested or supported with further field research in order to improve the integration policies of Turkey.

Conclusion

According to the results obtained from the quantitative and qualitative research of the study, the relations of Syrian urban refugees with the Turks were limited only with their landlords. Participation in social environments where Turks are intense, friendship or neighborly relations with Turks are very limited. There has never been an encounter with those who married the Turks in the field. The findings reveal that very few of the participants in the sample have a regular social relationship and interaction with the Turks. Friendship relationships of those in the group are mostly limited to the workplace.

Since the Syrian urban refugees included in the sample of the study varied in terms of ethnicity, the issue of belonging was tackled with its subdimensions and subjected to analysis. The findings of the study reveal that among Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen groups included in the sample, the Turkmen group have strong ties to Turkey due to their ethnic belonging. During the interviews, the Turkmen frequently expressed that they saw Turkey as their second homeland after Syria.

The existence of belonging is an important subcomponent that facilitates and accelerates integration. In addition, the existence of a strong ethnic belonging in the Syrian Turkmen group can be seen as a facilitating factor for their integration into the Turkish society. It can be predicted that religious belonging will make an important contribution to the integration of Syrians into the Turkish society. This situation can also mediate to some extent the implementation of interactive integration.

It can be predicted that the biggest source of problem for Turkey in the future will be the economic dimension of integration. This issue is as serious as the challenges about the social ties that should be overcome. While all women are outside the working life, the majority of the male participants of the sample are employed. Despite their employment, the majority of Syrian refugees are a cheap source of labor for employers; most of them are employed at low wages and have a higher workload due to their general refugee status.

The culture of coexistence begins with physical closeness but it is maintained through social interactions. Although migration has become an undesirable phenomenon in the last decade and the Syrian refugees were seen as *persona non-grata*, migration is a phenomenon that helps the development of a society by creating cultural diversity and enabling experiences of coexistence despite all the differences. Migration will continue to transform societies as well as individual and social lives with its dynamic nature. The negative effects of immigration and the problems that may occur in the future can only be overcome through successful integration policies and integration models suitable for the sociological atmosphere.

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