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Abstract

This ethnographic study aims to examine Syrian students' various experiences with belonging and identity while studying at Eastern Mediterranean University. The main objective of this study, which consists of the experiences of a sample group of students, is to examine in detail the subject of belonging and identity. The model of the study is ethnographic research, one of the qualitative research methods. Ten Syrian students participated in the fieldwork. The interviews were analyzed with a thematic analysis approach. As a result of the study, we see that Syrian students emphasize the similarities between the TRNC and Syria, such as food and climatic structure. However, in addition to this positive similarity, we found that differences in language and culture stressed the students. The relationship between Syrian culture and some of the variables, about both belonging and identity, is examined in detail and the results are given in the light of the literature as a result of this study.

Introduction

Currently, people move across borders and their activities are more effective in multi-national states. It is possible to explain this effect with the concept of globalization in general (Sutton, 2005). Globalization is a term widely used to characterize the profound changes taking place in the world and to describe the growing interdependence of world economies, cultures, and populations caused by cross-border trade of goods and services, technology and investment, people, and information flow (Teeple, 2000). In this study, how globalization affects Syrian students living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is examined. As a result of face-to-face interviews developed during the research phase, more realistic information was obtained from the people at the center of the question. The blending of the information obtained from the study with the literature prepares the environment for different research, than what has been seen previous studies.

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This study is important in terms of identifying possible problems that foreign students may encounter and presenting solution proposals in an ethnographic framework. It is also expected to contribute to making regulations for solutions to potential problems. This ethnographic research aims to examine Syrian students' various experiences of belonging and identity while studying at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). For this purpose, answers to the following questions are sought:

1. After the war, there was immigration to various countries. Did families send students to avoid the effects of the war or to get them a better education?

2. Do Syrian students experience cultural problems in TRNC?

3. What problems do Syrian students experience related to cultural conflict, discrimination, or prejudice?

4. What are their feelings of belonging to TRNC, and how do they express it?

5. Do they think they will return after the war is over? Why is that?

Conceptual Approach

Cavanagh (2012) explained that globalization affects people and human communities by providing a basis for internalization competence in universities. Lukosius and Festervand (2013) emphasized that reduced transportation and communication costs increase the mobility of students and enable the expansion of university education abroad. According to Dwyer and Peters (2004), some students decide to study abroad for their personal, professional, and academic development. Phang (2013) claimed that the increase in the number of students abroad for university education, indicates a change in the direction of the university, in order gain an international dimension. Also, according to Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner (2015), studying abroad offers better opportunities to develop a more globalized sense of responsibility and provides cultural experiences. Students studying in different countries contribute positively to the education process by contributing to the transfer and development of knowledge. However, there are some socio-cultural and educational problems obsticals that foreign students face. Baklashova and Kazakov (2016) and Lu (2001) explain that students' struggles are: cultural adaptations, finding equality between different tastes and unusual living conditions, suggestions, language, financial problems, studies, and study time. According to Alavi and Mansor (2011), foreign students trying to adapt to a new education system and social environment face various adaptation problems. According to Talebloo and Baki (2013), students' adaptation process and the stress they experience could be harmful to their mental health and well-being. For this reason, it is thought that foreign students struggle individually with adaption.

Although globalization has brought with it developments in technology, communication, and transportation, it has also invited an adaptation problem for immigrants (Geschiere and Meyer, 1998). The number of students leaving their home country for educational purposes is increasing. These students, who changed their country, aim to get a better education and get to know different cultures and environments. Language barriers that may occur during the establishment of compulsory relations, education, accommodation, transportation, and government institutions can be some of the most significant difficulties in this process. Even if these obstacles disappear, another dramatic challenge is the adaptation process for foreign students (Usta et al., 2017). In parallel, the concept of harmony accommodates the conflicts in the society in which the individual lives positively and fairly (Eraslan, 2015). At this point, belonging is an experience of identification with a group where the individual can develop relationships with loyalty and dependency. Living alone is excluded from this experience. In addition, the motivation to live together, which arises from the needs of individuals for each other, is one of the issues discussed in the field of psychology and sociology. Living together means the continuity of social relationships that individuals establish with others, and this continuity is the reason for the individual's interdependence (Alptekin, 2011). However, learning some norms and values that make it possible for the individual to live together and regulate themselves develops in the process of socialization. It is imperative to examine the basic needs of individuals, since primitive society belongs in this respect (Greenwood et al. 2013). Belonging can be associated with a conscious state in the process of identity construction, as well as being understood as an important need and emotion developed in the individual's self.

Regardless of whether the individual is willing or unwilling to join a community, group, or social category, they still come together under a common identity and act with this awareness in partnership. Individuals who are aware of the whole are inevitably extensive to each other, the slower the trust and solidarity they build for each other, the stronger the sense of belonging between them (Fund, 2010). It is possible to talk about an abstract contract based on the interactions of trust, solidarity, and emotional togetherness, including the concerns of mutual responsibility between the individual and society. This statement says that it acts in harmony with society's expectations and society must function in a way that exceeds the trust of all institutions and practices of individuals. In addition, the possibility of developing social elements such as common consciousness skills, meaning production, values, norms, and identity of people coexisting, necessitates a sense of belonging as a prerequisite (Barrett et al. 2014). Involvement is a type of emotion that people need. It emerges in direct and indirect relationships in life, established by the social environment in which individuals present concrete examples (Clark, 2007). It creates a sense of belonging directly to individuals in the social environment. People who can keep up with the social structure act with a sense of belonging. Therefore, the conditions of belonging may depend on the social environment that develops and normalizes

with birth, or it may have the effect of being updated and diversified by an individual's conscious choices (Costa-Font & Cowell, 2015).

Identity is seen as a part of belonging (Mendoza Alvarez, 2017). The phenomenon of identity is based on interdisciplinary collaboration (McAdams & Cox, 2010). All individuals establish social relationships and maintain their lives (Gökçe, 2003). From past to present, individuals have always needed others. The desire to live together helps people paint a stronger image. Individuals' sense of belonging consists of collective belonging that occurs at the level of social awareness and participation in various social groups. Alptekin (2011) draws attention to two different individual-power interactions, in which each individual in their social life experiences a family, a nationality, a cultural identity, and different belonging preferences depending on their own will. Pinto (2006) explained that the vital importance of belonging to a group triggers the formation of an effective internal mechanism in in-group control and ensures that inter-individual relationships are maintained harmoniously and systematically in these communities. Alptekin (2011) states how difficult and painful the struggle for life can be when the individual is not affiliated with any group or community. He also talked about the awareness of how easy it would be to connect to the group or community and how happy he would be. It can be stated that the internal mechanism emphasized in this awareness directs the actions of the individuals in the communities and ensures their welfare and security. By referring to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, Kuşat (2003) states that one of the most important needs of the individual, is identity and therefore status and loyalty, belonging and higher self needs, that come at the beginning of the adolescence period. Belonging can be defined as individual acceptance, recognition, value, and importance given by others.

According to Gao, Lai, and Halse (2018), there are currently serious problems with the increasing global influx of refugees and migrants on one hand, and the resurgence of xenophobia and fearful hostility towards minorities on the other. For this purpose, it is essential to ensure the individual acceptance of immigrants. It is also important to ensure integration in this process (Balcı, 2017). Cultural transition is necessary, which creates stress and the coping skills that are used in this process. Although immigrants, international students, and employees have different factors that affect the cultural process, these groups go through a similar adaptation process (Berry, 1997).

The psychological process of culture consists of five stages. The first stage is experiencing inter-cultural contact. In this process, people have interactions in their social life. The second stage is the perception of lived experiences. At this stage, life experiences are reviewed and evaluated. The experiences of the third stage are understood and different coping methods are used. The fourth stage is the initial response to the stress experienced. The stress level varies depending on the meaning of the experiment. The final stage is adaptation. Individuals begin to be affected by factors such as age, gender, reasons

for contact with different cultures, personality traits, education level, other statuses, and intercultural similarities. In the acculturation process, factors such as new cultural contact time, social support, coping skills, attitudes, and perceived discrimination affect the adaptation process (Kağnıcı, 2017).

Displacement is a dynamic process that shapes the demographic, cultural, socio-economic structure, and development in societies. For a country and society, the issue of displacement is not just about social, political, cultural, economic, administrative, and legal aspects. The interaction of individuals from different cultures may cause cultural adaptation problems (Akıncı, et al., 2015). Baier (2005) claims that individuals who have difficulty adapting to another culture find a place for themselves in that culture, and their reactions to problems, crises, and 'culture shock' are expressed. Psychosocial variables such as self-esteem, life satisfaction, and social support play a crucial role in overcoming culture shock. It is an important issue for people to live and adapt to other cultures without leaving their own culture (Algan et al., 2012). For this reason, it is necessary to create an infrastructure to ensure correct integration in the country of immigration.

Core Components of Syrian Culture

Syria has been home to many different cultures for thousands of years, including Islamic societies, Crusaders, Iranian traders, prehistoric tribes such as the Abbasids and the Ottoman Empire (Hitti, 1959). In addition to the Arab majority, which makes up 90% of Syrians, there are other ethnic origins in the region (Uzun & Sevinç, 2015). The most common of these ethnic cultures are the Kurdish and Armenian populations. The official language of Syria is Arabic, but the Syrian people also speak their own regional language. On the other hand, educated Syrians speak French or English fluently. 75% of the population is Muslim, and the rest is predominantly Christian. The population is about 20 million (Al-Fattal, 2010). Bhasin Consulting Inc. (2016) explains the Syrian clothing culture as a modest way of dressing. Some Muslim women wear headscarves that cover their arms and collarbones. However, this way of dressing is more common after the age of 65.

Family ties are very important for Syrians. In particular, the father figure emerges as a concept that should be respected. This shows the patriarchal structure of the country. Patriarchy is a widespread system throughout the world, especially in monotheistic religions (Erdem & Sayılgan, 2011). Syrian parents, who think that their children will take care of them in the future, can give birth to many children. However, there are gender-based differences among these children, and girls are discriminated against (Wofford & Tibi 2018; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Syrians often use gestures and facial expressions (Doerre, 2001; Hann & Dunn, 1996). Reynolds (2016) revealed that Syrians situate themselves close to each other in the social environment, speak very loudly (not a sign of anger), and show their reactions with gestures and hands. Meals are delicious flavors that include some types of vegetables such as tabouli and fattoush. They also consume various meat

dishes such as shish kebab, kafta, and kibbeh. There is a halal diet that excludes pork, alcohol, and some animal products. Syrians usually drink tea or coffee and use only their right hand to eat food when eating with their hands.

Syria in the Civil War Period

The protests, known as the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East, affected Tunisia in 2010 and spread to other regions (Ateş & Bektaş, 2017). Ethnic and religious differences are important triggers of the Civil War (Miş, 2011). The civil war in Syria started in 2011 with protests and demonstrations against Syrian President, Bashar Assad, and his government (Silva, 2017). Additionally, the Civil War was caused by other factors. According to Kaya (2017), socio-political, environmental, and unemployment. Drought, stress, and poverty in the water supply can be seen as factors that increase the risk of civil war. In addition, Fisseha (2017) explained that the Civil War led to conflicts and difficulties in the leadership of the Assad government and the opposition to the Syrian administration. Ergin (2016) emphasized that these conflicts and difficulties did not end.

Syria has six important United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) cultural and natural heritage sites. These are the Ancient City of Damascus, the Ancient City of Bosra, the Palmira Region, the Ancient City of Aleppo, Crac des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah Al-Din, and Northern Syria, which was the first settlement in Syria. These places are under threat from the war (UNESCO, 2014). The international dimension of the war also has the characteristics of an external war rather than a civil war. Groups such as the Assad Regime, the opposition, and PYD-YPG-PKK-ISID are at war, and countries such as Russia, Turkey, the USA, and Iran are also involved in the war (Ateş & Bektaş, 2017).

The problems faced by young people during their university period differ from their previous life periods (Tremblay et al., 2012). In this study, it is seen that the reason students left their country was the civil war in Syria. In this process, in which the students were relocated, situations arose. During this period, students get used to living conditions. The process of gaining a new ego, personality, and body is a tumultuous and difficult process for students who have just started university. Yurtsever (2009) stated that university students have responsibilities including solving problems such as housing, nutrition, academic success, dating, family, health, personality, and creating identity integrity. According to Güçlü (1996), foreign students may encounter adaptation barriers such as a new social environment and a new education system, social identity, in seeking help, experiences in romantic and sexual relationships, in seeking a job, changing the home environment and language. According to Levent and Karaevli (2013), the rate of foreign students applying to municipal services is low, and students do not receive sufficient support from university services. In this context, it is thought that foreign students would need these services more to strengthen and support the integration process, because the

current civil war in Syria has put students' education at risk. Students who were deprived of their right to education began to receive education in various countries. One of these countries is the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Methodology

In this study, ethnographic research was used as a qualitative research method to examine Syrian students' experiences with belonging and identity. Mason (2002) referred to the importance of qualitative research to explore perspectives in the social world. Atieno (2009) claims that qualitative research provides an environment for researchers to conduct in-depth research. Creswell (1998) emphasized that the concept of 'culture' is central to ethnography. This study aims to examine Syrian students' various experiences while studying at EMU in terms of belonging and identity. For this purpose, ethnographic research, one of the qualitative research methods, was chosen as the study design. One of the effective ways to understand these processes and experiences is to make social and process assessments (Reeves et al., 2013). Qualitative research methods were used in the study because it allows examination from a broad perspective and context, taking into account the environmental conditions in which students live. Therefore, it is possible to say that the ethnographic research design was used in this study.

Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, and McKibbon (2015) state that purposive sampling methods are used to identify participants in ethnographic research. In the purposive sampling method, the researcher selects the groups that will provide the most appropriate and rich data source for the research topic (Palys, 2008; Palys, 2008). In this research, we decided to create a sample using the 'snowball sampling' method. Trotter (2012) defined this as a common sampling technique, and it begins with an individual identified as having the characteristics required by the research design and asking this person to nominate a participant with common characteristics. These participants are the second wave of data collection, and they want the second wave to continue the third wave. In this research, the first Syrian student was asked, "Do you have any Syrian friends here?" We asked a question like this, and we expanded the sample group.

Owing to our close contacts in the fieldwork, we accessed a lot of data. The researchers took note of the information obtained with the answers given. Observing the participant, which is a part of ethnographic research, was also included in this study. In the data analysis, the opinions of Syrian students at EMU regarding their experiences of belonging and identity were examined with thematic analysis. In addition, to increase accuracy, the triangulation method, based on multiple perspectives, allowed the use of two or more information sources in data collection. The information gained by researchers through observation is important for the discipline of ethnography (Reeves, Kuper et al. 2008). In this study, the data obtained from the observations are examined along with the interview

data and the behaviors associated with the statements of the participants. In our research, we had the opportunity to work in-depth with a total of 10 Syrian students.

Findings

Connection to TRNC

Concerning the interviewee's family, was the student sent in order to not be affected by war conditions or for a better education?

> Participant 1 - My family sent to me in here for not being affected by the war.

> Participant 2 - There was also a risk incurred by students getting affected either physically or emotionally causing them to discontinue their study periods. Their safety is the more important reason and the main concern of course.

> Participant 4 - The main reason is to keep them as far as possible from the civil war in Syria and to guarantee a good place for them to start their life if the war doesn't end until then.

> Participant 6 - Obviously answer can be not being affected by the war and its environment. Syria is not the same as old.

> Participant 9 - None of us wanted to study abroad due to war in our country. We may take better education conditions here in TRNC, but I preferred to study in my country with my native language and feel my family behind me during all education periods. So, I can say directly for not being affected by Civil War.

Otherwise, for Participant 7 the idea was for a better education and claimed:

> In my point of view, they sent for a better future. When you graduate from TRNC, your diploma is already recognized by Turkey. So you are halfway to start your job there and manage your life in a safe country.

On the other hand, 5 participants said both factors about their families send them to TRNC. As examples:

> Participant 3 - For not being affected by the war and education quality can be both reasons this question for me. The suitable alternative and the universities in TRNC have provided the best one concerning the quality of education.

Participant 5 - I can say for both reasons because the war has deep effects on the education in Syria. Many well-known instructors have left the country which aided the drop in education levels nevertheless many schools got attacked heavily. So many people won't just throw their children there.

Participant 8 - I can say better education and not affected by the war.

Participant 10 - Most students here came for better education and not being in the war environment. The war did cause more students to study abroad and naturally, TRNC was one of the available good economic places.

Cultural Challenge/s in TRNC

The interviewees were asked if they faced any cultural conflict and/or problems in TRNC. According to their answers, they said mostly general attitudes toward themselves, foods and language, relationships, and traffic problems.

According to the responses from participants, issues such as cultural problems were shown in Participant 1 and Participant 10 had some opinion about the attitudes of other people.

Participant 1 - I think the hardest problem I suffered here was the lack of confidence of the citizens with Syrian people by Turkish people, not Cypriots. This led sometimes to make difficulties with every simple transaction that expatriate people need to do here. Also, when I did not feel I am welcome in the host society led me to prefer to be isolated and restricted to the Syrian community which made it difficult to be mixed up with people in different nations.

Participant 10 - It was between the Turkish students. Their attitudes as remaining distant came to me weird.

Furthermore, food problems were related by some of the participants. The examples of them are: Participant 1 - "In my first times, foods came to be different. Our foods are so spicy; in here they were so much lighter than Syrian foods" and Participant 9 - "I have felt cultural problems when I came here first because culture and traditions are very different than my country. For example, foods' tastes were different than ours."

Another issue for Participant 1 and Participant 6 was the language. Participant 1 reflected his idea about language as "Also the Turkish language was so hard to understand. There is no relation with Arabic," along with Participant 6 who described, "When I came, I had some struggle with the language. Turkish was so hard, and people were talking

to me Turkish in the first conversation because they thought I am Turkish." Although some of the participants mentioned other cultural problems in TRNC. Participant 6 and Participant 9 provided viewpoints that differed from those of other participants. Participant 6 told, "The example can be said relationships in here. For example, couples can live together in the same home before marriage. Syrian culture is definitely against this subject. Maybe I can say these examples of cultural differences between Syria and TRNC" conversely Participant 9 asserted "The traffic lane is in left in TRNC. It was so hard to get used to for me."

Identity Problem/s in School as a Syrian Student

The interviewees were asked if they faced an identity problem, conflict, discrimination, or prejudice and what kind of problem/s have they experienced.

According to the responses from participants, issues such as identity problems were detailed. The participants had problems with the adaptation process and with students who came from different backgrounds, while it was related to the lifestyle system. Some of the participants had identity problem/s in TRNC as Syrian students. Participant 1 and Participant 10 described the adaptation process, especially with people from different backgrounds. Participant 1 said,

> There are a few Cypriot students in our class. There was not any conflict or discrimination against each of us. Because TRNC is a multi-cultural society and there are many students here from abroad. But me and some of my friends had some problems with students who come from Turkey. They discriminate against us as Syrians because of events in Turkey. They have really big prejudice.

Participant 10 claimed,

> As any nation that went through a war and had its people displaced there would be cases of discrimination and cultural conflict against that nation's people. Syrians aren't a few people, there are hundreds of thousands of Syrian students who had to study abroad, and they come from all different kinds of backgrounds.

Unlike the others, Participant 8 asserted a different view about the lifestyle system, "I have faced many cultural problems. For example, Syrian people sleep very late, but Turks don't". Most of the participants had no identity problems in TRNC as Syrian students. They had common ideas.

> Participant 3 - Syrians were always the favorites for both Cypriots among

other foreign nationalities in TRNC. They were treated with much sympathy especially in the first years of Syrian students' presence in 2013.

Participant 4 - It is expected from any country that is hosting millions of people from another nation that speaks a different language to have problems in discrimination and prejudice, putting TRNC as an exception here because of all the foreigners in TRNC.

Participant 6 - My department has many foreign students, and all students are so helpful and tolerating. TRNC is also in harmony with different cultures. So, I can say that I am happy with this issue.

Participant 7 - The country is used to foreigner students and as all Syrians here are students, there are no such problems.

Belonging

The interviewees were asked questions concerning their feelings of belonging in TRNC. According to the responses, most of the participants have not developed any feelings of belonging to TRNC because of limited opportunities like residence limitation, and most of the students said that government does not give rights to international students for living in TRNC after graduation. Moreover, some of the participants also have no belonging feelings to TRNC because of adaptation the new environment. However, Participant 2 and Participant 4 feel belonging in TRNC.

Participant 2 - The citizens of TRNC are warm and welcoming. Provided, having lots of Syrians now residing there has helped build and strengthen, or in other words, deepen this sense of belonging. They have come together to form a Syrian society for instance, which created a homely atmosphere for students.

Participant 4 - Syrian students didn't get a cultural shock here in TRNC, again due to its similar cultural and the fact that it's mostly a climate with lots of different international students.

On the contrary, most other participants' (P 1,5,6,7,8,9) responses differ.

Participant 1 - After graduation, the government gives us only 40 days to go out of the country. So, I feel like the passenger in here.

Participant 5 - The feeling of belonging is impossible. Because of after graduation, we must go from TRNC.

Participant 6 - I get used to TRNC's atmosphere. But I can't say I have

the feel of belonging. Because the limited process does not give us to the feeling of belonging anywhere.

Participant 7 - I cannot say belonging. Because we are students, we will not and cannot stay here forever. If we can live here without any limitation as residence time, we feel belonging to TRNC.

Participant 8 - For me and most of the people; we don't and will not belong to TRNC. Because they don't let us stay in the country after graduation.

Participant 9 - At the end of the day, we are students in TRNC and this process will end one day. I have lived in here so amazing days, but this is not enough for the feeling of belonging toward TRNC.

Nevertheless, two of the participants provided viewpoints on the adaptation process that differed from the other participants about belonging. Participant 3 indicated, "I do not think Syrian students feel like they belong to TRNC as a home country, yet they have developed many feelings towards TRNC as a second home and as a country," and Participant 10 mentioned, "Some feel that this country is empty and that there is nothing other than the university. Other students like this country and see it as a quiet, clean, safe place to live in."

Opinions on Returning to the Motherland

The interviewees were asked if they think of returning to Syria after the war is over, and why. Many of the interviewees stated that they do not want to return to Syria, even if the war is over. Most students who do not want to return to Syria used common statements like:

Participant 3 - Syrian students do not consider staying in Syria either way if the war ends or not. It is collapsed and I think it is not like before.

Participant 5 - Actually I do not think we will go back. Education in Syria needs time to get where it was. I don't want to return after university.

Participant 6 - That can be the hardest question. Because I have no idea about if it will be over or continue like this. But if it is over completely, I am not sure whether I will return or not. Syria had problems and internal conflicts before the war had even started. The war started and expanded. I think Syria will not be like old Syria. I don't want to take my life into others' hands. If Syria changes totally in each area, we may return our country, but it comes to me so hard.

Participant 7 - I don't think these new graduate students will return immediately after the war is over. The country is destroyed. No infrastructure,

no electricity or water. It would be very hard to get used to these conditions again, but maybe in 10 or 20 years some of the Syrians might go back but most of them unfortunately not. We must arrange our life another place, but it is not in Syria unfortunately!

Participant 9 - Syria's situation is getting worse and worse each day. I cannot imagine how will it be or won't be. I don't want to lose my hope, but all news breaks my hope. I want to live in my country without any limitations or problems of course. But I don't want to return in these conditions.

Participant 10 - I have no hope that it will be like before Syria. Some students believe that they will go back. Other students think that here in the future and opened business. But I don't want to return to Syria. Also, most of the families of the Syrian students are already living outside of Syria.

On the other hand, the rest of the Syrian students want to return to Syria.

Participant 1 - I want to return to my country after the war is over. But this depends on who will be president. This war ruined Syria, I have no idea how the situation will change back.

Participant 2 - There is still hope that someday Syria will stand up on its feet again. For the sake of rebuilding the country, those graduates and Syrian youth should consider returning and contributing rather than becoming exploited resources for other nationalities. Thus, it is likely that anyone who shares this view would want to return.

Participant 4 - Most people would return if the war ended, and the country is safe again.

Participant 8 - If it is possible for them mostly students will go back, like me.

When the analysis is reviewed in general, the TRNC, whose climate and social life is compared to Syria by the participants, creates a moderate impression of its people. The fact that the TRNC is already multicultural may have created positive attitudes towards Syrian refugees. While Syrian students were satisfied with TRNC citizens, they stated that they had problems with Turkish citizens. In our observations, we observed that Syrian students are friendly and extroverted people. In addition, we noticed that students' adaptation problems negatively affect their academic lives. The fact that Syrian students did not want to return to Syria even after the war was over showed that they were satisfied with the environment they were in.

Conclusion

Foreign students have an important place in education marketing that has grown with globalization. Foreign students receive their education in different countries, contributing to their academic career and meeting new cultures. However, this can cause problems in some places. Specifically, communication problems can cause obstacles on a universal scale. This study examines the various experiences of Syrian students studying at EMU in terms of belonging and identity. Research data was collected through a field study and ten Syrian students participated in the research. Interview and observation forms of qualitative data collection methods were used in the study. By analyzing research data with the thematic analysis method, findings of the belonging and identity experiences of Syrian students were reached.

In the data obtained, it was seen that most Syrian students were affected by the war and came to receive an education. In addition, students were sent to the TRNC by their families to receive a good education, although they were not affected by the war, were also included in the study. Most of the participants stated that they were not discriminated against in the TRNC, but in general, they mentioned communication problems arising from language and cultural differences. Most of the participants stated that they did not want to return to their countries even if the war was over and said that this created hopelessness in them.

In the light of the data obtained, we can make recommendations for practices and further research. This study was conducted with university students and is based on the opinions of university students. The inclusion of students at different levels of study may benefit the research topic. The processes are related to many psychological dimensions, and it is understood from the interviews. Therefore, planning studies on how psychologists and psychological counsellors play an important role in the institution/university adaptation process can provide meaningful results. Some orientation activities such as social activities, excursions, sports activities, and cultural activities can increase student's adaptation to the university and the region, and their regular organization will contribute positively to both the institutional, regional, and the subjective and psychological well-being of the students. Syrian students should be provided with quality education and students should be motivated. Implementing orientation programs for all foreign students can prevent problems with belonging and identity. Syrian students' adaption problems could be decreased by awareness studies and training about identity and belonging issues.

At the point of removing traces of Syrian students' traumatic experiences before and during migration, attempts can be made to encourage psychologists and/or psychological counsellors in institutions to assist students. In addition to mental health professionals, steps can be taken that will contribute to social welfare and integration in the long run by building a bridge between other education stakeholders. Addition to training in mig-

ration psychology, crisis counselling, and culturally sensitive psychological counselling skills in institutions as an elective course, especially during the undergraduate education period, may contribute to the professional and individual benefit, in order for all students to gain multicultural perspectives and foresight. Various informative trainings on immigration, multiculturalism, and Syrian society should be organized for students, and academic and administrative staff on discrimination and exclusion. On the other hand, it is important to open language courses in continuing education centers (SEM) for Syrian students to maintain their academic competence and social life easily in the education process. Activities should be carried out on campuses and outside the campus to increase socialization and interaction between groups through joint activities with clubs within the university, and to eliminate prejudices.

It is very important to follow dynamic and multidimensional policies that ensure understanding between both communities for the desired level of social acceptance and harmony and its sustainability. International human rights standards should be reached regarding immigrants, and services should be provided as a right, not as possibilities, by obtaining the consent of the local people. At this point, non-governmental organizations can make a meaningful contribution to the development of the culture of living together by participating in projects and activities involving both segments of society. Subsequently, it would be beneficial to implement the process of social cohesion and belonging simultaneously with policies that complement and support each other. It is important to create platforms to get the ideas of the students and ensure their participation while making arrangements on this subject. For the social and cultural adaptation process to get healthy results, students and their families can be given a sense of confidence that no assimilation aims are pursued. All Syrian students who come to the TRNC for education should be registered, their attendance and progress in higher education institutions should be followed realistically. A long-term and productive education program for Syrian students should be prepared by collecting up-to-date and realistic data with the cooperation of the relevant ministries.

Some of the suggestions for future research are a more comprehensive study can be conducted including different variables related to Syrian students. Examining the students' sense of belonging both for the institution they are in and in a more general perspective can provide a double benefit and increase their level of belonging to the place. This study, using the qualitative research method, will enrich the subject with quantitative research and mixed research methods. In addition, in-depth analysis of different variables and research groups is very important in terms of providing opportunities for Syrian students and making meaningful contributions to the literature. Studies can be conducted to examine students' views on adaptation problems and educational status. Investigations can be made on how Syrian students overcome problems. At this point, insights into problems and problem-solving skills can contribute to the analysis of psychological needs.

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