

The Effect of Migration-Themed Children's Books on Primary School Students' Attitudes and Views Towards Refugee Students*

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Abstract. This study aims to investigate the impact of migration-themed children's books on the attitudes of fourth-grade primary school students towards migrant students. Employing a mixed design, the study adopts a quasi-experimental approach with a pre-test-post-test control group and an explanatory case study. Recruiting 56 students living in a neighborhood with a dense migrant population in Istanbul, the first author administered the attitude towards refugee students scale (ATRSS) and conducted semi-structured interviews during the 2021-2022 academic year. As an experimental practice, the first author held reading sessions for 8 weeks with activities using migration-themed children's books. Control group students continued their regular classes. The experimental and control groups were interviewed and asked to fill in the ATRSS both before and after the reading sessions. The quantitative data was analyzed with SPSS 22.0 and qualitative data using descriptive analysis. The analysis revealed that migration-themed children's books do not effect attitudes towards migrants. Other social/educational variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, and parental education level also has no effect on attitudes towards refugee students. The qualitative data revealed that migration-themed children's books promote sensitivity to migrants' problems, empathic thinking, and a positive attitude about diversity. As a result, this study significantly contributes to further studies for researchers and teachers

Keywords: Attitudes Towards Migrants, Children's Books, Migration, Migration-Themed Children's Books.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Migration can occur either on a regional or large-scale basis. Large-scale migration, often caused by war, can lead to economic, social, political, and educational crises (Şimşir & Dilmaç, 2018; Sarıahmetoğlu, 2019). The influx of Syrian migrants to Türkiye beginning in April 2011 resulted in the largest surge of migration to the country. As a result of the Syrian civil war, the initial group of 250 people arrived in Turkey on April 29, 2011. As the conflict continued, the number of arrivals increased steadily. The arrivals were given "temporary protection" status in conformity with international refugee law and international legal customs (Seydi, 2014). According to a report from the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management on May 12, 2022, 3.763,211 Syrians are under temporary protection in Türkiye. Istanbul, Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Adana are the five provinces with the greatest concentration of Syrians (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2022).

Migrants who leave their home country for various reasons adopt different attitudes in their new society. The migration wave of Syrian refugees arriving in Türkiye has changed local attitudes and behaviors towards migrants, either in supporting or opposing their presence (Özüdoğru et al., 2018). A range of factors including personal experiences, economic repercussions, political processes, length of stay in the host country, integration policies, and the number of migrants in the country can all influence attitudes towards migrants (Sevi et al., 2016; Uygur, 2018).

The war in Syria and influx of asylum seekers to Türkiye have led to a greater focus on literature about immigrants. It has been claimed that migration-themed children's literature can help children in facing with difficult situations and empathizing with the main characters in the story. The stories can also help non-immigrant children to gain insight into the experiences and struggles of migrant children. Children's literature that addresses the theme of migration can promote coexistence, emotional understanding, and help children to comprehend the issues surrounding migration. It is important for authors and publishers to create works that cover themes like the experiences of migrants, coexisting with others, respecting cultural differences, and building positive relationships in order to contribute to the creation of a more peaceful society (Çiftçi, 2020; Öztürk et al., 2021).

Most studies on the effect of children's literature on attitudes have found that it has a positive effect on students' attitudes (Öztürk & Otluoğlu, 2002, Dikmen, 2019, Demir et al., 2019). Based on these findings, this study aims to investigate the impact of children's books with a migration theme on the attitudes of 4th grade students towards migrant students. As the number of migrants increases in Türkiye, it is important to understand the evolving attitudes towards migrant children. It is expected that children who are exposed to the migrant families' stories will be more empathetic towards migrants. Children's books can be an effective tool for shaping perspectives and attitudes towards migrants. With this goal in mind, the study aims to answer three research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the “Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale” scores for students in the experimental and control groups before and after the experiment?
2. Do these scores correlate with the students' demographic characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic status, and parental education level?
3. In what ways does reading children’s books with a migration theme change Turkish students’ views of migrants?

2. METHOD

The Research Model

This study employed an exploratory mixed model. Using a quasi-experimental design in the quantitative part, the first author conducted an 8-weeks reading session with pre-selected children’s books with migration themes in both groups. She also administered the Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale (ATRSS) before and after the sessions. In the qualitative part, using an exploratory case study model, the first author conducted interviews with the experimental and control group students before and after the reading sessions. Table 1 summarizes the research procedure in detail.

Table 1

Research procedure

Mixed Model						
Quantitative Design: Experimental Design with Pre-/ Post-Test Control Group						
Qualitative Design: Exploratory Case Study						
Groups	Study design	Pre-test	Experiment			Post-test
Experimental (%) Group	Quantitative	Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale (ATRSS)	Activities with Migration-Themed Children's Books			Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale (ATRSS)
	Qualitative	Interview				Interview
Control Group	Quantitative	Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale (ATRSS)	Normal process	course		Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale (ATRSS)
	Qualitative	Interview				Interview

Study Group

The study recruited 56 students in the fourth grade of a primary school in Istanbul's Sultanbeyli district during the 2021-2022 academic year. There were 29 students in the experimental group and 27 in the control group. Since our target groups are immigrants in Türkiye, we used a typical case sampling method of purposeful sampling in order to reflect the average instance of migration phenomenon. The experimental group consisted of 18 male and 11 female students while the control group consisted of 16 male and 11 female students. Ethics committee approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of İstanbul Medeniyet University with the decision dated 06.09.2022 and numbered 2021/09-05.

Data Collection Tools

The study used quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. Quantitative data was collected with ATRSS (Kılcan et al., 2017; taking the authors' permission), Kılcan et al.'s (2017) scale has 24 items rated "Agree," "Neutral," or "Disagree" on a 3-point Likert scale. The scale has 6 negative items. Negative items were scored as negative points. Positive items were scored as "Agree" 3 points, "Neutral" 2 points, and "Disagree" 1 point. The lowest score is 45, highest is 225. A high score indicates that students like migrants. Cronbach's Alpha was 92, so the scale is reliable. Six items in the scale were reverse coded. Qualitative data was collected with interviews with students. The questions asked in the interviews were revised based on expert opinions, resulting in a reduction of the number of items to eight.

Data Collection and Statistical Analysis

The study began with the selection of children's books with migration themes to be used in the reading sessions. Table 2 lists the books used in this study.

Table 2

The books used in this study

Session	Books
1	Name: Akim Koşuyor Author: Claude K. Dubois Publisher: Ginko Çocuk Release date: 2019
2	Name: Taştan Adımlar Bir Mülteci Ailenin Yolculuğu Author: Margriet Ruurs Publisher: Nesin Yayınevi

	Release date: 2017
3	Name: Kayıktaki Çocuk Author: Maya Mizuno, Vonne Hemels Publisher: Timaş Çocuk Release date: 2017
4	Name: Arkadaşım Korku Author: Francesca Sanna Publisher: Taze Kitap Release date: 2018
5	Name: Herkes Burada Bizim Rengarenk Yaşamımız Author: Anja Tunkermann Publisher: Kırmızı Kedi Çocuk Release date: 2017
6	Name: Yolculuk Author: Francesca Sanna Publisher: Taze Kitap - Çocuk Kitapları Dizisi Release date: 2016
7	Name: Başka Yerde Yaşasaydım Author: Publisher: Release date:
8	Name: Tarık ve Beyaz Karga Author: Constance Orbeck-Nilssen Publisher: Abm Yayınevi Release date: 2017

Following the identification of the books, activity plans were developed based on the learning outcomes in the 4th-grade Turkish curriculum. While the first author-teacher used migration-themed children's books during the 8-weeks sessions in the experimental group, the control group continued their regular classes without any specific design.

The quantitative data was analyzed in the SPSS 22.0 program using the convenient tests for each research question. The qualitative data was collected via interviews with students. The students' responses were audio-recorded and noted by the researcher.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Findings on the first research question

Experiment Group ATRSS Scores

To answer the first research question, which aims to determine whether there was a significant difference in ATRSS scores between the experimental and control group students before and after the experiment, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used. Table 3 and 4 shows the results respectively.

Table 3

The Experimental Group's Pre- and Post-Test ATRSS Scores

		N	Rank Mean	Rank Total:	Z	p
ATRSS Post-test	Negative Ranks	10	14.10	141.00		
ATRSS Pre-test	Positive Ranks	17	13.94	237.00	-1.155	.248
	Equal	2				
	Total	29				

The results in Table 2 show that there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test ATRSS scores of the 29 experimental group students ($z = -.15$, $p = .248$ ($p > .05$)). This indicates that the experimental group's attitudes towards migrants did not significantly differ as a result of the reading sessions.

Table 4

The Control Group's Pre- and Post-Test ATRSS Scores

		N	Rank Mean Total:	Ranks	z	p
ATRSS Post-test	Negative Ranks	14	16.29	228.00	-1.335	.182
	Positive Ranks	12	10.25	123.00		
ATRSS Pre-test		1				
		27				

The results in Table 4 show that there was no statistically significant difference between pre- and post-test ATRSS scores of the 27 students in the control group ($z = -1.33$, $p = .182$ ($p > .05$)). This results point out that the control group's attitudes towards migrants did not significantly differ as a result of the reading sessions.

3.2. Findings on the second research question

To answer the second research question, which aims to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre- and post-test ATRSS scores of male and female students in the experimental and control groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. Table 4 shows the results in both groups.

Table 5

Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Experimental and Control Group Students' Pre- and Post-Test ATRSS Scores Based on Gender

Groups	Measure	Gender	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Experimental Groups	Pre-test	Female	11	15.73	173.00	91.000	.719
		Male	18	14.56	262.00		
	Post-test	Female	11	14.95	164.50	98.500	.982
		Male	18	15.03	270.50		

Control Group	Pre-test	Female	11	15.68	172.50	69.500	.358
		Male	16	12.84	205.50		
	Post-test	Female	11	13.50	148.50	82.500	.786
		Male	16	14.34	229.50		

According to the data in Table 5, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females in the experimental group ($U_{\text{pre-test}}=91.000$, $U_{\text{post-test}}=98.500$, $p>0.05$) or the control group ($U_{\text{pre-test}}=69.500$, $U_{\text{post-test}}=82.500$, $p>0.05$). These results indicate that gender did not significantly affect the scores on the ATRSS test in either group.

Table 6 shows the results of Kruskal-Wallis Test which is used to compare pre-and post-test ATRSS scores of experimental and control group students based on socioeconomic status. Students' socioeconomic status are determined based on their own statements during the interviews.

Table 6

Kruskal-Wallis Test Results of Experimental and Control Group Students' Pre-and Post-Test ATRSS Scores based on Socioeconomic Status

Groups	Measure	Socioeconomic Status	N	Rank Mean	sd	χ^2	p
Experimental Groups	Pre-test	Low	2	24.25	2	3.618	.164
		Moderate	23	15.02			
		High	4	10.25			
	Post-test	Low	2	10.25	2	.940	.625
		Moderate	23	15.00			
		High	4	17.38			

Control Group	Pre-test	Low	1	20.00	1.311	.519
		Moderate	21	14.40		
		High	5	11.10		
	Post-test	Low	1	21.00	3.251	.197
		Moderate	21	12.55		
		High	5	18.70		

The results in Table 6 demonstrates that there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores of the socioeconomic status groups ($\chi^2_{\text{pre-test experimental}}=3.618$, $\chi^2_{\text{post-test experimental}}=.940$, $\chi^2_{\text{pre-test control}}=1.311$, $\chi^2_{\text{post-test control}}=3.251$, $p>0.05$). Accordingly, socioeconomic status has no effect on the pre- and post-test ATRSS scores.

Table 7 shows the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test which is used to find out whether there is a significant difference between the pre- and post-test ATRSS scores of students in the experimental and control groups based on the mother's educational status.

Table 7

Kruskal-Wallis Test Results of Experimental and Control Group Students' Pre- and Post-Test ATRSS Scores based on Mother's Educational Status

Groups	Measure	Mother's educational status	N	Rank Mean	sd	χ^2	p
Pre-test		Primary school	15	17.00	6.685	.083	
		Middle school	8	9.88			
		High School	3	22.50			
		University and beyond	3	11,17			

Experimental Groups	Post-test	Primary school	15	13,80	3		
		Middle school	8	14.88		.940	.264
		High School	3	24.00			
		University and beyond	3	12.33			
Control Group	Pre-test	Primary school	8	16.19			
		Middle school	9	15.17		3.380	.337
		High School	8	12.63	3		
		University and beyond	2	5.50			
	Post-test	Primary school	8	13.19			
		Middle school	9	13.33		3.112	.375
		High School	8	13.19			
		University and beyond	2	23.50			

The results in Table 7 demonstrates that there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test results across the groups. ($\chi^2_{\text{pre-test experimental}}=6.685$, $\chi^2_{\text{post-test experimental}}=.940$, $\chi^2_{\text{pre-test control}}=3.380$, $\chi^2_{\text{post-test control}}=3.112$, $p>0.05$). Accordingly, the mother's educational status has no effect on the pre-and post-test ATRSS scores.

Table 8 shows the test results of the Kruskal-Wallis test which is used to compare pre- and post-test ATRSS scores of experimental and control group students based on father's educational status.

Table 8

Kruskal-Wallis Test Results of Experimental and Control Group Students' Pre-and Post-Test ATRSS Scores based on Father's Educational Status

Groups	Measure	Father's Educational Status	N	Rank Mean	sd	χ^2	p
Experimental Groups	Pre-test	Primary school	6	16.83	3	.510	.917
		Middle school	16	14.78			
		High School	5	14.60			
		University and beyond	2	12.25			
	Post-test	Primary school	6	10.17	3	3.190	.363
		Middle school	16	17.16			
		High School	5	15.00			
		University and beyond	2	12.25			
Control Group	Pre-test	Primary school	5	18.50	3	6.398	.094
		Middle school	10	11.35			
		High School	9	16.83			
		University and beyond	3	6.83			
	Post-test	Primary school	5	12.30	3	1.370	.713
		Middle school	10	15.75			
		High School	9	14.22			

University and 3 10.33
beyond

The results in Table 8 demonstrates that there was no statistically significant difference between pre- and post-test results across the groups ($\chi^2_{\text{pre-test experimental}}=.510$, $\chi^2_{\text{post-test experimental}}=3.190$, $\chi^2_{\text{pre-test control}}=6.398$, $\chi^2_{\text{post-test control}}=1.370$, $p>0.05$). Accordingly, the father's educational status has no effect on the pre-test and post-test ATRSS scores.

3.3. Findings on the third research question

The interview questions were analyzed under 8 different themes, including the definition of the concept of migrants, empathy towards migrants, coexisting with migrants, the return of migrants to their home country, sensitivity to migrants' problems, and sensitivity to differences/diversity.

Definition of migrants

When asked "Who do you think of when you hear the word migrant and why?", the students replied "Syrian", "war broke out in their country", "migrated from one place to another", and "from another country". In the experimental group, a student mentioned migrating birds. In the control group, a student thought that a person who migrates for any reason other than war can also be considered a migrant. The students' responses in both groups show that they did not hold negative attitudes towards migrants before and after the experiment, and when defining migrants, they mainly associated them with forced migration from Syria to Türkiye. Furthermore, students also used positive definitions such as "my classmate, my neighbor".

Empathy towards migrants

To explore the students' empathic thinking about migrants, the following question was asked: "Have you ever considered your family as migrants? Can you provide an explanation for this?" The answers were categorized as empathizing and non-empathizing. Table 9 shows the frequency of the answers.

Table 9

Views on being able to think empathetically about migrants

	Before the Experiment		After the Experiment	
Experimental Group	Empathizing	Non-Empathizing	Empathizing	Non-Empathizing
	5	24	13	16
Control Group	Empathizing	Non-Empathizing	Empathizing	Non-Empathizing
	15	12	14	13

Before the experiment, only five students in the experimental group were able to empathize with migrants, but this number increased to 13 after the experiment. In the control group, only one student changed their perspective. This suggests that the books read during the study had a positive impact on increasing the number of students who were able to empathize with migrants. When non-empathizing students' responses were analyzed, most stated that they had never thought of themselves as migrants because they had no reason to migrate. S25, a member of the experimental group, reported that they were unable to empathize with migrants before the experiment, but were able to do so after the experiment: *"I thought of myself and my family as migrants. It's horrible to think about. Some people mistreat migrants, though. They've never put themselves in migrants' shoes."*

Coexisting with migrants

The question *"How does it make you feel to be in the same city, school, or classroom with migrants, and why?"* was asked to determine students' views on living together with migrants. Table 9 categorizes students' views as "positive, neutral, and negative".

Table 10

The frequency table of views on living together with migrants

Experimental Groups	Before the Experiment			After the Experiment		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative
	19	4	6	20	3	6
Control Group	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative
	23	3	1	23	2	2

Before and after the experiment, a majority of the students expressed a willingness to live with migrants. Those who responded positively to living with migrants mentioned the benefits of diversity and the opportunity to play together with children from different cultures. Some students had neutral responses, discussing the pros and cons of living with migrants. The majority of students who opposed living with migrants mentioned language barriers and miscommunication as their primary concerns. S12, a student, stated that they liked living together: *"I feel good, I make friends with them. If I have to leave my country one day, they will treat me well too"*.

The return of migrants to their home country

The following question was asked to learn the students' views on the possibility of migrant students returning to their countries: "Do you think migrant students will be able to return to their countries, and why?". Table 11 categorizes the views as "will return, neutral, and will not return".

Table 11

The frequency table of the views on the return of migrants to their home country

Experimental Groups	Before the Experiment			After the Experiment		
	Will Return	Neutral	Will not Return	Will Return	Neutral	Will not Return
	19	4	6	17	3	9

Control Group	Will Return	Neutral	Will not Return	Will Return	Neutral	Will not Return
	13	4	10	16	6	5

Students who believe migrants will return to their home countries state that the war will end and they will want to return. Neutral students think that migrants who have established a new life may not want to return. The students who thought migrants would still not return stated that the war would not end and they would not leave their new lives. After the experiment, S10 mentioned, *“They will not return. The war in their countries has been going on for years. It will not end.”*, while S9 stated that migrants would not return to their countries, *“I believe they will return. The war will end, and people will help them, and they will unite and improve their countries.”*

Sensitivity to migrants' problems

The question *“Would you like to solve the difficulties migrants experience, what are these, and how would you solve them?”* aimed to evaluate the students' sensitivity to migrants' problems. The results were analyzed in two steps. Table 11 shows students' willingness to help migrants.

Table 12

Frequencies of Opinions Regarding the Willingness to Solve the Migrants' Problems

Experimental Groups	Before the Experiment		After the Experiment	
	Willing	Unwilling	Willing	Unwilling
	18	11	25	4
Control Group	Willing	Unwilling	Willing	Unwilling
	24	3	20	7

According to Table 12, the experimental group demonstrated increased willingness to assist migrants in solving various problems after the experiment. These problems

included language barriers, conflict, discrimination, homelessness, food insecurity, financial difficulties, and unemployment, as identified by the students who expressed a desire to help migrants. Figure 1 shows the distribution of problems migrants face in both interviews.

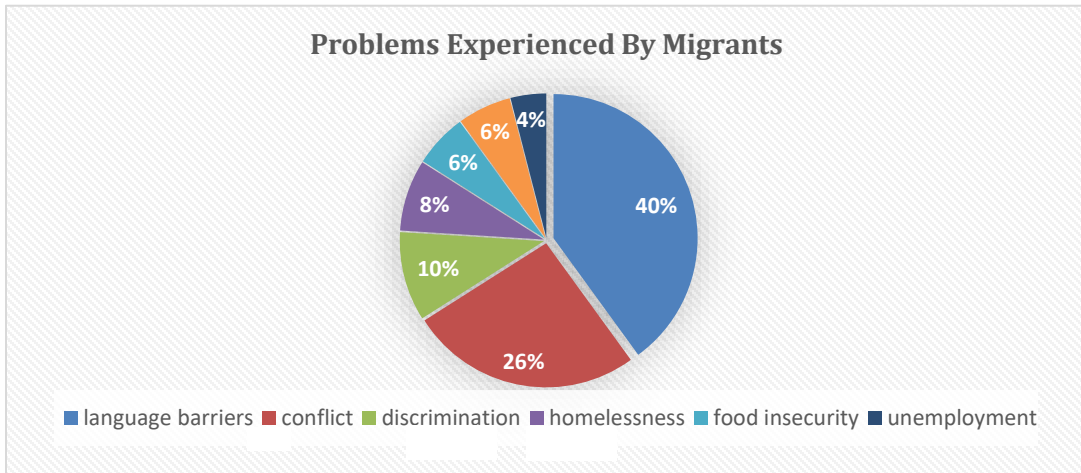


Figure 1. Distribution of the problems experienced by migrants

Sensitivity to differences/diversity

To understand the students' perspectives on cultural and linguistic differences among migrants, the following question was asked: "How do you feel about migrants having different cultures and languages? Can you explain your feelings?" The responses to this question were classified into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative, as shown in Table 12.

Table 13

Distribution of views on differences towards migrants

	Before the Experiment			After the Experiment		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Experimental Groups	11	3	15	17	2	10
Control Group	17	2	8	19	2	6

In the experimental group, six students held positive views about cultural and linguistic differences after the experiment. In the second interview, two students in the control group expressed positive views on diversity. Most students, however, held negative views about language barriers. Students with positive views towards diversity stated that they would be more comfortable speaking the same language but also recognize that language differences require extra effort in communication. For example, S25 noted, *"Even though cultures and languages may be different, I still try to communicate with them"*.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Discussion of Quantitative Findings From ATRSS

This study found no significant difference in the attitudes of the experimental group students towards migrants. Similarly, Yaydırğan (2008) conducted a study using an experimental design with pre- and post-tests to measure the effect of stories in Turkish literature on the development of empathic skills in 15-17-year-old high school students. Yaydırğan's study also found no significant difference in the empathic thinking skills of the experimental group students after ten weeks of reading sessions. Akyol (2011) conducted a study using a pre- and post-test experimental design to examine the effect of children's books on empathic thinking, and found a positive effect on the experimental group. However, the study found that variables such as whether the students had their own room, had a pet, came from a nuclear or extended family, had a medical condition, had a father with a regular job, had a working mother, and the number of siblings did not play a role in empathic thinking. Contrary to the findings of the previous studies, some research has found a relationship between children's books and attitudes towards migrants. For example, Çiftci (2020) conducted a study to investigate the effect of migrant-themed children's books on the attitudes of seventh-grade students towards migrants. The study found that the experimental group students' attitudes changed positively as a result of reading sessions using migrant-themed children's books.

This study found that the ATRSS scores of the students were moderate and above among the students in the experimental group. The highest score can be obtained from ATRSS is 72 and the lowest score is 24. While the average score of the experimental group students before the experiment was 58.24, it was 60.86 after the experiment. Based on these results, we can conclude that the attitudes of the experimental group students in this study were positive at the beginning. The reading sessions did not significantly change these positive attitudes over the course of 8 week period. Attitude is a concept that is acquired and learned by people and can change and develop over time. However, according to Türkmen (2006), it can be difficult to make students' positive attitudes even more positive. In such cases, it is required to conduct a study covering a longer period of time in order to change attitudes. Erkan and Aykaç's (2014) and Dalboy's (2014) studies can be cited as an example of long-term studies. While Erkan and Aykaç

conducted a 14-week study covering the entire fall semester, Dalbooy conducted a 23-week study. As a result, it was observed that students' attitudes changed positively.

In this study, the students had likely had extensive exposure to migrants, as they lived in an area with a high concentration of migrants who had settled and integrated into the community. This may have contributed to their positive attitudes towards migrants as measured in the pre-test, which aligns with Allport's (1954) "contact theory." This theory suggests that positive attitudes towards outgroups can be improved through interactions with members of those groups, which may have occurred in this study due to the students' prolonged contact with migrants in their community. The more the groups interact, the more they will move away from stereotypes, prejudices, and generalizations (as cited in Işık, 2015). Experimental studies on migration also show that contact between groups reduces prejudice and positively affects attitudes (Dovidio et al., 2011; Eller & Abrams, 2003; Levin et al., 2003). For instance, Levin et al. (2003) conducted a longitudinal study to determine the effect of contact on the intergroup attitudes of 2000 white, Latino, African-American, and Asian university students by measuring them five times at different times between 1996 and 2000. They observed that students from different ethnic groups going to the same school, studying in the same classrooms, and living in the same residence halls developed more positive attitudes towards outgroups and interacted more easily with members of other ethnic groups by the time they reached their senior year. In this study, local students and migrant students shared the same classroom, played games in the same neighborhood, and were in contact with each other for 4 years.

The current study was conducted with 4th-grade primary school students. The ages of the students ranged between 9 and 10. In a study conducted by Feddes et al. (2009) with 76 German and 73 Turkish students aged between 7 and 11, the effects of friendship between children on ethnic attitudes were examined. In the study, it was observed that among these heterogeneous students studying in the same primary school, local German students with majority status started to have positive attitudes towards Turkish students with migrant status over time. It was observed that having intergroup friendships at a young age increased positive attitudes. Tropp and Pettigrew (2005) show in their study that early contact between majority native and minority migrant students has a positive effect on attitudes towards migrants. Maintaining good relations and increasing contact between groups is another significant factor that contributes to intergroup cohesion. According to Aboud et al. (2003), younger students form more intergroup friendships, while older children form fewer intergroup friendships. As they grow older, children tend to make friends with people who share their social identity. Since this study was conducted with younger age groups, it was discovered that friendships between groups were more common, which reflected positively on attitudes.

The lack of a significant difference in the experimental group students' attitudes towards migrants could be attributed to the reasons such as the students' positive attitudes at the beginning of the study, the study's duration, the fact that the students have been living

with migrants for a long time, the migrants in their environment are now settled in Türkiye and the study group's young age.

In this study, there was no significant difference in the attitudes towards migrants between male and female students in the experimental and control groups. This result is consistent with the findings of Yeşildağ (2022) who also did not find a significant difference in attitudes towards migrants based on gender in their study of adults. Other research has shown that gender can impact attitudes towards migrants, with some studies finding that women have more negative attitudes than men (Kaldık, 2021) and others finding that men have more negative attitudes than women (Karataş & Güzel, 2020; Svensson & Edblad, 2015). However, these studies all focused on adults, and there is a lack of research on the effect of gender on attitudes towards migrants in children.

This study found that there was no significant difference in the attitudes towards migrants (as measured by the ATRSS) between the experimental and control group students based on their socioeconomic status. This result is consistent with the findings of other studies, such as those conducted by Kaldık (2021) and Yeşildağ (2022), which also did not find a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and attitudes towards migrants. On the other hand, Öztürk (2020) aimed to investigate the sociodemographic factors affecting xenophobia towards Syrians among 384 young people and concluded that the group with low income had more negative attitudes towards Syrians. Some other studies conducted outside Türkiye have also revealed that socioeconomic status affects attitudes towards migrants. For example, Scheepers et al. (2002) aimed to investigate the exclusion of different groups and negative attitudes towards foreigners. According to their findings, people with low incomes tend to exclude various ethnic groups. Similarly, O'Connell (2005) conducted a study in which he categorized Western European countries based on their per capita income as low, middle, or high and examined attitudes towards migrants in these countries. They found that citizens of high-income countries, such as Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Luxembourg, tended to have more positive attitudes towards migrants than citizens of lower-income countries. This relationship was attributed to economic competition. These findings suggest that socioeconomic status can influence attitudes towards migrants in adults. However, this study and other research (e.g. Kaldık, 2021; Yeşildağ, 2022) have found that socioeconomic status does not significantly impact attitudes towards migrants in children.

This study did not find a significant difference in the attitudes towards migrants between the experimental and control group students based on their parents' educational level. However, a study by Akgün et al. (2018) found that the mother's educational status had a significant impact on the attitudes of children aged 48-84 months towards Syrian students in their classrooms, while the father's educational level did not have a significant effect. The mean scores of children whose mothers had a college education or higher were found to be higher than those of children whose mothers had lower levels of education. Can Yaşar & Aral (2011) argued that parents'

educational status can influence their children's growth, care, education, and communication, and that parents who have pursued self-improvement and higher levels of education may have more productive time to devote to caring for their children.

Discussion of Qualitative Findings

When asked to define the word "migrant", the students in this study provided a range of responses, including "Syrian", "war broke out in their country", "people who have migrated from one place to another", "from another country". One student in the experimental group mentioned migratory birds, while another student in the control group mentioned a relative who had migrated for non-obligatory reasons. The students' definition of migrants as "Syrian" may be due to the high prevalence of Syrian migrants in their community. Only a few students mentioned Ukrainians who had left their country due to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia as migrants. These varied definitions suggest that students receive information about migrants from a variety of sources, including the media and adults, and they define words based on their current experiences and surroundings. During the interviews, some children also used terms like "friend" and "neighbor" in their definitions, possibly because they had lived and interacted with migrants for an extended period of time.

In Türkiye, migration is a current issue, and children who are exposed to various interpretations about migrants may not have accurate information. Children's books about migration can provide accurate information about this issue. In a study, Clifford and Kalyanpur (2011) evaluated migrant-themed young adult novels published in the United States after 2000 and found that these books are essential in understanding migration. These books cover the causes, stages, and consequences of migration in detail. In our study, students in the experimental group who listened these books had a better understanding of migration after the experiment. For example, before the experiment, one student, S8, had a basic understanding of migrants as "people who migrated from a place." After the experiment, S8 had a more detailed and empathetic understanding of migrants as people who may speak a different language, may have experienced forced migration, and may have various reasons for migrating. This shows that reading books about migration can help children understand the complexities of this issue.

In their study, Akyüz (2014) found that children's literature can enhance empathetic reasoning skills in fourth-grade students. Campos (2018) used children's literature to help college students understand poverty and migration, and found that it led to significant increases in their awareness of multiculturalism and empathy towards migrants. In the current study being discussed, an increase in the number of students who were able to think empathetically following the experiment was observed. One student, S23, noted that the migration-themed literature they read enhanced their capacity for empathy. Additionally, more students in the experimental group expressed a desire to help migrants with their problems after reading these books and were able to identify the challenges faced by migrants, such as language barriers, war, exclusion,

homelessness, hunger, financial struggles, and unemployment. Overall, reading children's books about migration seems to increase awareness of migrant issues and enhance empathy towards migrants.

In this study, most students reported that they enjoyed living in the same city, school, and classroom with migrants. Some students had positive views of living with migrants, appreciating the cultural differences and enjoying the opportunity to play with their migrant peers. Other students had neutral views, recognizing both the positive and negative aspects of living with migrants. A minority of students had negative views, often citing communication issues and language barriers as challenges. One student in the experimental group, S24, had a particularly positive view of living with migrants, stating that diversity is a source of wealth and that living together is desirable. The majority of students had positive views of living with migrants, having had long-term experience living with and interacting with migrants. Those with negative views often mentioned communication problems related to language differences as a challenge. Overall, students' views of living with migrants seemed to be influenced by their experiences and interactions with migrants.

This study employed children's literature as a means of fostering an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures among students. Local students mentioned communication problems as a significant issue in their interactions with migrant students in the interviews prior to the reading sessions. For example, S28, a student in the experimental group, responded *"I feel bad. I don't understand what they're saying,"* and that the language barrier posed a challenge for them and made it difficult for them to communicate effectively. Destebaşı and Karabuğa (2013) argue in their study that children's literature can be used in the classroom to help students understand and appreciate diversity, and to behave without prejudice towards people and cultures that differ from their own. Their study was conducted with 5th grade students in Iran. Students wrote compositions, drew pictures, and participated in discussions to learn about Iranian culture. After the study, students' negative views of Iranian culture were listed. The students then read a book about Iranian culture and conducted research. It was noted that, upon repeating the same procedures after reading the book, the students' prejudices towards cultural differences decreased and they displayed more positive attitudes. Similarly, the students in the experimental group acquired a positive perspective on migrant culture through reading migration-themed children's books that contained information about different cultures and immigration stories in our study.

5. CONCLUSION

The experimental group's ATRSS scores before and after the experiment were not significantly different, indicating that the use of migration-themed children's books did not alter their attitudes towards migrants. Possible explanations for this lack of significant change include:

- The students may have already held positive attitudes towards migrants prior to the experiment.
- The students' young age may have limited the effect of the experiment on their attitudes.
- The short duration of the experiment may not have been sufficient to significantly alter the students' attitudes.
- The long-term contact between the local and migrant communities may have already established positive attitudes among the students.
- The attitudes of teachers and others within the school towards migrants may have influenced the students' attitudes.

The attitudes of the experimental and control groups towards migrants did not differ significantly based on demographic characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic status, and parental educational status. Both groups gave similar definitions of migrants, including terms such as "Syrian" and "from another country," without using any negative language. After reading migration-themed children's books, the students in the experimental group showed increased empathy towards migrants and a greater sensitivity to their problems. They also had more positive views on language and cultural differences. Some students in both groups believed that migrants would eventually return to their previous lives, while others thought they had become settled in Türkiye. Both groups identified issues faced by migrants, including language differences, war, exclusion, homelessness, hunger, and unemployment.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This section includes recommendations for researchers and teachers. Researchers could conduct similar studies with students at different grade levels and compare the results.
2. The study could be repeated over a longer period of time and with different children's books.
3. When selecting the sample group, it might be helpful to prioritize regions with less exposure to migrants.
4. Teacher attitudes can have a significant impact on students' attitudes towards migrants. Future studies should consider evaluating the effect of teacher attitudes on student attitudes within the same class.
5. This study could be replicated in regions with more negative attitudes towards migrants, using migration-themed children's books.
6. Teachers can use migration-themed children's books, such as those used in this study or others, to help students develop a deeper understanding and more positive attitudes towards migration in Türkiye.

7. Non-governmental organizations working on migration issues can also use these types of books in their activities.

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Selim Tiryakiol and Gülşah Maraş planned and modeled the study. Maraş conducted tests and interviews with students as well as performing data analysis. Tiryakiol and Maraş interpreted the results and wrote the discussion, conclusion and recommendations in collaboration. This study is a product of MA thesis conducted by Gülşah Maraş under the supervision of Dr. Selim Tiryakiol at Graduate School of Social Sciences at İstanbul Medeniyet University.

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