

## A pinch of spice: Investigating the social integration processes of immigrant women through creative drama

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the processes of change, transformation, and social integration among Syrian refugee women residing in Türkiye. This research was conducted through four creative drama workshops under the theme "A Pinch of Spice." Various spices were employed as metaphors in the participants' interactions throughout the workshops. Fourteen Syrian refugee women residing in Türkiye participated in the workshops. Participants addressed cultural diversity, richness, and personal experiences of change and transformation through the metaphorical use of various spices during the workshops. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants. The data were analyzed through content analysis, from which themes were identified. The findings revealed that through creative drama workshops, participants enhanced their emotional expression, advanced their identity exploration, and engaged more effectively in social integration processes. When examining the effects of creative drama workshops on participants, it was observed that these activities enhanced the emotional expression abilities of Syrian refugee women and played a significant role in their identity quests. The use of spice metaphors facilitated and deepened the participants' expression of their lived experiences. The interactions during the workshops helped participants establish deeper connections with one another and their inner worlds. Further studies are recommended to examine the long-term impacts of creative drama activities on social integration processes in more detail. Conducting more comprehensive studies involving participants from different cultural groups would provide better insight into how the effects of these activities vary among different groups.

### KEYWORDS

Migration, food metaphor, identity transformation, creative drama, social integration.

## Introduction

Global dynamics constantly subject countries and populations to ongoing transformations. These changes encompass human-induced factors like global warming and air pollution physical alterations stemming from natural events, such as floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Alongside physical changes, countries undergo transformations in economic, educational, commercial, and cultural realms, influenced by social factors. Migration stands out as one of the drivers behind such transformations.

Migration, increasingly prominent with globalization, has shifted from primarily environmental causes, such as famine and climate conditions to encompass more economic, political, religious, cultural, and educational motives in the latter half of the 20th century (Eryılmaz Herdem, 2019, p. 39). Today, individuals are compelled to migrate due to factors, such as war, political instability, torture, ethnic and religious conflicts, ecological crises, and economic downturns.

Migration, one of the fundamental elements of social transformation, brings forth both challenges and opportunities for migrants in new environments. Such challenges often manifest in economic, social, cultural, political, and other domains (Özyakışır, 2013, p. 117). Economically,

migrants may encounter various hardships, including labor exploitation, wage withholding, long working hours, lack of citizen rights, violation of labor rights, occupational accidents, and easy termination of employment (Anderson, 2019, p. 6).

From a social and cultural perspective, migrants may face issues like alienation, exclusion, labeling, deportation threats, struggles in adapting to cultural differences, racism, and xenophobia (Sayan, 2018, p. 174). Politically, the political stance of the host country, lack of inter-agency coordination, insufficient focus on multicultural policies, and inadequate resource allocation pose challenges that may exacerbate migrants' future prospects (Yılmaz & Günay, 2022, p. 11).

Gender inequalities can also be examined within the framework of the negative situations that immigrants are exposed to. Gender inequalities are prevalent in Middle Eastern societies, more so among residents than immigrants. Despite positive developments due to evolving societal structures and cultural perceptions, gender-based inequalities persist. Women still face disadvantages in education, access to knowledge and working conditions. Many women worldwide have been forced to undergo migration either individually or with family members to escape health issues, violence, work, marriage, or societal pressures (Küçük, 2022, p. 32). Recent studies estimate that globally, 70% of forcibly displaced individuals are women (Karadağ Çaman & Bahar-Özvarış, 2010, p. 8). Migration disproportionately affects women due to their traditional societal roles and statuses, placing them in more disadvantaged positions than men.

Amid these gender-specific challenges, large-scale migration movements further hinder the integration process for displaced individuals, especially refugee women. Since 2011, the Syrian civil war has forcibly displaced approximately 5.6 million individuals, most of whom have sought refuge in neighboring countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Türkiye (UNHCR, 2020). This mass displacement has made the Syrian refugee crisis one of the most devastating humanitarian crises of our time, leading to significant demographic shifts in host countries.

Türkiye, confronted with the repercussions of the Syrian refugee crisis, has accepted millions of Syrian refugees over the past decade. This wave of migration, particularly for refugee women, requires a delicate balance between adapting to a new society and preserving personal and cultural identities. This process also mandates the adaptation of local communities to the new demographic structure, posing multifaceted challenges, such as social integration and identity changes (Altıntaş, 2018, p. 483; Gencer, 2017, p. 17).

The focus of this research is on the social integration processes and identity changes of Syrian refugee women in Türkiye. The study examines the impact of creative drama methodology on these processes, considering it an effective tool for enhancing participants' social awareness, communication skills, and self-esteem. Creative drama enables women to address events and experiences in their daily lives more consciously and effectively.

Many studies have been conducted in creative drama in recent years, especially emphasizing activities, such as spontaneous improvisation, role-playing, and storytelling. Gemalman (2022) examines the personal reflections of the five senses in our minds and their effects on artistic expression in his work. Art education allows us to express emotions and imagination freely and enriches them. The article examines the importance of art and drama education in image axis. Altan (2023) also showed in his study that role-playing group counseling significantly reduced parenting stress. In addition, it was determined that mothers' self-perception also affected parenting stress. In the control group, no significant change in parenting stress was observed. Unlike traditional theater studies, creative drama deviates from rigid scripts, focusing on individual growth and learning processes. In this process, personal development is not only encouraged but also celebrated. Creative drama is considered a significant tool for increasing individuals' social awareness, strengthening communication abilities, and boosting self-confidence.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the social integration processes and identity transformations of Syrian refugee women residing in Türkiye., This study aims to shed light on these aspects in depth by utilizing the creative drama method. Furthermore, this research seeks to create opportunities for profound reflections on gender roles and personal identities among the participants.

This study holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a critical gap in the literature by focusing specifically on Syrian refugee women and their experiences of social integration and identity transformation. While there have been studies on migration and its impact, there is a paucity of research dedicated to understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by refugee women, particularly within the context of creative drama. Secondly, this research contributes to the field of creative drama by demonstrating its effectiveness as a tool for fostering social integration and facilitating identity exploration. By conducting workshops and analyzing the outcomes, this study aims to provide empirical evidence of the positive impact of creative drama on participants' social awareness, communication skills, and self-esteem. Moreover, this research has practical implications for policymakers, practitioners, and organizations working with refugee populations. By highlighting the potential of creative drama in addressing the psychosocial needs of refugee women, this study advocates for the integration of creative and arts-based approaches into existing support programs and interventions. Lastly, this research has broader implications for understanding and addressing the complex social dynamics of migration and displacement. By delving into the experiences of Syrian refugee women, this study sets out to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intersecting factors that shape their social integration and identity formation processes. This knowledge can inform more effective and culturally sensitive interventions to support refugee populations worldwide.

In summary, this research aims to advance knowledge in migration studies, gender studies, and creative arts therapies by examining the social integration processes and identity transformations of Syrian refugee women through the lens of creative drama. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to theoretical understandings and practical interventions to support the psychosocial well-being and empowerment of refugee women in host communities.

## **Method**

### **Research design**

This research adopts a qualitative research approach, specifically integrating participatory action research and creative drama techniques to in-depth explore the social integration experiences of immigrant women. Qualitative research methods are well-suited for examining complex phenomena within their natural contexts, providing a nuanced understanding of the subjects' experiences, perceptions, and the societal structures they navigate (Creswell, 2007, p. 154; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 25). Before starting the data collection phase, ethical approval session number 2019-30813-140 was obtained from the Istanbul Bilgi University Ethics Committee.

#### **Integrative Approach for Enhanced Expression and Real-world Solutions**

The innovative integration of creative drama into action research in this study serves as a potent methodological approach. This integration facilitates the comprehensive and effective expression of participants' experiences, emotions, and thoughts and aligns with the core aims of action research, which focus on addressing real-world problems and enhancing practical outcomes (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013, p. 114).

## Preliminary and data collection phases

This research commenced with an informative session for potential participants, detailing the study's objectives, processes, and the ethical considerations relevant to their participation. Following this, data were primarily collected through a series of home visits utilizing a "Semi-structured Interview Form." This method provided a flexible framework allowing participants to freely express their thoughts and experiences, thereby enriching the data quality (McNeely Cobham & Patton, 2015, p. 32).

## Creative drama workshops: core interactive component

The study's centerpiece consisted of four creative drama workshops, each extending over six hours, making up 24 hours of intensive participant engagement. These workshops were designed to actively involve participants in expressing and reflecting on their cultural interactions and social integration processes. The themes of the workshops were strategically selected based on preliminary discussions held during a cooking and dining event, which helped shape the workshop content to be engaging and relevant to the participants' experiences (Saldaña, 2013, p. 241).

### Thematic Workshops Designed for Cultural Expression and Integration

1. Workshop 1: "The Story of Spices - Intercultural Bridges" – This session utilized spices as metaphors to discuss cultural heritage and identity, allowing participants to share their cultural backgrounds creatively.
2. Workshop 2: "New Flavors - New Beginnings" – Focused on the experiences of transitioning to a new country, paralleled with trying new flavors, this workshop highlighted the contributions of immigrants to their new communities.
3. Workshop 3: "Empathy and Communication - The Harmony of Spices" – Aimed at fostering empathy and effective communication, this workshop encouraged participants to explore and understand each other's experiences through the metaphor of blending spices.
4. Workshop 4: "Shared Meal - Creating Our Common Future" – This final session emphasized the importance of collaboration and community building, where participants engaged in cooking and sharing a meal, symbolizing communal integration and coexistence (Boal, 2006, p. 72).

## Study group

This research was conducted in 2022 with 14 women living in the Şişli and Okmeydanı districts of Istanbul. The participants were all Syrian Kurdish women who voluntarily participated in the study, specifically chosen because they worked in kitchens. The ages of the participating women ranged from 21 to 50. The workshops, attended by all 14 women, consisted of four sessions, each lasting six hours. The educational levels of the participant women included three primary school graduates, four high school graduates, and seven university graduates.

## Data collection tools

The data collection methods for this research adopted an integrated approach of participatory action research and creative drama methodology. The researcher used multidimensional qualitative data collection methods to deeply examine the social and cultural interactions of the participants and understand the impact of these interactions on their individual identities. To this end, semi-structured interviews, video and audio recordings, along with creative drama workshops, were used as primary data collection tools.

Data collection utilized a multifaceted approach, including unstructured interviews, and the creative output from drama workshops, which were recorded for detailed analysis. The data analysis was conducted through thematic content analysis, focusing on identifying patterns that

illustrate how immigrant women navigate their integration into new social contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85).

This methodological framework, combining a comprehensive qualitative approach with creative elements, seeks to yield profound insights into the mechanisms of social integration and cultural adaptation among immigrant women, thereby contributing significantly to social science and migration scholarship.

### **Data analysis**

In this study, data obtained from participants were analyzed using discourse analysis. The main purpose of discourse analysis is to examine what the statements contain in social, cultural and political contexts and the effects of this content on social relations, power dynamics and meaning-making processes, and to highlight the depth and nuance of the social phenomena under study. Initially, individual interview recordings conducted with the participants were transcribed into MS Word documents to prepare for detailed analysis.

### **Findings**

The results derived from content analysis provide a deep dive into the participants' verbal expressions, personal experiences, and social interactions. This process has been instrumental in shedding light on the intricacies of cultural interactions and the complexities of social integration. Here, we explore how participants use metaphors related to spices and cooking to articulate their experiences, highlighting the nuances of social adaptation and identity transformation within their narratives.

#### **Workshop 1: "The Story of Spices - Intercultural Bridges"**

The metaphor of spices is an effective way to demonstrate the relationship between concepts like variety, interculturality, and multiculturalism. Cultural diversity enriches, deepens, and broadens society, much as diverse spices give flavor to dishes. Each culture provides its own values, traditions, and lifestyle to society, much as each spice adds a distinct flavor to a meal. Interculturality can be defined as the harmonious combination of these spices, or the interplay of diverse cultures and their reciprocal learning processes that enrich one another. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, is an atmosphere in which several spices can coexist in the same dish, each maintaining its own distinct traits while becoming a whole. In this sense, the spice metaphor might be seen as a phenomenon that promotes cultural diversity, fosters intercultural conversation, and enhances the taste and richness of multicultural societies.

Based on this perspective, the first workshop, "The Story of Spices - Intercultural Bridges," utilized this metaphor to encourage participants to explore their cultural heritage and identities. Participants engaged in meaningful conversations about migration, adaptation, and cultural contributions in their new communities by discussing the significance of various spices in their own traditions.

In this workshop, participants identified with specific spices that they felt represented their personal experiences and approaches to integrating into a new society. The use of spice metaphors helped articulate their feelings of alienation, adaptation, and eventual acceptance. Through this creative process, participants were able to express their challenges and achievements in an engaging and symbolic manner, facilitating deeper reflection on their journeys of cultural integration.

**Participant Responses and Analysis:** These responses highlight how participants use spice metaphors to express their individual journeys of cultural adaptation and identity negotiation in a new country. Metaphorical language enriches the understanding of their experiences by associating the sensory and familiar elements of spices with complex emotional and social processes.

P1 on Mint: "I resonate with mint, which symbolizes freshness and vitality. Initially, I felt alienated in the new country, but gradually, by communicating with people and cooking dishes from Syrian cuisine, I integrated into the new society, maintaining my freshness and culture, much like mint."

Explanation: Mint's freshness symbolizes P1's resilience and ability to maintain her cultural identity while adapting to new social environments.

P5 on Cumin: "I identify with cumin, known for its strong and distinct flavor. In the new society, my differences are often pronounced, but they define my uniqueness. Like cumin, I preserve my authenticity while engaging with other cultures to adapt to this new life."

Explanation: Cumin represents strength and uniqueness, mirroring P5's journey of maintaining personal identity amidst cultural diversity.

P10 on Sumac: "I am akin to sumac; it's slightly sour yet sweet. The challenges and nostalgia I faced upon arrival were the sour parts of my life. Establishing connections here and learning the language helped me adapt to this new life. Like sumac, I've learned to balance life's sweet and sour aspects."

Explanation: Sumac, with its complex flavor profile, reflects P10's experiences of overcoming adversity while finding joy in new beginnings.

P12 on Saffron: "I compare myself to saffron—rare and valuable. My experiences in the new country have made me stronger and more self-assured. Like saffron, I make my presence felt subtly but significantly, amplifying the voices of Syrian women for integration."

Explanation: Saffron's rarity and value are metaphoric to P12's perceived uniqueness and impactful presence in her new community.

P14 on Thyme: "I feel like thyme, which is versatile but adds a distinct flavor everywhere. In the new country, I represent Syrian culture and strive to assimilate into the new cultural milieu. Like thyme, my adaptability and resilience help me bridge two cultures."

Explanation: Thyme's adaptability and ability to enhance various dishes symbolize P14's efforts to blend and contribute positively to both her native and new cultures.

## **Workshop 2: "New Flavors - New Beginnings"**

This workshop delved into the metaphor of discovering new spices as a way to describe the participants' initial experiences in the host country. It explores how new flavors symbolize the challenges and opportunities of beginning anew in a different cultural setting.

Participant Responses and Analysis: These nuanced interpretations of spices as metaphors for their experiences allow the participants to convey their adaptive strategies and emotional responses to cultural integration. By using familiar culinary elements, they articulate complex and often intangible aspects of their social integration processes, providing profound insights into the multifaceted experiences of immigrant women as they navigate their new social landscapes.

P2 on Coriander: "Coriander, often used across various cuisines, represents my journey of blending into different cultural groups. Its versatile nature mirrors my adaptive strategies in connecting with diverse people to foster integration."

Explanation: Coriander's widespread use across different cuisines mirrors P2's efforts to adapt and find common ground in diversity, enhancing her social integration.

P4 on Saffron: "Saffron is impactful in small amounts and symbolizes the significant yet subtle changes I am making in my new community. It highlights my contributions to making big differences through small, deliberate actions."

Explanation: The potent effect of a small amount of saffron reflects P4's approach to creating meaningful change in her new environment through incremental, yet impactful contributions.



P6 on Thyme: "Like thyme, which thrives under tough conditions, I see myself persevering through relocation challenges. Thyme's resilience represents my determination to grow and prosper, despite the adversities."

Explanation: Thyme's hardiness and ability to flourish in various conditions are analogous to P6's resilience and capability to adapt to the new challenges while maintaining her growth and identity.

P7 on Lavender: "Lavender symbolizes peace and calm, which is what I strive for in my transition to a new life. It represents my search for stability and tranquility in a once unfamiliar environment."

Explanation: Lavender's association with tranquility parallels P7's efforts to establish a peaceful and stable life, reflecting her desire for psychological and emotional well-being in her new surroundings.

### **Workshop 3: "Empathy and Communication - The Harmony of Spices"**

This workshop encouraged participants to explore and understand each other's experiences through the metaphor of blending spices.

Participant Responses and Analysis: These responses highlight how participants used spice metaphors to empathize and communicate in the new country. Metaphorical language also enriches understanding of the senses or experiences of others through spices.

P2 on Nutmeg: "Nutmeg, with its bold but nuanced flavor, helps me illustrate how I bring richness and complexity to my interactions, enhancing the multicultural tapestry of my new community."

Explanation: Nutmeg's complex flavor profile symbolizes P2's rich cultural background and her role in enriching the social fabric of her new environment through diverse interactions.

P4 on Turmeric: "Turmeric is known for its healing properties and vibrant color, much like how I aim to bring vibrancy and positive energy to my community, healing and uniting different cultures through shared experiences."

Explanation: Just as turmeric adds color and has medicinal benefits, P4 contributes positively to community health and cohesion by bridging cultural gaps with her vibrant personality and inclusive actions.

P6 on Cinnamon: "Cinnamon, a spice that warms and comforts, reflects my endeavor to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where cultural differences are not just accepted but celebrated."

Explanation: Cinnamon's warm and comforting nature is reflective of P6's efforts to create a nurturing community atmosphere that embraces and celebrates cultural diversity.

P1 on Ginger: "I see myself as ginger—strong and invigorating. Like ginger, I infuse energy and vitality into my new community, overcoming challenges and inspiring others."

Explanation: Ginger is known for its bold and energizing flavor, symbolizing P1's dynamic presence in her new community. Her comparison to ginger reflects her proactive and resilient nature, actively contributing to community life and inspiring others through her strength and vitality.

P9 on Cinnamon: "My strength resembles cinnamon—warm and comforting. In my new community, I bring warmth and comfort, which fosters new friendships."

Explanation: Cinnamon's warm and comforting qualities mirror P9's nurturing and welcoming approach to interactions in her new environment. This metaphor highlights her role in making others feel at ease, fostering a sense of belonging and friendship through her warm personality.

P10 on Saffron: "I feel like saffron, which is rare and impactful. Like saffron, even a small contribution can have a significant effect. I positively influence my new surroundings by sharing my culture and values."

Explanation: Saffron, a spice known for its rarity and significant flavor impact even in small quantities, is used by P10 to describe her unique and valuable contributions to her community. This comparison emphasizes the profound influence she believes her cultural expressions and interactions have on enriching her new social environment.

These statements demonstrate how participants view their roles within new cultural contexts, emphasizing their resilience, warmth, and unique contributions to societal integration. The use of spice metaphors not only personalizes their narratives but also bridges the understanding between their past and present environments.

#### **Workshop 4: "Shared Meals - Creating our Common Future"**

This workshop delved into the cultural significance of spices unique to various traditions and how these are integrated into new culinary contexts. Participants discussed how blending traditional spices from their native cultures with those from their new environment has facilitated cultural exchange and contributed to community bonding.

P8 on the Challenges and Joys of Mixing Spices: "Using spices from different cultures can be challenging, but I'm eager to experiment with new flavors. Even though I miss traditional tastes, I now find ingredients from both my homeland and new cultures, allowing me to recreate and retain my culinary heritage while embracing new influences."

Explanation: P8's experience reflects the broader integration process where individuals strive to maintain their cultural identities while adapting to new environments. The use of various spices symbolizes the blending of old and new, representing the ongoing negotiation of identity and belonging.

P9 on Culinary Sharing and Intercultural Understanding: "I love using spices from various cultures in my cooking. Sharing meals with neighbors and introducing them to Syrian cuisine has been a way to foster understanding and tolerance. These kitchen encounters promote intercultural dialogue and enhance communal harmony."

Explanation: For P9, cooking is a bridge to cultural exchange. By inviting neighbors into her kitchen and sharing her traditional dishes, she facilitates a deeper understanding of her background while appreciating the culinary practices of others, thus strengthening community ties.

P14 on Balancing Flavor and Identity: "Trying new spices is exciting but sometimes overwhelming. The strong flavors can make me feel as though I'm losing touch with my cultural identity. It's a balancing act between exploring new tastes and preserving my traditional culinary roots."

Explanation: P14 highlights the emotional complexity of integrating into a new society where culinary experimentation can sometimes lead to feelings of cultural displacement. This metaphor of spice intensity mirrors the struggles some immigrants face in balancing assimilation with cultural preservation.

P4 on New Spices and Building Relationships: "Introducing new spices into my meals not only enhances the flavors but also opens doors to new friendships. Cooking has become a way to welcome people into my life and explore new cultures together, which has led to the formation of strong bonds."

Explanation: P4 uses culinary experiences as a metaphor for social integration. By incorporating new spices, she not only enriches her dishes but also her social interactions, using shared meals as an opportunity to build and strengthen new relationships in her community.



The discussions in this workshop underscore the role of culinary practices in cultural integration and social bonding. Participants used the metaphor of spices to articulate their experiences with cultural diversity, adaptation, and identity negotiation. Sharing traditional and new culinary practices contributes to a richer, more integrated community. This workshop highlights how food serves as a powerful medium for cultural expression and community engagement, promoting a mutual understanding that transcends cultural differences.

## **Discussions**

In this study, where creative drama workshops were conducted through interviews with participants, empirical evidence was obtained regarding the positive effects on the social awareness, communication skills and self-esteem of the participants. In the first workshop of this study, "The Story of Spices - Intercultural Bridges," participants associated themselves with different spices to describe their social integration processes. Through these metaphors, the challenges and richness brought about by the merging of different cultures were emphasized. The identification with spices reflects the desire of individuals to express their identities with their cultural richness. Spices, such as mint, cumin, sumac, saffron and thyme stand out as elements representing cultural heritage. In this context, while immigrant women express their identities in new cultures, they are sociologically associated with concepts, such as cultural diversity and identity construction. However, in social adaptation processes, individual obstacles, such as language and economic difficulties complicate social adaptation and limit social mobility opportunities by deepening socio-economic inequalities. From a sociological perspective, the difficulties experienced by immigrants are addressed as structural problems beyond individual experiences. Language and economic status are processes intertwined with the dynamics of social relations and power. When evaluating the social adaptation of immigrant women, elements, such as social structures, policies and immigration status should also be considered. The spice metaphor symbolizes the different experiences and contributions of individuals and emphasizes that each one embarks on a unique journey. Participants defined themselves with spices, such as mint, cumin, sumac, saffron, and thyme, expressing their experiences in the new culture. Individual challenges that exacerbate the social integration processes of immigrant women are often highlighted in the literature as language and economic difficulties. Similarly, it is noted that the main problems affecting the social integration of individuals migrating to Türkiye are difficulties with language and economic issues (Buz, 2009, p. 43). Other challenges encountered by migrating women include inadequate living conditions and security problems. Yalçın (2015) has stated that migrant women working in Türkiye face security issues and that the places where they stay are not sufficiently safe, presenting various difficulties and barriers in their social integration processes.

In the second workshop, "New Flavors, New Beginnings," participants thought of their lives in the new country as creating a recipe and shared which ingredients were prominent in this recipe. By likening their experiences to personal characteristics and skills, they emphasized the importance of resilience and flexibility in adaptation process. In terms of social issues, difficulties encountered among immigrant women include the response of the community, challenges in integrating into the community, security concerns, and the exploitation of goodwill. This metaphor illustrates that individuals draw on their personal characteristics, skills and cultural capital to adapt to a new social order. While the ingredients of the recipe symbolize individual identities and experiences of individuals, it sociologically reflects identity reconstruction and cultural adaptation. In the integration process of immigrants, the effort to protect their own cultural identities also plays an important role; the durability in this process indicates individual differences in social adaptation. Immigrant women face integration difficulties and the reaction of society, and this situation is sociologically associated with social exclusion, discrimination and marginalization (Kaczmarczyk, Brunarska, Brzozowska & Kardaszewicz, 2020, p. 177). Security concerns and exploitation of goodwill foster feelings of

insecure about the host society, making social adaptation difficult. Throughout this process, societal reactions may lead individuals to oscillate between acceptance and exclusion, underscoring the critical role of social capital and support networks (Özçürümez, Hoxha & Icduygu, 2021, p. 599). Examining related literature, Barın (2015) indicated that social privilege and security issues are among the reasons that negatively affect the lives and social integration of migrant women in Türkiye. Furthermore, Granville-Chapman et al. (2004) stated that migrant women cannot sufficiently integrate into society because they fear the reaction of the community and lack confidence in receiving fair treatment.

The third workshop, "Empathy and Communication - The Harmony of Spices," focused on how participants represent their empathy and understanding in communication using different spices. Through spice metaphors, concepts of diversity, flexibility, resilience, and balance in communication were emphasized, describing the diversity and contrasts that emerge when interacting with different cultures. The sub-theme of social contributions that facilitate the social and economic lives of migrant women in the country or city they migrated to includes significant factors that improve their lives. Çağlayan (2006) emphasized the importance of mutual aid and solidarity as factors facilitating the integration of migrant women into society. Barın (2015) noted that the socio-economic conditions of Syrian migrant women vary, with some facing economic hardships while others live comfortably due to investments brought from their home countries. Moreover, the final workshop, "Common Meals - Creating Our Shared Future," involved participants discussing how they integrate spices from different cultures into their traditional dishes and how these culinary meetings play a role in fostering intercultural understanding and partnership. These kitchen meetings contribute to the formation of new friendships and the enhancement of mutual understanding. Research findings suggest that protective factors that help migrants cope with social integration processes and maintain psychological resilience focus on various areas. These factors include strong relational networks, language learning, education, social support, the use of social and legal rights, and a sense of belonging. Migrant women face social integration issues due to language and cultural differences in the countries they migrate to (Tuzcu & Ilgaz, 2015, p. 59). In this context, it is emphasized that providing solutions to economic, social, and health issues, as well as in language and education, is important to strengthen the social integration of migrant women. The literature states that services, such as language courses and socio-cultural orientation training play a significant role in the social integration processes of migrant women, as issues, such as illiteracy and low education levels can make them vulnerable and exposed to dangers in the host country (Kaya, 2017, p. 51).

## Conclusions and recommendations

This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by examining the social integration and identity transformation experiences of Syrian refugee women. It underscores the limited research on the challenges faced by these women within the context of creative drama. This research advocates integrating creative approaches into existing support programs to address. The studies conducted through workshops aim to empirically demonstrate the positive effects of creative drama in enhancing social awareness and self-esteem. This research advocates the integration of creative approaches into existing support programs to address the psychosocial needs of refugee women. The workshops conducted in this research were designed to explore the social integration processes of Syrian Kurdish women in their new countries and to facilitate their expression through spice metaphors. The findings reveal that participants expressed their cultural identities, inner strengths, and social interactions through various spices.

Overall, participants expressed their experiences, social integration processes, and identity changes in the new culture using spice metaphors. These findings highlight the importance of creative methods that can be used to understand and support the effects of cultural diversity

on social integration processes. In the light of the findings obtained in this study, the following suggestions can be presented:

- Providing language and socio-cultural orientation programs can enhance migrant women's integration by improving both linguistic competence and cultural adaptation. The training improves language skills and also help in understanding and adapting the local culture.
- Economic issues are significant factors affecting social integration processes. Providing economic support and increasing employment opportunities for migrant women can strengthen their social integration.
- Research emphasizes the support of strong relational networks for social integration. Establishing support groups, community activities, and solidarity platforms for migrant women can enhance social integration.
- Offering targeted psychosocial support can meet emotional and psychological needs, thereby facilitating social integration.
- Focus on activities that promote interaction and understanding to enhance intercultural interaction. Cultural meetings like common meal events can help people understand each other better.
- Increasing societal awareness against migrants can reduce prejudices and contribute to creating a more inclusive environment.
- Support mechanisms should be established to increase the legal awareness and security of migrant women.

Creative methods like workshops using spice metaphors can be effective tools for understanding and supporting social integration. It is recommended to continue such activities.

## Author contribution rates

1. Author: 100 % contributed to this study.

## Conflict of interest declaration

There is no financial conflict of interest with any institution, organization or person related to my article "A Pinch of Spice: Investigating the Social Adaptation Processes of Immigrant Women through Creative Drama."

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