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Editorial

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present the September issue of the *Turkish Journal of Diaspora Studies*. We are pleased to deliver an issue composed of articles based on original field research and archival investigations.

On this occasion we would like to share some good news: our journal has been accepted for indexing by *Index Copernicus International* (ICI), one of the respected international indexes in our field. Inclusion in another prestigious index further increases our responsibility. Moreover, the journal received a full score under the “publication quality and standards” criterion from the ICI. We are deeply grateful to our authors, reviewers, the editorial team, everyone who supported the layout and printing processes, and, of course, our readers.

The first article in this issue, by Dr. Mawahib K. M. Hassan (University of Khar-toum), addresses intimate partner violence experienced by Syrian women. According to UN Women, one in three women worldwide is subjected to violence, and violence against women increases in contexts of conflict and war. Dr. Hassan’s study is based on interviews with 20 Syrian women residing in Ankara. The research examines women’s accounts of intimate partner violence before the war, after internal displacement, and following their arrival in Turkey. The findings indicate that, after migration to Turkey, the prevalence of violence decreased, owing to increased awareness of violence and improved access to support mechanisms.

The second article, by Dr. Süreyya Sönmez Efe (University of Lincoln), scrutinizes refugee women’s access to maternal care services in Turkey. Based on fieldwork conducted at various healthcare institutions in Bursa, the study emphasizes women’s intersectional positions. Employing an ecological health model, the article examines data at the micro, meso and macro levels to assess the extent to which refugee women can make use of maternal care services within the Turkish health system.

The third article is Dr. Dirk Tröndle’s scholarly analysis of German construction workers and engineers who contributed to Ankara’s construction during its transition to capital status in 1924–1925. When discussing Turkey–Germany migration relations, the 1961 labor migration of Turkish workers to Germany is often the first example that comes to mind; as a result of that movement, more than 3.5 million people of Turkish origin now live in Germany. However, Turkish–German migration has earlier antecedents.

One of the first significant migration movements after the founding of the Republic of Turkey occurred between 1924 and 1925, when Ankara's municipal authorities hired construction workers and engineers from Germany to build the new capital. Drawing on archives of the German Foreign Office, this research makes an original contribution to an understudied but important topic.

The final article in this issue, by Süleyman Furkan Çobankara, analyzes the voting rights provided to citizens of Türkiye abroad. Covering the period 1950–2014 and examining four distinct historical phases of overseas voting rights, the study reviews Turkey's policies using primary legal sources. Employing the conceptualizations of "All Subjected", "All Affected" and "Stakeholder" principles, the article offers a comparative analysis, drawing on the global literature, of how the voting rights granted by Ankara to its citizens abroad can be conceptualized.

This issue also includes reviews of two important books on migration. Şevval Nur Acuner provides a comprehensive review of Ahmet İçduygu and Saime Özçürümez's volume *The Experience of Forced Migration and Social Integration: Concepts, Models and Practices, with an Emphasis on Turkey* (Istanbul Bilgi University Press). Hassina Azizi offers an in-depth review of Ensar Göçmez's *Continuous Migration, Urban Adaptation, Identity and Religion: The Zeytinburnu Afghan Uzbeks* (Çizgi Kitabevi).

We wish you an enjoyable read and look forward to sharing original research and good news in forthcoming issues.

Editörden

Değerli Okurlarımız,

Turkish Journal of Diaspora Studies dergisinin Eylül sayısı ile karşınızda olmaktan dolayı büyük mutluluk duyuyoruz. Özgün saha araştırmalarına ve arşiv incelemelerine dayanan makalelerden oluşan bir sayıyı sizlere ulaştırabilmenin heyecanını yaşıyoruz.

Bu vesileyle sizlerle güzel bir haberi paylaşmak istiyoruz. Dergimiz alanımızın saygın uluslararası indekslerinden *Index Copernicus International*'dan kabul aldı. Prestijli bir indeksin daha dergimizi tarayacak olması üzerimizdeki sorumluluğu daha da arttırıyor. Üstelik dergimiz “yayın kalitesi ve standartları” kriterinden tam puan almayı başardı. Tüm yazarlarımıza, hakemlerimize, dergi editoryal ekibimize, dizgi ve matbaa süreçlerinde destek veren herkese ve de elbette tüm okurlarımıza sonsuz müteşekkirimiz.

Bu sayımızın ilk makalesi Hartum Üniversitesi'nden Dr. Mawahib K. M. Hassan tarafından kaleme alınan Suriyeli kadınların maruz kaldığı yakın partner şiddetini ele almaktadır. Birleşmiş Milletler Kadın Birimi'nin verilerine göre dünyada her üç kadından biri şiddete maruz kalmaktadır. Üstelik çatışma ve savaş yaşanan ülkelerde kadınların maruz kaldığı şiddet daha da artmaktadır. Dr. Hassan'ın çalışması, Ankara'da yaşayan 20 Suriyeli kadınla yapılan mülakatlara dayanmaktadır. Araştırmada Suriyeli kadınlarla, savaştan önce, savaş başladıktan sonra ülke içinde yer değiştirdiklerinde ve Türkiye'ye geldikten sonra maruz kaldıkları yakın partner şiddetiyle ilgili mülakatlar yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları, Türkiye'ye göçün ardından Suriyeli kadınların şiddete karşı farkındalıklarının artması ve daha iyi destek mekanizmalarına sahip olmaları nedeniyle karşı karşıya kaldıkları şiddetin azaldığını göstermektedir.

İkinci makale ise Lincoln Üniversitesi'nden Dr. Süreyya Sönmez Efe'nin Türkiye'deki mülteci kadınların anne bakım hizmetlerine erişimini mercek altına almaktadır. Dr. Sönmez Efe'nin Bursa'daki farklı sağlık kurumlarındaki saha araştırmasına dayanan çalışma, kadınların kişisel konumlarını vurgulamaktadır. Ekolojik sağlık modeli çerçevesini kullanan makale; mikro, mezo ve makro düzeylerdeki verileri incelemekte ve mülteci kadınların Türk sağlık sistemindeki anne bakım hizmetlerinden ne düzeyde yararlanabildiklerini irdelemektedir.

Üçüncü makale, Dr. Dirk Tröndle'in 1924-1925 yıllarında Ankara'nın başkent olma sürecinde şehrin inşasına katkı sağlayan Alman inşaat işçileri ve mühendislerle ilgili akademik çalışmasıdır. Türkiye-Almanya göç ilişkileri denince, şüphesiz ilk akla gelen, 1961'de başlayan Türk işçilerin Almanya'ya göç etmesi sürecidir. Bu sürecin doğal sonucu

olarak bugün 3,5 milyondan fazla Türk kökenli birey, Almanya'da yaşamaktadır. Oysa Türk-Alman göç süreci çok daha eskilere dayanmaktadır. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kurulduktan sonraki ilk önemli göç hareketlerinden biri 1924-1925 arasında gerçekleşmiştir. Bu dönemde Ankara şehir yönetimi, yeni başkentin inşası için Almanya'dan inşaat işçilerini ve mühendislerini işe almıştır. Alman Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nın arşivlerine dayanan bu araştırma, az çalışılan ama önemli bir konuya orijinal katkılar sağlamaktadır.

Bu sayımızın son makalesi Süleyman Furkan Çobankara'nın Türkiye'nin yurtdışında ki vatandaşlarına verdiği oy verme hakkını analiz etmektedir. 1950'den 2014'e kadar olan süreçte dört farklı tarihsel dönemde yurtdışı oy hakkını analiz eden çalışma, birincil hukuki kaynaklardan faydalanarak Türkiye'nin politikalarını mercek altına almaktadır. Çalışma, "Tüm Tabi Olanlar", "Tüm Etkilenenler" ve "Paydaşlık" kavramsallaştırmalarını kullanarak, Ankara'nın yurtdışındaki vatandaşlarına tanıdığı hakkın nasıl bir kavramsal çerçevede analiz edilebileceğini, küresel literatürden de faydalanarak karşılaştırmalı olarak irdelemektedir.

Ayrıca bu sayımızda göçle ilgili iki önemli kitabın incelemesini bulabilirsiniz. Şevval Nur Acuner, Ahmet İçduygu ve Saime Özçürümez tarafından kaleme alınan İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi yayını *Zorunlu Göç Deneyimi ve Toplumsal Bütünleşme: Kavramlar, Modeller ve Uygulamalar ile Türkiye* başlıklı kitabın kapsamlı bir incelemesini kaleme almıştır. Hassina Azizi de Ensar Göçmez'in Çizgi Kitabevi tarafından basılan *Sürekli Göç, Kente Uyum, Kimlik ve Din. Zeytinburnu Afganistan Özbekleri* kitabını derinlemesine incelemiştir.

İyi okumalar dileriz. Yeni sayılarımızda özgün çalışmalar ve güzel haberlerle görüşmek üzere.



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Syrian Refugee Women's Experiences with Intimate Partner Violence during Pre-War, Displacement, and Asylum Period in Türkiye

Mawahib K. M. Hassan

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Syrian Refugee Women's Experiences with Intimate Partner Violence During Pre-War, Displacement, and Asylum Period in Türkiye*

Mawahib K. M. Hassan** 

Abstract

This study examines Syrian married refugee women's experiences with intimate partner violence (IPV) across three periods: the pre-war period in Syria, the period of war and internal displacement, and the asylum-seeking phase in Türkiye. It explores how changing social contexts and structural conditions shape IPV within forced migration settings. A qualitative design was used, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 Syrian women in Ankara. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's framework, and MAXQDA were used during data interpretation. The findings indicate that IPV was present across all phases of displacement, with the highest levels reported in pre-war Syria and displacement largely shaped by patriarchal norms and unequal gender dynamics. However, IPV declined in the asylum period, coinciding with shifts in women's awareness, access to support systems, and changes in social environments. The study underscores the lasting influence of gendered power relations and highlights the need for targeted and context-sensitive interventions.

Keywords : Intimate Partner Violence, Syrian Refugee Women, Displacement, Patriarchy, Asylum

Savaş Öncesi Dönemde, Yerinden Edilme Sürecinde ve Türkiye'ye Sığınma Dönemlerinde Suriyeli Sığınmacı Kadınların Yakın Partner Şiddeti Deneyimleri

Özet

Bu çalışma, Suriyeli mülteci kadınların yakın partner şiddeti deneyimlerini üç dönemde incelemektedir: savaş öncesi dönem, savaş ve ülke içi yerinden edilme dönemi ile Türkiye'deki sığınma dönemi. Makalede zorunlu göç bağlamında değişen toplumsal yapıların ve yapısal koşulların yakın partner şiddetini nasıl etkilediği araştırılmıştır. Nitel araştırma deseniyle yürütülen çalışmada, Ankara'da yaşayan 20 Suriyeli kadınla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Veriler, Braun ve Clarke'ın tematik analiz yöntemiyle ve MAXQDA desteğiyle analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, yakın partner şiddetinin her dönemde görüldüğünü, ancak savaş öncesi dönemde ve yerinden edilme sürecinde ataerkillik normları ve eşit olmayan toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileri nedeniyle daha yoğun yaşandığını ortaya koymuştur. Ancak, sığınma döneminde yakın partner şiddetinde azalma gözlemlenmiştir; bu durum, kadınların farkındalığındaki artış, destek sistemlerine erişim imkânlarının gelişmesi ve sosyal çevredeki değişimlerle ilişkilidir. Çalışma, toplumsal cinsiyet temelli güç ilişkilerinin etkisini ve bağlamsal müdahale gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Yakın Partner Şiddeti, Suriyeli Mülteci Kadınlar, Yerinden Edilme, Ataerkillik, Sığınma

* This study has been based on the author's Ph.D. dissertation: "Syrian Married Refugee Women Experience with Intimate Partner Violence and Their Strategies Dealing with It", Hacettepe University, Department of Social Work, Institute of Social Sciences, 2022.

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Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive global issue affecting women across diverse societies. It is defined as any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors (WHO, n.d.). IPV affects individuals across all socioeconomic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. However, women disproportionately bear the global burden of IPV (WHO, 2012, p. 1). This study focuses on violence within heterosexual marital relations, focusing on violence perpetrated by husbands against their wives as a form of gender-based violence.

IPV functions as a tool of social control, reinforced by systems of power and oppression related to gender (Bograd, 1999). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 35% of women worldwide experience physical or sexual IPV in their lifetime, and 30% of partnered women report abuse from their intimate partners (WHO, 2018). Disturbingly, 38% of all female homicides are perpetrated by male partners, highlighting the lethal consequences of unchecked IPV (WHO, 2005). Although IPV is a global concern, its prevalence varies significantly by region, with the Middle East exhibiting notably high rates (Al-Modallal, 2015). WHO further reports that the Eastern Mediterranean region bears the highest regional burden, with 37% of women having experienced physical and/or sexual IPV at some point in their lives (WHO, 2013, p. 27).

IPV is a widespread and persistent problem in Syria, with high rates documented across the country. A national survey conducted in 2010 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the General Family Affairs Commission, involving 5000 women over the age of 18 from diverse regions, reported that 25% of participants had encountered psychological, physical, and sexual violence within the family context. Physical abuse was especially prominent, with one in every three women reporting exposure to such violence (Zaman Al Wasal, 2010). Reports from UNFPA and local organizations continue to highlight the widespread occurrence of IPV in Syria. Multiple factors contribute, including family laws and the patriarchal structure of society. The Personal Status Law also reinforces male authority over women and confines women's roles largely to domestic duties. As Mousa (2018) notes, Syrian laws are rooted in the principle that "the man is the head of the family," entrenching patriarchal norms (Mousa, 2018, p. 1). Legal provisions designate men as family guardians (Article 21/1) and require women to obtain their guardian's consent for marriage (Article 21/2). Other articles prohibit women from working outside the home without their husband's permission (Article 73/6; Syria News, 2019). Moreover, Syrian criminal law does not explicitly criminalize violence against women within marriage, and marital rape is neither defined nor prosecuted, with rape recognized only outside of marriage (Mousa, 2016).

In addition to legal frameworks, cultural values and social expectations in Syria reinforce patriarchal authority and contribute to the normalization of IPV. Male dominance is embedded in the fabric of Syrian society and is normalized and reinforced through cultural and social norms (*Syrians for Truth and Justice*, 2021). Multiple societal dynamics support and sustain this violence, rendering it an accepted norm. Cultural values that portray women as inherently subordinate or dependent on men for protection further embed this issue. Compounding the problem is the widespread societal minimization of IPV as a serious concern. Many women conceal abuse, often perceiving it as a private family issue unfit for public discussion. Additionally, some women rationalize their partners' violent behavior as a reaction to economic hardship. Low educational attainment and limited awareness of legal rights further increase women's susceptibility to abuse. Social stigma and fears of blame, retaliation, divorce, or loss of child custody further silence women and prevent them from seeking help (*Al-Shdayfat & Hatamleh*, 2017).

The outbreak of war in 2011 further exacerbated IPV; as displacement, economic collapse, and the disintegration of social support systems intensified women's vulnerability (*Freedman*, 2016). These contextual shifts highlight the importance of exploring how Syrian refugee women experienced IPV during three periods: the pre-war period, the period of war and displacement, and the asylum-seeking phase¹ in Türkiye. These periods were chosen to understand how the structural framework of patriarchal societies contributes to women's exposure to violence, and to explore the negative consequences of internal conflicts, the collapse of social systems, widespread violence, and cross-border displacement in search of safety on incidents of IPV. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the evolving nature of IPV in these distinct contexts and to understand how patriarchal norms have shaped women's vulnerability across different stages of crisis and displacement.

The primary research questions guiding this study are as follows: What forms of IPV do Syrian refugee women experience? In what ways does the patriarchal structure of society contribute to their vulnerability? And how have the manifestations of violence changed during the war and the asylum period in Türkiye?

While previous studies have examined IPV among Syrian refugee² women in war

¹ The asylum-seeking phase in Türkiye refers to the time during which individuals fleeing conflict, violence, or persecution can apply for asylum. This includes Syrians under temporary protection as well as people from other nationalities seeking international protection. Although Türkiye maintains a geographical limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it provides protection and asylum procedures for non-European refugees, often with the goal of facilitating resettlement in third countries (*UNHCR*, n.d.).

² In Türkiye, Syrian migrants are not granted formal refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention due to the country's geographical limitation but are instead protected under the Temporary Protection Regulation of 2014. This legal framework, established through the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (No: 6458), ensures access to basic rights and services while safeguarding against forced return. Although Syrian refugees do not hold formal refugee status under Turkish law, this study uses the term "refugee" to refer to Syrians in Türkiye, based on their social and living conditions.

zones, few have employed a longitudinal perspective that captures women's experiences before, during, and after displacement. Using a feminist theoretical lens, this study offers new empirical insights into how patriarchal structures and gendered power imbalances shape women's vulnerability to IPV across these critical periods.

Theoretical Background

To explain Syrian refugee women's experiences of IPV, the study draws on feminist theory, which argues that the root cause of violence against women lies in unequal power relations that privilege men over women. These power imbalances extend to marital relationships, where men are often granted authority, and women are expected to be subordinate. As Walker (1979) argues, IPV is a natural consequence of the systemic oppression of women by men. Such unequal gender relations are deeply embedded in the patriarchal societal structures, where men hold greater authority and social privilege while women are relegated to secondary roles. In such systems, men are often seen as the heads of family and are given control and decision-making power. This patriarchal dominance is reinforced through socialization, customs, and social norms, all of which play a significant role in perpetuating IPV (Walby, 1990, as cited in Haj-Yahia, 2005, p. 5).

Patriarchal societies perpetuate ideologies of male dominance that often normalize, tolerate, or even justify violence against women. Within these systems, a woman's social status is typically defined by her domestic roles; which are largely confined to housework, childcare, and showing obedience and respect toward her husband. When a man perceives that his wife has failed to fulfill these expectations or has disobeyed him, he may respond with IPV (Haj-Yahia, 1998).

Empirical studies have shown that women themselves sometimes internalize these norms, accepting or even justifying acts of violence committed against them. For example, the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey, conducted by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (2019), included 7,346 women aged 15-49 from across Türkiye, including 1,256 Syrian refugee women. The study found that 7% of Syrian women surveyed believed physical violence was justified in situations such as disobedience to the husband, neglect of children or housework, arguing with the husband, leaving the house without permission, questioning him about other women, or refusing sexual relations.

Similarly, a World Health Organization study (2005) involving 2,400 women across 10 countries found that 68% of respondents believed physical violence by a husband was justified under circumstances such as neglecting housework, refusing sex, disobedience, or infidelity. In Zimbabwe, a national survey of women aged 15-59 revealed that 53% of participants justified wife-beating in cases such as neglecting children, arguing with the husband, going out without permission, or refusing sex (Hindin, 2003). In some cultural and religious contexts, such acts of violence are even framed as disciplinary measures

or safeguards of family honor, stemming from the deeply entrenched belief that a wife is the property of her husband and therefore subject to his control (WHO, 2002, p. 95).

In sum, this theoretical perspective offers a useful lens for understanding the gendered power dynamics that shape Syrian refugee women's experiences of IPV. It will also guide the analysis of the interview data in this study. The next section will review previous research on IPV.

Literature Review

Several studies have examined IPV in refugee communities. Notably, El-Moslemany et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review using a critical appraisal methodology to examine previous research on IPV among asylum seekers and refugees. Their analysis of 23 studies revealed that IPV is influenced by a complex interplay of factors. The review found that higher educational attainment among both perpetrators and survivors was associated with lower rates of IPV. Additionally, factors such as relationship dynamics, legal status, and age were identified as significant correlates of IPV within refugee populations (El-Moslemany et al, 2020).

Meanwhile, Cankurtaran and Albayrak (2019) conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 26 Syrian refugee women in Ankara to explore their life experiences before and after the war, and during and after their migration. The study revealed that these women faced multiple forms of violence, not only from their husbands but also from their mothers-in-law. Many women lived in constant fear of their husbands marrying a second wife or divorcing them, which often compelled them to tolerate abuse to remain with their children. The study also documented cases of reproductive coercion, including pressure to bear more children and restrictions on contraceptive use. Cultural norms emphasizing family privacy, combined with language barriers, further discouraged women from seeking help, contributing to the persistence of IPV (Cankurtaran & Albayrak, 2019).

Similarly, Al-Natour et al. (2019) conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 Syrian refugee women living in refugee displacement facilities in Jordan to explore their lived experiences with marital violence during the Syrian war and displacement. Their findings identified four main themes: women experienced severe losses and insecurity, endured shame and humiliation from abuse, justified remaining in abusive marriages due to social and familial factors, and developed coping mechanisms such as religious practices, avoidance, and, in some cases, self-harm or aggression toward their children (Al-Natour et al., 2019).

Usta et al. (2016) also examined the experiences of 29 displaced Syrian women living in Lebanon to explore IPV in refugee settings. The study revealed that women faced IPV, harassment, and community violence, often worsened by poor living conditions and

stress. Many women adopted harmful coping strategies, such as justifying IPV or redirecting their frustration toward their children. The authors highlighted the need for culturally sensitive support programs for refugee women.

Finally, Al-Modallal et al. (2015) examined IPV among refugee women residing in Palestinian camps in Jordan, revealing that 78% of the participants experienced at least one form of violence. Among the different types, controlling behavior was the most common, affecting 73.7% of women, followed by economic violence (53%), and emotional violence (50.3%). Physical violence was reported by 22.7% of the participants, while 16.7% disclosed experiencing sexual violence. The relatively lower incidence of reported sexual violence may be attributed to cultural norms that prioritize family privacy and societal pressures that discourage women from speaking out about such experiences (Al-Modallal et al., 2015).

Through the review of literature, it becomes evident that factors such as societal structures, cultural norms, lack of education, and armed conflicts along with social collapse intersect to contribute to the widespread prevalence of IPV. Women are particularly affected at the familial level, experiencing an increase in IPV, while refugee women face unique vulnerabilities, including reproductive coercion, economic dependency, and fear of social stigma, which often prevent them from seeking help or leaving abusive relationships.

Methodology

Study Design

The study investigates Syrian refugee women's experiences with IPV during three periods: the pre-war period, the period of war and displacement, and the period of asylum-seeking in Türkiye. To explore this in depth, it employs a qualitative research method supported by a feminist research approach for data collection. Applying feminist research principles, such as equalizing power between the researcher and participants during data collection, helps reduce hierarchical relationships, build trust, and facilitate the disclosure of participants' experiences, while also recognizing and reflecting on the emotional aspects of women's lives.

During the interviews the researcher employed empowering language to challenge participants' self-blame and reframe their understanding of IPV. Specifically, carefully chosen phrases such as "You are not the only one who has experienced this matter" and "I've heard of this before" were used to achieve two key objectives: 1) alleviating women's tendency to blame themselves for the violence they experienced and 2) reinforcing the notion that IPV stems not from individual failures but from broader patriarchal structures that systematically privilege men over women. This approach aligns with existing literature demonstrating that many women who are exposed to IPV internalize blame, leading

to self-stigmatization and reluctance to disclose abuse (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Gray et al., 2015; Mendis, 2009).

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, using a snowball sampling technique to recruit participants. Interviews were conducted with 20 Syrian refugee women between March and May 2021 in three neighborhoods in Ankara, Türkiye: Ulubey (Altındağ district), Baraj (Kuzey Ankara district), and İncirli (Keçiören district). Table 1 below presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: being Syrian refugee women, being married, and currently residing in Ankara. Interviews were held in participants' homes at times arranged in advance based on their availability. To ensure participants' safety and to uphold confidentiality, interviews were scheduled when husbands were not present, thereby reducing the risk of potential repercussions for participation.

Each interview lasted for approximately 40 to 120 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Arabic by the researcher who is a native Arabic speaker. This shared linguistic and cultural background helped establish a strong sense of trust and connection with participants, which were essential for encouraging disclosure when discussing sensitive topics such as IPV.

Table 1- Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Name	Age	Age at Marriage	Education Status	Women's Work Experience	City of Residence	Age of Husband
Participant1	41	14	Illiterate	None	Aleppo	52
Participant 2	50	14	Secondary school	None	Aleppo	62
Participant 3	30	14	Secondary school	None	Aleppo	45
Participant 4	25	18	Secondary school	None	Idlib	47
Participant 5	36	28	Primary school	None	Aleppo	51
Participant 6	32	17	Primary school	None	Aleppo	45
Participant 7	31	24	Secondary school	None	Aleppo	47
Participant 8	40	20	Primary school	Tailor	Aleppo	50
Participant 9	24	17	Primary school	None	Aleppo	33
Participant 10	33	22	Primary school	None	Aleppo	40
Participant 11	60	16	Illiterate	None	Aleppo	69
Participant 12	43	15	Primary school	None	Aleppo	53
Participant 13	22	16	Primary school	None	Aleppo	35
Participant 14	24	16	Primary school	Hairdresser	Aleppo	33
Participant 15	32	14	Primary school	None	Aleppo	42

Participant 15	33	13	Secondary school	None	Aleppo	47
Participant 16	57	17	Primary school	None	Aleppo	66
Participant 17	28	13	Primary school	None	Aleppo	32
Participant 18	31	13	Primary school	None	Aleppo	40
Participant 20	33	24	Ph.D.	Teacher	Aleppo	38

Most of the study's participants were originally from Aleppo, with one participant from Idlib. Their length of residence in Türkiye ranged from three to 10 years, and their ages varied between 22 and 60 years. A notable age difference was observed between the women and their spouses, ranging from four to 14 years.

In terms of educational background, most participants had completed only primary school, a few had attended secondary education, two were illiterate, and one completed PhD degree. These educational trajectories reflect prevailing cultural norms in Syria that promote early marriage and limit women's access to education. All participants reported that girls commonly leave school after completing the sixth grade, as early marriage is seen as a means of protecting family honor. Early marriage was prevalent among participants: seven participants married between the ages of 13 and 14, six between 15 and 17, and the remaining participants at age 18 or older. Under Syrian law, girls are legally permitted to marry from the age of 13. Employment among women was rare; only three had work experience. Cultural restrictions also constrained women's employment opportunities, confining them mostly to home-based activities such as tailoring and hairdressing, activities typically sanctioned by their husbands.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the researcher employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model of thematic analysis, which provides a structured yet flexible approach to identifying patterns within qualitative data. The six interconnected stages include: 1)familiarization with the data, 2)generating initial codes, 3)searching for themes, 4)reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6)producing the report.

To facilitate the coding process, the researcher used MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software that enabled the systematic organization, coding, and retrieval of data segments. The analysis process was iterative, with the researcher moving back and forth between the different phases. Each stage was revisited multiple times, as coding is a dynamic and evolving task that requires constant refinement. Codes were revised, deleted, or added as necessary to ensure that the emerging themes accurately reflected the data. This recursive process ultimately allowed the researcher to identify and define the study's central themes.

The Ethical Framework of the Study

The ethical framework of this study is grounded in institutional and qualitative feminist research guidelines to ensure participant safety, confidentiality, and empowerment. Before beginning data collection, the researcher obtained ethical approval (E-12908312-300-00001396874) from Hacettepe University's Committee of Scientific Research in January 2021. This required informed consent, participant safety, impartiality, and respect for human dignity.

Additionally, the researcher followed the World Health Organization's (2002) ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence, incorporating the five key ethical principles for qualitative social work research: integrating ethics throughout the research process, empowering vulnerable participants, ensuring informed consent, avoiding harm, and maintaining academic competence.

The researcher prioritized building trust, using pseudonyms to protect identities, and fostering participant empowerment by connecting participants to social services, supporting their personal and professional growth, and maintaining supportive relationships beyond data collection. This approach aligned with feminist research principles, emphasizing mutual respect, collaboration, and valuing participants' lived experiences.

Findings

Thematic analysis of the data revealed several key themes related to women's experiences with IPV (IPV) across different periods of their lives. These themes are:

1. ***Forms of IPV during the pre-war period:*** the dominant themes during this phase centered around prevailing customs and traditions, and how these cultural norms contributed to the normalization and perpetuation of violence against women.
2. ***Forms of IPV during the war, internal displacement, and asylum-seeking periods:*** the dominant themes during this phase centered around the social and economic upheaval caused by the war and its implications for women's experiences of IPV. The second theme is the changes that occurred in the forms of IPV after moving to Türkiye and the change in women's perceptions toward violence.

Forms of Intimate Partner Violence during the Pre-War period

During this period, the study found that Syrian social customs and traditions played a pivotal role in women's exposure to various forms of IPV, creating an environment conducive to the occurrence and normalization of violence, as previously discussed. Key customs contributing to this include early marriage, the emphasis on ensuring a bride's virginity commonly symbolized by the "white sheet tradition" and cohabitation with the

husband's extended family. These practices contributed to women's vulnerability to sexual, physical, economic, and psychological violence, as well as controlling behaviors.

For example, the practice of verifying a bride's virginity on her wedding night has had negative consequences for women, making them more vulnerable to sexual violence. Some participants experienced negative health effects, including bleeding, vaginismus, fainting, and severe vaginal injuries.

Each form of IPV involves different actions, most of which result from the social structure of a patriarchal system. The most common form of IPV reported was forced sexual intercourse. The mechanism of forcing a sexual relationship differs from one husband to another. While some use physical violence to compel their wives, others employ methods such as threatening to marry another woman, accusing their wives of having a sexual relationship with another man, or threatening to inform her family. Some also punish their wives economically by depriving them of household necessities, including food. For these reasons, women often feel forced to comply with their husbands' sexual demands to avoid the occurrence or escalation of IPV. Two of the participants reported that, throughout their marriage, they never engaged in consensual sexual intercourse, as they complied with their husbands' demands out of fear of violence. They explained that as follows:

"He forced me all the time, and whenever I refused, he would punish me the next day by depriving us of basic household necessities. Throughout my entire marriage, I never engaged in sexual intercourse by my own consent. I did so only out of fear—to avoid problems or to prevent him from suspecting that I was being unfaithful." (Participant 2, 52 years old, Aleppo).

"My husband continuously coerced me into sexual intercourse. I never desired intimacy with him; I complied only to avoid his anger. I was afraid of him. I resented him, his mother, and all his family. I had no sincere emotional connection with him. I never felt safe in his presence, nor did I truly perceive him as my husband." (Participant 18, 28 years old, Aleppo).

The experiences of participants reveal that sexual coercion was not merely an individual act of violence but a systemic mechanism enforcing male dominance, where refusal led to punishment whether through physical abuse, economic deprivation, or psychological intimidation. These patterns align with radical feminist theory, which argues that patriarchal societies treat women's bodies as male property, normalizing non-consensual sex within marriage.

Most participants reported experiencing physical violence, with some stating that the abuse was more severe while they were in Syria. This prevalence was attributed to societal norms that legitimized a husband's use of physical force as a means of controlling his family. In Syria's patriarchal social structure, men are positioned as authority figures, while women

are expected to manage childcare, perform household duties, and obey their husbands. These dynamics led many women to perceive such violence as a normal part of marriage.

Additionally, all participants reported that their husbands' families contributed to their exposure to IPV. Traditional practices of living with the husband's family often resulted in a lack of privacy and frequent interference, particularly with mothers-in-law, in the wife's personal affairs. Moreover, some women shared that their husbands would sometimes physically abuse them in front of their family to assert their masculinity and authority.

Participants are subjected to various forms of physical violence, including beating, pushing, punching, hair-pulling, slapping, and attacks with sharp objects such as a knife. Such abuses led to feelings of worthlessness and deep humiliation, severely damaging their sense of dignity and self-esteem. Even during pregnancy, some participants were subjected to physical violence. One participant explained that the frequent beatings she endured during pregnancy resulted in multiple miscarriages. As she described:

"I got married as a small child. Then I got pregnant when I was 15 and miscarried, and the second time, I got pregnant I was 17, but I also miscarried because my husband beat me all the time. Also, because my back was too weak to bear a child. My husband used to hit me a lot." (Participant 13, 31 Y, Aleppo).

In addition to physical violence and controlling behavior, the study found that participants were extensively exposed to psychological violence in Syria. This was due to the patriarchal culture that puts women in second place in the family and allows men to insult and humiliate them. One of the most common forms of psychological abuse reported was humiliation, which deeply undermines self-respect. Participants defined a range of abusive behaviors, including being insulted in front of others, subjected to screaming and destruction of objects, and enduring verbal attacks that reduce their value. Many recounted threats of marrying another person or divorce and harm to their relatives. Women also reported emotional neglect, such as not receiving affection or respect or being excluded from decision related to their children or domestic matters. These experiences consistently left women feeling inferior, lowering their self-esteem, and often involving humiliation in front of their children. One participant described this sense of powerlessness and devaluation in her marriage. "In our society, a woman inside the home feels that she has no value and that her life has no meaning. She is like a chair or any other lifeless object in the house. She has no say in any decisions; everything is controlled by her husband, and she is treated like his maid" (Participant 3, 30 years old, Aleppo).

Another form of psychological violence reported by participants was the constant pressure to bear more children, especially male children, which was often accompanied by threats of divorce or polygamy, which created ongoing fear and anxiety. One participant shared her experiences:

“When I first got married, I did not get pregnant for a long time. My husband’s family used to say that I couldn’t get pregnant, and my mother-in-law would say, ‘I wanted my son to marry again. We want a boy to support my son.’ I was always afraid that he would marry another woman. After we moved to Turkey, we went to the hospital and got treatment, and then I had two boys” (Participant 12, 43 years old, Aleppo).

Controlling behavior manifested in various ways, including physically confining wives to the home, limiting visits to their families, and forbidding them from leaving the house without male accompaniment. Some husbands also prevented their wives from pursuing education or accessing healthcare, particularly when services involved male professionals. Additionally, many participants reported that their husbands monitored or restricted their mobile phone use. Notably, some women interpreted these behaviors as expressions of love or jealousy, rather than recognizing them as controlling. These practices reflect deeply entrenched cultural and patriarchal norms shaping marital dynamics in Syria. Feminist theorists have long emphasized that when women are socialized to value obedience and dependence, coercion and control may be internalized and normalized. This complicity is not a reflection of women’s weakness but of how patriarchal power operates subtly through cultural norms and emotional attachments.

Controlling behavior often escalates into economic violence, manifesting as the deliberate deprivation of women’s access to financial resources. The study found financial deprivation and neglect of material needs the most prevalent forms of economic violence. These dynamics were especially pronounced in households where women lived with their husbands’ extended families, where financial resources and material provisions were collectively managed, further deepening women’s economic dependence.

Through the analysis of Syrian women’s experiences with IPV during the pre-war period, it becomes evident that IPV is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures, harmful social norms, and traditions that reinforce male authority and female subordination. The accounts of sexual coercion, physical abuse, psychological violence, controlling behavior, and economic deprivation reflect the broader systemic oppression that shape women’s lives in Syria. In the next section, the analysis will focus on how internal conflicts, the collapse of social systems, widespread violence, and cross-border displacement in search of safety have further shaped women’s experiences with IPV.

Forms of IPV during War, Internal Displacement, and Asylum-Seeking in Türkiye

Women and children are disproportionately affected during times of war and internal conflict (Holt, 2013). The absence of security and social protection leads to a surge in gender-based violence against women. This study argues that after the war began in 2011, the collapse of the economic and social infrastructure contributed to the persistence of

IPV. All participants were forced to flee their homes, which were destroyed by bombings, leaving them with no choice but to relocate to relatively safer areas within Syria that offered basic services despite being overcrowded with displaced populations.

The displacement process presented numerous challenges, resulting in significant negative impacts on participants, with IPV being one of many critical issues. Indeed, the study highlighted a rise in IPV incidents during displacement, particularly physical and psychological abuse, including beatings, shouting, and verbal abuse. Husbands often used IPV to express their frustration over deteriorating economic conditions, unemployment, the loss of property, and the harsh realities of living in displacement camps. The participants explained these harsh living conditions in the following accounts:

“There were a lot of explosions in Aleppo, even our house was bombed. We left Aleppo and went to Bab al-Salama camp. We stayed there for seven months but living in the camp is difficult. There were no bathrooms nearby. At that time, my husband became nervous all day. He yelled at me and the children. I became afraid to talk to him so that he might beat me or the children. I was silent all the time. I prayed to God a lot to save us from the camp life” (Participant 8, 40 years old, Aleppo).

“My husband and I started having problems when we moved to the camp and he lost his job. Our economic situation became extremely difficult. When a storm hit the camp, our tent collapsed, and the mud and rain flooded everything. My husband grew exhausted and frustrated with the situation and became increasingly cruel towards me. Life in the camp was unbearable, and he would often return filled with anger. Sometimes I confronted him, asking why he directed his anger at me. I would cry, and other times I stayed silent because I knew he was upset, and there was nothing I could do to change our circumstances” (Participant 9, 24 years old, Aleppo).

As the war escalated and spread to previously safe areas, most Syrians were forced to flee neighboring countries, including Türkiye, which became a primary host country for refugees due to its geographical proximity and its “open-door” policy between 2011 and 2014. In this period, participants reported that the incidence of IPV decreased, describing changes in how certain IPV acts were expressed, particularly in relation to controlling behaviors and economic restrictions. Moreover, women’s perceptions about violence began to shift during this period.

One of the most critical factors that contributed to a reduction in violence was living in a house separate from the husband’s extended family. All participants reported that after seeking asylum in Türkiye, they lived independently from their husband’s family. This reflects how physical and social environments are often shaped and reinforced by patriarchal control. Participants described experiencing a greater sense of freedom in these

separate living arrangements, noting that they were no longer under the constant supervision of their mothers-in-law or subject to interference in their married life. The participants reflected on their experiences of living separately from their husband's extended family as follows:

"When I was in Syria, my marriage was full of problems because of my mother-in-law. I was the first to come to Turkey, I lived in a house of my own, my life changed, I became free, and no one controlled me. I now feel very, very comfortable, because I live in a house for myself and there is no supervision from anyone" (Participant 1, 41 years old, Aleppo).

"After I came to Turkey and lived in a house for myself, I became stronger, and if I went back in time and came back to live with my mother-in-law, it is impossible to repeat with her the same life of injustice that I was living through, I would not be silent about the injustice. Because, after I came to Turkey, I knew that women have rights like their husbands, I was in the process of attending lectures at the center and I also saw how the Turkish men treat their wives with respect. My life in Turkey is much better than in Syria because I am alone and my husband's family is not with me. Even my husband changed the way he dealt with me after we came to Turkey. What happened the day he hit me when we were in Syria, he beat me because my mother-in-law wanted that. Sometimes when I remember the life I used to live, I feel surprised that I endured it. In Syria sometimes I regretted my marriage because I was young and did not know anything in life" (Participant 6, 32 years old, Aleppo).

Participants elaborated on how certain forms of IPV, particularly controlling behaviors and economic restrictions, were experienced differently after seeking asylum in Turkey. Many described noticeable improvements in their husbands' behavior. For instance, they recalled that in Syria, young women were not allowed to go to the market alone and had to be accompanied by a male relative or a mother-in-law. This reflects feminist arguments that highlight how restrictive gender norms and culturally enforced dependence on male guardians are embedded in patriarchal societies. However, after relocating to Turkey, this situation shifted, influenced by the norms of the host society. Several women expressed that they now feel a greater sense of freedom compared to their lives in Syria. One common example was that their husbands allowed them to visit neighbors or go shopping alone something that had not been permitted when we were in Syria. As Participant 5 mentioned, "My husband in the first days of our marriage had a lot of control over me, but after we moved to Turkey, the situation changed, and I felt more freedom" (Participant 5, 33 Y, Aleppo).

In addition to changes in controlling behaviors, participants also described shifts in economic violence. A study indicated that changes in gender roles after resettlement

contributed to a reduction in economic violence, as some women became responsible for managing household needs. Many participants explained that they were now able to go to the market alone to purchase necessities for themselves and their children. This shift was largely attributed to the working conditions faced by men in Türkiye specifically, jobs that were far from home and involved long hours. As a result, husbands were often unable to handle daily shopping responsibilities and began delegating these tasks to their wives. While this change offered women more mobility and decision-making power, some expressed feeling an additional burden, as they were expected to fulfill these new responsibilities alongside traditional household duties.

Although some participants reported a reduction in IPV, others stated that their experience of physical violence did not change significantly. These women often tolerated or justified the violence. As one participant explained:

“In Turkey, the difficult economic conditions affected my husband, the children, and me. When a man is financially frustrated, he has no place to release his anger other than his wife and children. Therefore, when he is angry, I take my children to my mother’s house, where we spend one or two hours and then come back. I try to avoid making the situation worse, so I don’t talk to him, and he doesn’t ask me for money or anything” (Participant 10, 33 years old, Aleppo).

This reflects what feminist theory argues: in patriarchal societies, ideologies of male dominance normalize, tolerate, or even justify violence against women. Such social structures shape women’s perceptions, leading them to accept violence as an inevitable part of their lives. Hindin (2003), WHO (2005), and Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (2019) have reported similar findings.

The most significant change in women’s experiences with IPV during their asylum in Türkiye was their shift in attitudes toward violence. While they previously viewed violence as normal and believed their husbands had the right to inflict it, this perception changed after seeking asylum in Türkiye. The impact of the programs provided to Syrian refugee women by government agencies and international organizations interested in issues of violence against women were intended to raise awareness about violence against women, educating them about their rights, and how to benefit from available support, be it through lectures presented by psychological and social support centers for refugee women and municipalities and women’s organizations. One participant mentioned:

“Before I understood life, I thought that it was normal for a man to hit his wife and control her and that a woman should be patient and satisfied with her husband and not tell anyone, so she can go to paradise. And because I also saw my father beating my mother, I was thinking about it as normal. But after I came to Turkey, my life was completely different. The reason for my awareness in Turkey is that I used to go to attend lectures on women’s rights and see how the Turkish men treat their wives

and that here in Turkey there is no difference between women and men, they are equal in everything. And my idea has changed a lot. I learned here in Turkey that a woman is not supposed to be silent about her husband's bad behavior. I began confronting my husband and rejecting his actions. For example, when he tried to hit me or prevent me from doing something, I started asking, 'Why are you raising your hand against me? Why do you prevent me from going outside?' That's what I mean I learned not to stay silent about my rights." (Participant 16, 33 Y, Aleppo).

The shift in participants' attitudes toward IPV during their asylum in Türkiye reflects a key concept in feminist theory, namely, consciousness-raising. Initially, many women perceived IPV as an accepted and expected part of marital life, aligning with what radical feminist theory describes as the internalization of patriarchal ideologies, wherein male dominance and female subordination are regarded as natural and justified (Walker, 1979; Haj-Yahia, 2005).

The analysis of women's experiences during the war and internal displacement reveals that IPV intensified due to heightened insecurity, harsh living conditions, and economic hardship. However, the transition to asylum in Türkiye brought noticeable changes in women's experiences, particularly in the reduction of controlling behaviors and economic restrictions. While physical and sexual violence largely persisted, many women reported a significant shift in their attitudes toward IPV and an increased awareness of their rights following resettlement in Türkiye.

Discussion

This study adopted a feminist theoretical framework to investigate Syrian refugee experiences with IPV across three periods: pre-war period, war and internal displacement period and seeking asylum period in Türkiye. These periods were chosen to understand how patriarchal structures contribute to women's exposure to violence. The study also aimed to explore the impact of internal conflicts, the collapse of social support systems, widespread violence, and cross-border displacement on the prevalence and nature of IPV.

The study found that, during the pre-war period, the patriarchal structure in Syria placed women in an inherently subordinate role, with men regarded as the heads of households and primary decision-makers in family affairs. Cultural norms and traditions routed in this patriarchal system, such as the emphasis on verifying the bride's virginity on the wedding night (commonly known as the 'white sheet tradition') and expectation for women to live with the husband's extended family, played a significant role in exposing women to IPV.

Many participants reported that a primary reason for their exposure to IPV in Syria was living with the husband's extended family. The interference of in-laws in their private lives often exacerbated tensions and contributed to incidents of abuse. In some cases, husbands verbally or physically assaulted their wives in front of family members as means of

asserting their masculinity. The patriarchal ideal of the man as the unquestioned leader of household reinforced this dynamic, encouraging displays of dominance to maintain a socially sanctioned image of male authority. Moreover, society did not perceive verbal or physical abuse against wives as violence but rather as part of the husband's role in disciplining both the wife and children. These findings illustrate how patriarchal norms justify and legitimize abusive behavior. They also align with Aljan's (2022) study, which revealed that actions women describe as violent are often dismissed by men as mere "arguments" or a "way of educating the wives," thereby morally legitimizing violence (Aljan, 2022, p. 9804).

The findings of this study regarding the pre-war period align with core principles of feminist theory, which argue that gender-based power imbalances rooted in patriarchal structures are fundamental to understanding violence against women, including IPV. Feminist theorists have long argued that patriarchy is not merely a set of individual attitudes but a systemic social order that privileges men and subordinates women across institutional, cultural, and interpersonal domains.

During the period of internal displacement and asylum, the collapse of Syria's economic and social systems following the onset of war in 2011 contributed to the persistence of IPV. Drawing on feminist intersectionality theory, this study reveals that IPV does not occur in isolation but emerges from the intersection of gender with broader structural factors, including displacement, asylum, and economic hardship. Previous studies have also documented an increase in IPV rates since the beginning of the war (Freedman, 2016), which is consistent with the current study's findings. Most participants were forcibly displaced to refugee camps near the Turkish border, where they faced numerous hardships, including overcrowding, limited access to basic services, poverty, and food insecurity. In these conditions, the inability of men to fulfill their traditional roles as providers contributed to heightened frustration and aggression, with women often bearing the consequences of this distress through IPV.

From a radical feminist perspective, these dynamics reflect how systemic gendered power imbalances are reproduced in displacement settings. In patriarchal societies, where men control most societal resources, displacement and the resulting loss of status may lead them to reassert dominance through violence against women, reinforcing male dominance and female subordination within both the private and public spheres.

Conclusion

This study employed a feminist theoretical framework to examine Syrian married refugee women's experiences with IPV across three periods. The findings align with the core tenets of feminist theory, which assert that unequal power dynamics between men and women in patriarchal societies, reinforced by cultural norms and traditions that legitimize violence, are fundamental drivers of women's exposure to persecution and abuse.

IPV represents a critical manifestation of these structural inequalities, underscoring the profoundly adverse effects of patriarchal social structures on women's lives.

A key finding of this study is that Syrian women experienced high levels of IPV during the pre-war period in Syria, largely due to deeply entrenched patriarchal customs and traditions that create a conducive environment for IPV. Moreover, by adopting a longitudinal perspective that captures women's experiences, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how changing social, cultural, and structural contexts shape women's exposure to IPV. It also addresses a significant gap in the existing literature on Syrian refugee women's experiences with IPV, particularly within the Turkish context, a topic that had received limited scholarly attention.

The study found out that seeking asylum in Türkiye significantly contributed to increased awareness among some participants regarding violence against women and their legal rights. This awareness was primarily cultivated through lectures and programs offered by psychological and social support centers for refugees, as well as municipal initiatives. Furthermore, living in Türkiye provided women with new perspectives on marital relationships by observing interactions of Turkish couples. This exposure led them to realize that their husbands' abusive behavior, which they had previously considered normal in Syria, was not acceptable. Despite their increased awareness of their rights and heightened recognition of abusive behavior, many women still refrained from seeking help from official support sources when experiencing IPV.

Although this qualitative study does not aim to produce generalizable results, its in-depth insights contribute to a deeper understanding of Syrian women's experiences with IPV. These findings open the door for future studies to further explore the evolving IPV in different displacement settings and across diverse refugee populations.

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Ecological Model of Health in Understanding Refugee Women's Access to Maternal Care Services in Türkiye*

Süreyya Sönmez Efe** 

Abstract

This paper analyses refugee women's experiences in accessing maternal care services in Türkiye. Using a human rights framework, it emphasizes the vulnerability of refugee women arising from their precarious legal status, social position, gender and health status which intersect in complex ways. The ecological model is employed as a methodological approach to illustrate the normative and practical complexities of interactions between maternal care, its determinants, and outcomes across three interrelated stages: the micro-level (refugees' interactions), the meso-level (healthcare clinics and centers), and the macro-level (state policies and international agencies). Drawing on fieldwork findings, the paper concludes that while refugee women receive maternal care within the Turkish health system without overt discrimination, there are persistent challenges that hinder access to high-quality maternal care.

Keywords : Refugee Women, Right to Health, Human Rights, Maternal Care, Intersectionality, Ecological Model

Türkiye'de Mülteci Kadınların Anne Bakım Hizmetlerine Erişimini Anlamada Ekolojik Sağlık Modeli

Özet

Bu makale, mülteci kadınların Türkiye'de anne bakım hizmetlerine erişim deneyimlerini analiz etmektedir. İnsan hakları çerçevesini kullanarak, mülteci kadınların kişisel olan güvencesiz yasal statüleri, sosyal konumları, cinsiyetleri ve sağlık durumları nedeniyle savunmasızlıklarını vurgulamaktadır. Ekolojik model; anne bakımı, belirleyicileri ve sonuçları arasındaki etkileşimlerin normatif ve pratik karmaşıklıklarını üç aşamada göstermek için yararlı olan bir metodolojik yaklaşım olarak kullanılmaktadır: mikro düzey (mültecilerin etkileşimleri), mezo düzey (sağlık klinikleri/merkezleri vb.) ve makro düzey (devlet politikaları/uluslararası kuruluşlar). Saha araştırması bulgularından elde edilen verileri sunan bu makale, mülteci kadınların Türk sağlık sisteminde ayrımcılık yapılmaksızın anne bakımı aldıklarını, ancak kaliteli anne bakımı almalarını engelleyen zorlukların da olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Mülteci Kadınlar, Sağlık Hakkı, İnsan Hakları, Anne Bakımı, Kesişimsellik, Ekolojik Model

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Introduction

We are living in an era of unprecedented international mass migration, with cross-border movements taking various forms, including forced or involuntary migration. It is widely recognized that when the root cause of the migratory movement is involuntary, human capabilities over life decisions are compromised due to a lack of power and agency. In other words, forced migration or unlawful displacement of people from their homes creates a power dilemma for displaced individuals in negotiating their rights, vulnerabilities, spatial precarity, and sense of belonging. The causes of individual vulnerabilities among forced migrants are intersectional, encompassing their legal status, social and cultural position, and overall health and well-being. Displaced persons are often in a constant state of negotiation between statuses and vulnerabilities, which undermines their capacity to make meaningful decisions about their lives. They become disempowered as a result of institutional and structural constraints, spatial changes, and demands of adaptation processes.

A human rights-based approach provides a valuable lens through which we interrogate the concepts of displacement, consent, rights, well-being, right holders, and duty bearers in the context of forced migration. These concepts are explored in this paper through an analysis of refugee women's experiences with maternal care and their interactions with health institutions in Türkiye. Refugee maternal healthcare in Türkiye remains underexamined from both ecological and intersectional human rights perspectives. Therefore, this paper offers a significant contribution to literature.

Existing studies in the field of healthcare identify differential levels of prenatal care for refugee and native women in Türkiye (Demirci et al., 2022), the younger age of refugee women giving birth (Erenel et al., 2017), challenges in antenatal care among refugee women (Turkay et al, 2019), issues of migrant women face in accessing health services (Yucel et al., 2021). However, these predominantly large-scale, quantitative, and comparative studies focus on statistical differences and lack a more nuanced, rights-based account of the lived experiences of refugee women. Although they reveal a growing health crisis for this population, they fall short in fully illustrating this issue through a human rights lens. This gap underlines the need for a deeper exploration of how refugee women experience access to healthcare, including the barriers and enablers involved.

This study will explore the root causes of the lack of maternal care for refugee women, such as the legal loopholes, social inequalities, and practical issues that prevent them from receiving much-needed healthcare. It will also develop a uniquely holistic illustration of this issue by incorporating the role of governmental and non-governmental actors in facilitating healthcare to refugee women. The paper uses the ecological model (Thurston and Vissadjee, 2005) to illustrate the complexities of interactions between maternal care, its determinants, and outcomes. These interactions of networks

occur in three interconnected levels: 1) the micro-level (refugee experiences and their interactions.) 2) the meso-level (healthcare clinics and centers, community-level issues on health etc.) and 3) the macro-level (state policies and international agencies' regulations). Thus, this study addresses the limitations of existing literature by bridging policy framework to an ecological model of health through a holistic and intersectional methodological approach.

The paper starts with a section on definitions of migrant statuses at both international and national levels. It then outlines the human rights approach as the theoretical foundation for analyzing refugee women's right to maternal healthcare. Subsequent sections examine the ecological-intersectional model for understanding refugee women's vulnerability in healthcare systems, provide an overview of the Turkish health system for refugee women's access to maternal care; a discussion section on the fieldwork findings from participant observations conducted at national health centers that provide healthcare services; and a conclusion with recommendations for improving the quality of maternal care for refugee women in Türkiye.

Refugee Status in Turkish Law

International Legal Framework

Turkish law incorporates both the United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention and the European Commission (EC) legal frameworks when defining the status of refugees. EC defines forced migration as "...a migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including to a life or livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes" (EC, n.d.). This definition encompasses refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and those displaced due to natural, environmental, or chemical disasters or famine" (EC, n.d.). Similarly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (n.d.) defines forced displacement as "...when individuals and communities have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave homes or places of habitual residence as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of events and situations such as armed conflict, violence, human rights abuses, natural or man-made disasters, and/or development projects". The UNHCR does this definition within the context of "internally displaced persons (IDPs) and in legal terms treats "internationally displaced persons" as a separate category with the status of "refugee". The term "refugee" is reserved for individuals who cross international borders, who are legally a distinct category that carries specific rights and protections under international law.

The term refugee is a legal concept recognized by states and International Law requiring protection at the state, regional, and international levels under customary law. Refugees are people forced to flee their own country and seek safety in another country

“owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality...” (UN Refugee Convention 1951). This definition initially applied only to people from Europe and legally recognized them as refugees. However, the Protocol Relating to Refugees and Stateless (1967) removed this geographical limitation.

Refugees and Temporary Protection in Turkish Legislation

This paper focuses on refugee women in Türkiye, who fall under the category of forced migrants. Turkish domestic law retains the geographic limitation of the legal definition of a refugee from the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, despite Türkiye being a signatory to the 1967 Protocol (Decree No:6/10266, 1968), which removes this restriction. Under Turkish law, only individuals fleeing from Europe are granted full refugee status (Law on Foreigners and International Protection - LFIP, 2013). Although Türkiye is a signatory to the Protocol (1967), Turkish Law (Decree No:6/10266, 1968) makes a distinction between the term “asylum seeker” and “refugee” based on geographical limitation. Some scholars consider asylum status as *de facto* refugee status¹ which encompasses the elements of refugee status, thus needs to be recognized as such *de jure* (Cicekli, 2011, cited in Yilmaz Eren, 2018, p. 33; Sonmez Efe, 2021).

Turkish legislation (LFIP, 2013) gives Temporary Protection (TP) only to Syrian people who has sought refuge in Türkiye fleeing the civil war since 2011. TP is “an exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent influx of displaced persons where the idea is to provide protection against non-refoulment and respect for fundamental human rights...” (EC, n.d.; Luca, 1994). There are currently 2,820,362 Syrian refugees under TP (PMM, 2025) and 9,009 applicants for International Protection (IP) applications, with the majority coming from Afghanistan (5,550) and Iraq (1,881) (PMM, 2024).

The UNHCR advocates TP and states that “it is not a protection scheme replacing existing international obligations...1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol or Regional Refugee arrangements” (UNHCR, 2023). Rather, it is considered an effective tool for ensuring rapid access to protection and services in host countries. To be legitimate, TP arrangements must adhere to international refugee and human rights law standards, including the principle of non-refoulment and the discouragement of premature returns (UNHCR, 2023).

UNHCR Decree No 22 (1981) lays out key guidelines for protecting individuals

¹ A *de facto* refugee: “Person not recognised as a refugee (within the meaning of Art. 1A of the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol) and who is unable or, for reasons recognised as valid, unwilling to return to their country of origin or country of nationality or, if they have no nationality, to the country of their habitual residence” (European Commission, n.d.).

during situations of mass influx, offering a pragmatic tool for safeguarding those who may not qualify for formal refugee status but are nonetheless in need of protection under TP. Although this Decree does not have binding principles for the states, it creates a norm for the protection of people fleeing conflict (Yilmaz Eren, 2018, p.69). In line with International Law, Turkish legislation (LFIP, 2013; Regulation No.6883, 2014; Regulation No.8375, 2016) encompasses the following principles for people under TP: unconditional admittance into the country, enforcement of non-refoulement without exceptions, and stay arrangements/meeting basic needs (UNHCR Emergency Handbook, 2025).

This paper focuses on access of refugee women under the TP status to health services in Türkiye using the human rights framework. The HRs framework enables the paper to formulate and advance an ecological model to analyze the refugee women's experiences and in accessing maternal care. This approach facilitates a normative and humane understanding of their healthcare needs and rights, emphasizing the moral obligations of host states and institutions.

A Human Rights Approach to Refugee Women's Right to Maternal Health Care

The Right to Health in International Human Rights Law

Human rights are the rights that everyone possesses because they are human (Donnelly, 2013, p. 7). Human rights have 'humanity or human nature' as the source, which are different than legal rights that are enforced by legal frameworks (Donnelly, 2013, p. 13). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Constitution (1948), health is considered to be an intrinsic human right regardless of gender, race, nationality, or socio-economic status. A human rights approach to health is particularly crucial for refugee women who are a vulnerable group within host countries due to their precarious social and legal status.

Human rights are different from legal rights (positive rights) as individuals are entitled to the latter because they are legal members of a state. Hence, countries ought to recognize health as a human right and have legal obligations to have appropriate policies to allocate resources to guarantee this right without discrimination between groups of people (WHO, 2024a). However, this paper does not make a distinction between negative rights and positive rights (or between the generations of rights²), as the right to health encompasses other aspects of rights³ that prevent us from making such a distinction.

² French Jurist Karel Vasak advanced generations of rights: first generation rights (civil and political rights); second generation rights (economic, social and cultural rights); and third generation rights (solidarity rights) (Pierre Claude and Weston, 2006, p. 21).

³ Refugee women's rights to maternal care include social, economic, physical and mental wellbeing.

The recognition of the interdependence of human rights means that an individual's right to life is the fundamental right for them to sustain their physical existence. To enjoy the right to life and other human rights, an individual ought to have "good health" (Tuncer, 2021, p.14). Thus, the right to health encompasses other entitlements, such as "the right to control one's health, informed consent, bodily integrity, and participation in health-related decision-making" (WHO, 2024a). The Universal Declaration model incorporates the Bill of Human Rights and guides us to the fundamental principles of human rights⁴ including the 'right to health care and social services' (UDHR, Article 25, 1948; ESCR Article 12, 1966). WHO Constitution (1948) adopts a holistic approach to the definition of health which is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (1948).⁵ WHO defines reproductive health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes" (2024c). This definition includes people having safe sex and the capability to reproduce, and have the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to have children regardless of their social and legal status.

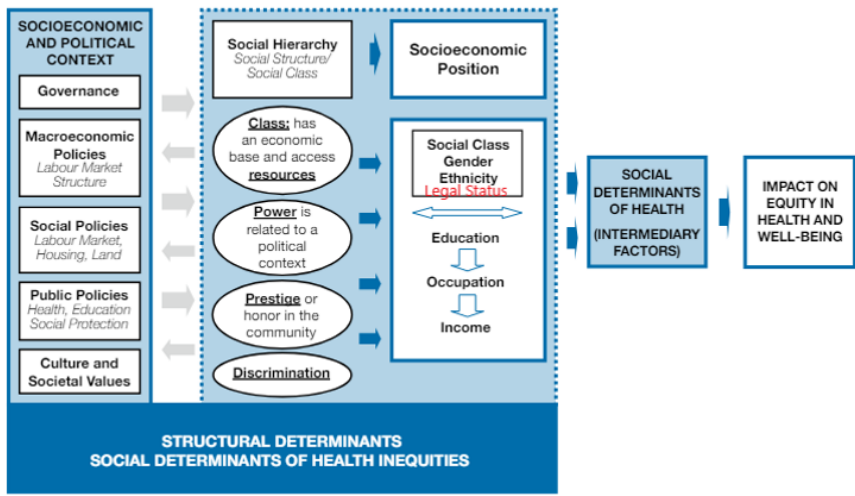
Health Equity and Social Determinants for Refugee Women

Refugees are among the most vulnerable groups and thus disproportionately experience poor health as they are usually on the margins of the host societies (Ahonen et al., 2007). Structural mechanisms such as legal status, ethnicity, social class, gender and education are considered the social determinants of health inequities (WHO, 2010). An unequal distribution of health-related resources (Christie-de Jong, 2018) has a grave impact on refugees' physical, mental and social health in the host countries. Diagram 1 illustrates how social stratification generates inequalities in health. The left column shows the institutional and policy structures within governments that directly influence social hierarchies, and the next column summarizes the social structure. Societal values create social hierarchies (or social divisions) that impact government policies. Socioeconomic position indicators such as gender roles serve as proxies for social hierarchy, influencing individuals' access to power and resources in both political and economic domains. In this study, legal status is added as a crucial component alongside gender and ethnicity. It reflects an individual's positionality based on migratory status and legal recognition within the host country, which significantly impacts their access to healthcare and other basic rights.

⁴ Such as "right to life" (UDHR, Article 3, 1948; ICCPR Article 9), "freedom of movement and residence" (UDHR, Article 13; ICCPR Article 12, 1966)

⁵ Physical health means one's ability to use full physical potential; psychological health allows individuals to cope with stress and anxiety and, thus, to conceive an environment with full potential; and social health enables one to communicate with others and socialize within the society (Erdil, 2023, p. 67-68).

Diagram 1: Structural Determinants: The Social Determinants of Health Inequalities



Source: WHO (2010), “A conceptual framework for action on the social determinants of health,” p. 35 (with author’s interpretation).

Legal Status and Structural Barriers to Accessing Maternal Care

Refugee women are susceptible to health inequalities in host countries because of the temporariness of their legal status. Their migration experience as a social determinant of health may also generate barriers to accessing healthcare. These barriers deprive refugee women of living a life in dignity with the absence of one or more aspects of health. Human dignity⁶ is the “ultimate value” (Hasson, 2003 cited in Donnelly, 2009, p. 3), and the right to health automatically bestows refugee women with this value through the principles of worthiness and respect in the host society.

The concept of health equity explicitly recognizes the vulnerabilities of socially marginalized populations by advocating for fairness in health outcomes and empowering them with an equity agenda. WHO defines health equity as “the absence of unfair and avoidable or remediable differences in health among population groups defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically” (2005). Health inequalities are socially constructed issues which can be rooted in systematic processes that operate within different segments of the social hierarchies outlined in Diagram 1. Refugee women are positioned in these structural hierarchies in health systems which cannot be fully understood with merely their migration status and need to move beyond singular social categories (i.e. sex and gender)

⁶ Human dignity is the foundation of the concept of international human rights law which gives coherence to human rights (Hasson, 2003, p. 83 cited in Donnelly, 2009, p. 3). To claim ‘human dignity’ simply because being human fundamentally and intrinsically makes one worthy and deserving of respect (Donnelly, 2013, p. 29).

and determinants (i.e. immigration status, gender, indigeneity, age, and education) for a comprehensive understanding. Intersectionality (Bunjun, 2010; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Van Herk et al., 2010; 2011) enables the researchers and policymakers to engage in social hierarchies and encourages a critical reflection that allows researchers and decision-makers to study multiple forms of discrimination intersecting to shape refugee women's health outcomes (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2009; Hankivsky et al., 2014).

The human rights framework enables a robust conceptual framework for advancing health equity through action and implementation. International Law suggests that all individuals under IP should have the right to have good standards of physical and psychological health (Erdil, 2023, p. 99). Due to their political dominance in international order, states are the central institutions that have the responsibility for protecting and enhancing health equity in their jurisdictions (Donnelly, 2013, p. 34; WHO, 2010, p. 12). This moral and ethical debate is located within the "just governance" (Sen, 1999) argument where governments are held responsible for equitable distribution of health, which is considered as "special good" (Anand, 2001). Health is special good for two reasons: "a) it is directly constitutive of a person's well-being and b) it enables a person to function as an agent" (Anand, 2001).⁷ Thus, for refugee women to reach their full potential and capability to become autonomous agents, government policies act as enablers or duty bearers of fair health policies and create systems that facilitate health equity. This paper argues that refugee women in maternal care need a special focus and empowerment due to the intersecting vulnerabilities they face within health systems.

Ecological Model in Studying Refugee Women's Access to Maternal Care

The migratory experience, including pre-migration, migration, and post-migration, is an important social and legal determinant in health research. One's legal status, culture, and gender are central to understanding migration and health through the ecological model of health (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004; Thurston and Vissadjee, 2005). These determinants intersect with broader social determinants laid out by the WHO (2010) that act as proxies for social hierarchies, including power and class (see Diagram 1).

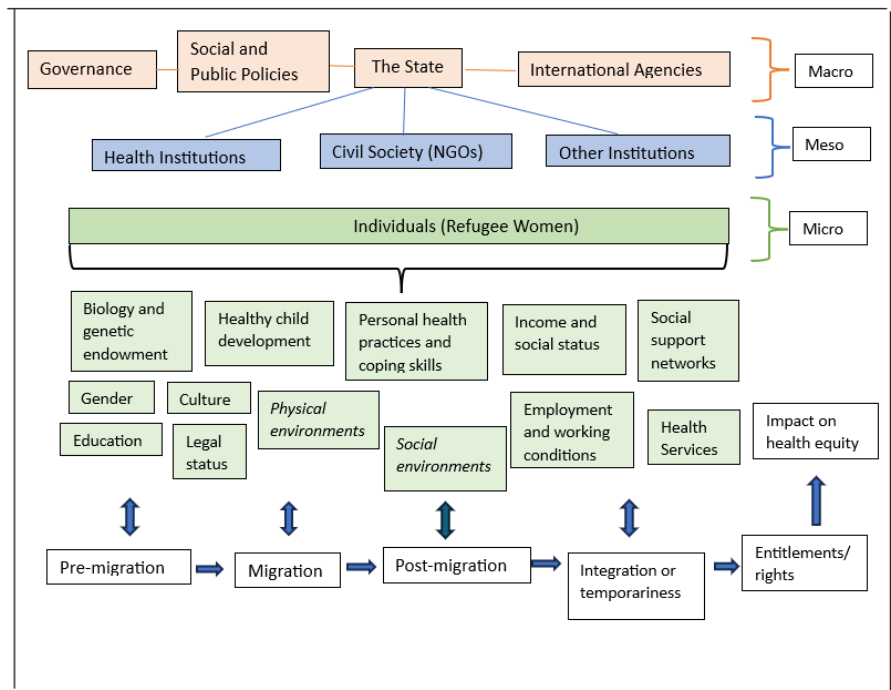
Thurston and Vissadjee (2005) argue that migratory experience is usually confused with culture; thus, they differentiate the two in their analysis. The ecological model was first introduced by Bronfenbrenner's (1986) systems theory, where he argues that to understand human development, we must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. Other studies expand upon the ecological model, for instance, Howard and Hollander (1997) focus on gender, and Thurston and Vissadjee (2005) incorporate gender

⁷ In this context, with the prevailing inequalities, people will not meet their full potential and capability to function, thus their freedoms and autonomy will be compromised because of their social position.

and culture in cognitive schemas to study the integration processes in a new locality over time. In this paper, I add another layer of themes to this schema, “migrant legal status” and “health determinants”, to understand refugee women’s access to health in host countries. I argue that it is the legal status that defines these women, thus, migration experience becomes an important social determinant to understand their access to health which is, according to feminist literature, a fundamentally gendered process (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004, p. 31). Migrant status also impacts on these women’s living and work conditions.

The diagram below illustrates the relationships and interactions of equally interdependent determinants in an open system. At the macro level, the state and symbolic institutions are in the same category, although, as mentioned before, states are the ultimate decision-makers, even though they are in constant interaction with other non-state institutions. These interactions can be an iterative process where some modes of structures incorporate a continuation across time and space. They may produce new forms of structures because of new dynamism stemming from internal or external determinants.

Diagram 2: Ecological Model in Studying Refugee Women’s Experiences of Maternal Health Services in Türkiye



Source: Created by author with inspiration from “An Ecological Model for Understanding Culture as a Determinant of Women’s Health” (Thurston and Vissadjee, 2005, p. 231, in Appendix 1)

Welfare institutions, institutional civil society, and economic institutions are kept separately in Diagram 2 to illustrate conceptual and practical differences within systems and structures. Their interactions with the state would vary based on the level of cooperation. Here, (migrant) legal status plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' interaction with systems and structures. Thus, migration experience has a grave impact on physical, social, economic, political, and cultural determinants and define their positionality within the systems and structures.

This paper advances the ecological model of health, as illustrated in Diagram 2, in three ways: 1) it will provide more clarity on institutions' behavior at the macro-level where the hierarchies shift based on the decision-making powers; 2) it adapts social and structural determinants to the context of the Turkish health system; and 3) it introduces new or additional health determinants with the inclusion of migration experience in shaping refugee women's health outcomes and their interactions with systems and structures.

Integrating Ecological Model to Understand Refugee Women's Health in Türkiye: Why are Refugee Women More Vulnerable?

Refugee Women's Health Profile in Türkiye

This paper refers to refugees as individuals under TP, as refugee status is granted in Türkiye only to people coming from Europe (see definitions section). Official data suggest that all migrants under TP in Türkiye are from Syria, who fled their country due to the civil war that started in 2011 (see introduction). Statistical evidence also suggests that of the total of 2,820,362 Syrian refugees, 1,365,892 are women (PMM, 2025). Moreover, nearly 50% of Syrian refugees in Türkiye are women, who are of reproductive age. According to a study by SIHHAT, the majority of Syrian refugee women in Türkiye are housewives (52%), students (19.9%) and have no profession (19.5%) (2018, p. 113). It is common for them to get married at a young age, such as 13, and give birth (Ciftci et al., 2016). The same survey, with a sample of 1280 refugees across 10 cities with a high refugee population, suggests that 83.9% of women aged 15-49 have children (SIHHAT, 2018, p. 115).

The most common health problems that refugee women under TP face are unwanted pregnancies due to lack of family planning (SIHHAT, 2018, p. 115), miscarriages (Karadağ and Altıntaş, 2010) and delivery-related complications (WHO, 2022). Moreover, the SIHHAT study also found that 54.4% of Syrian refugee women in Türkiye aged 15-49 do not use any contraceptive methods to prevent pregnancy (2018, p. 140). When asked why not, 47.7% among women aged 15-18 said "they wanted to have children"; similarly, 24.2% of women aged 15-24 indicated that they wanted to get pregnant (2018, p. 143).

Vulnerabilities and Barriers to Maternal Care

Women and children are considered the most vulnerable refugee group under TP who need special protection (Erdil, 2023). The vulnerability of women aged 15-49 derives from their gender roles and experiences of serious problems during pregnancy and childbirth (Ciftci et al., 2016). It is suggested that gender roles and expectations for Syrian refugee women influence their desire to have children at an early age. Refugee women are also vulnerable due to insufficient pregnancy monitoring, lack of information about maternal care clinics, giving birth in unhealthy conditions, and lacking the vitamins and minerals during and post-pregnancy (Özgülner, 2016 cited in Türk Tabipler Birliği, 2016). Cultural expectations and gender roles also impact refugee women's accessing sufficient healthcare, including patriarchal family structures and dependence on husbands to go out of their homes, lack of practical knowledge of the Turkish language, and lack of knowledge of the Turkish healthcare system (Tuncer Unver and Baykal, 2020).

The psycho-sociological health of refugee women is usually low because they experience harsh migratory experiences, witness difficult situations, and are away from their homes and families. According to the SIHHAT study, refugees' health status deteriorated after migration from Syria to Türkiye, with 85% stating that they had been in good health prior to migration but declining to 62% after migration (2018, p. 55). Thus, many refugee women "experience feelings of anxiety and sadness, hopelessness, difficulty in sleeping, fatigue, irritability, anger or aches and pains... depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (WHO, 2022). According to a study, depression levels among refugee women are high, with one in 10 women attempting to commit suicide (Yurdagül and Aytekin (2018). Studies (SIHHAT, n.d., p.11; Türk Tabipler Birliği, 2016; Gümüş et al., 2017) emphasize the reproductive health risks that Syrian refugee women usually experience as:

- Early marriage; forced marriage; short-term marriage; close-kin marriage; polygamy
- Teenage pregnancy; high fertility rate
- Violence-sexual violence
- Lack of usage of modern contraceptive methods
 - Lack of awareness and knowledge
 - Unwanted pregnancies
 - Unfulfilled contraceptive needs
- Insufficient prenatal care
 - Iron and vitamin deficiency (especially Vitamin D)
 - Poor obstetrics outcome (miscarriage, premature birth, DDA, and risky pregnancy)
- Mother and child mortality
- Unsafe miscarriage

- Lack of gynecological periodic checks
- CYBH/HIV (polygamy, torture, rape, sexual violence)
- Osteoporosis and cancer

Other social determinants of health are strongly related to refugee women's health, including gender, education, income, housing, culture, and employment. For instance, due to forced migration, Syrian refugee women may have reproductive health problems, such as attaining the desired number of children and accessing family planning services (SIHHAT, 2018, p. 119). Some determinants also create additional barriers for refugee women accessing reproductive health, including language, lack of awareness, communication issues with healthcare providers, sociocultural problems and lack of healthcare service (SIHHAT, 2018, p. 14).

Refugee Women's Access to Maternal Health Care in the Turkish Health System

Structure of the Turkish Health System

The Turkish health system provides primary (family health centers [FHCs]), secondary (hospitals) and tertiary (research hospitals) services for maternal care including antenatal and postnatal care. Primary and secondary maternal care is also provided in migrant health centers (MHC) and extended MHCs (E/MHCs) (for migrants only) directly by booking an appointment. Tertiary care is given by referral to university research hospitals or private health care providers in private hospitals or clinics. All three tiers in the Turkish health system ensure all women in maternal care needs are monitored and taken care of with services free of charge (see Table 2 (created by the author based on official and fieldwork data) in Appendix 2). Everyone, including documented and undocumented foreigners,⁸ can benefit from emergency health services, facilities, and services to fight against infectious diseases and victimization (DGHC, 2022).

There are also 442 prenatal schools in healthcare facilities including public health centers, secondary and tertiary health institutions in Türkiye (MoH, 2023a, p. 92). They aim to prepare/inform pregnant women about a healthy pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal health, and raise awareness about vitamin D and iron deficiency⁹ during and after pregnancy. Türkiye collaborates with WHO and UNICEF (2020) to tackle mother and baby mortality and implements high health standards by monitoring and providing transparent data sharing across institutions to meet WHO's 2010-2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Türkiye also initiated the Mother-Friendly Hospital Program in

⁸ The term 'foreigner' is used here in line with Turkish Law.

⁹ 92.6% of pregnant women have vitamin D deficiency.

2023 (MoH, 2023a, p. 81; 2023b, p. 126), with 121 hospitals named Mother-Friendly¹⁰ (MoH, 2023b, p.81), and implemented the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative nationwide,¹¹ with 1,353 hospitals categorized as baby-friendly (MoH, 2023b, p. 83).

The Turkish health system accommodates refugee women in FHCs (until recently), MHCs, E/MHCs, and hospitals, all of which prescribe medicine that refugees can buy from the pharmacies that have agreements with state institutions. The health system has language facilities, including translation and information centers,¹² for all foreigners, which are crucial services for overcoming language or cultural barriers. Türkiye collaborates with the EU on the SIHHAT Project (Facility for Refugees in Türkiye [FRIT]; EC, 2024), which enables refugee women to receive basic health care, health education, health personnel development, reproductive health care, family planning, and mental health care (Sonmez Efe, 2025). Primary healthcare services for refugees¹³ are provided through MHCs, E/MHCs,¹⁴ mobile clinics, and polyclinics for foreigners, all of which are critical for refugee women's sexual and reproductive health.

Legal Rights and Entitlements under Temporary Protection

Refugees with TP and IP statuses benefit from primary, secondary, and tertiary health services in Türkiye. However, refugee women without TP and who cannot provide a TP identification document can only benefit from emergency health services, services that fight against infectious diseases, and victimization services (DGHC, 2022). All refugees without TP must register with the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management to receive full health services in the city of residence. According to the TP Regulation Article 27/(d),¹⁵ refugees under TP cannot directly go to private health institutions, unless for

¹⁰ Mother-Friendly Hospital Model (WHO and UNICEF, 2020) aims the creation of birth units for one person with privacy to promote natural birth and a comfortable environment for pregnant women to give birth (MoH, 2023b).

¹¹ It aims to train pregnant women and support them during the postnatal period for the skills for breastfeeding. There are currently 1,353 baby-friendly hospitals in 81 cities in Türkiye (MoC, 2023b). Refugee women with TP can benefit from these health services without discrimination.

¹² Communication Centre for Foreigners (YIMER) by calling 157, Ministry of Health Communication Centre (SABİM) by calling 184, and Ministry of Family and Social Politics Social Support Call via 183.

¹³ Within the scope of the SIHHAT Project: primary health services, laboratory and imaging support in primary care, psychosocial support services in primary care, cancer screening program support, CBMHC (Community-Based Mental Health Center) services, mobile health services, provision of micronutrient and vitamin D. support, immunisation and vaccine follow-up services (Sonmez Efe, Unpublished Evidence Paper, HoC, 2025).

¹⁴ SIHHAT projects currently support 190 MHCs and E/MHCs, where there are further specialised services such as gynaecology, internal medicine, paediatrics and dental care) (Sonmez Efe, Unpublished Evidence Paper, HoC, 2025).

¹⁵ 'The cost of health services, including second and third step health services, shall not exceed the costs in the Health Budget Law [SUT] determined by the Presidency of Social Security Institution for beneficiaries of general health insurance' Article 27(c), 2013).

emergency procedures (2014). However, the interview data and fieldwork study suggest that refugees with TP benefit from the private hospital services only when they financially afford to do so. The Regulation (2014) takes a holistic approach to the provision of health services to refugees including psycho-social services in coordination with the Disaster Intervention Plan of Türkiye.

The regulation also lays out health services provided to refugees in Türkiye as Article 26 (1) as the following: “Foreigners under this Regulation may be provided with health, education, access to the labor market, social assistance, interpretation and similar services.” Moreover, Article 27 gives control and responsibility to the Ministry of Health for the provision of health services to refugees under TP “inside and outside of temporary accommodation centers”¹⁶

Access to Maternal Health Services: FHCs, MHCs and Hospitals

As mentioned earlier, refugee women can access primary and secondary maternal care at FHCs, and since 2018, at MHCs, E/MHCs, Migrant Health Education Centers, and Migrant Health Units in the cities and provinces in which they are registered. Women registered in the FHCs before 2018 continue to receive health services and are monitored as a family; however, the FHCs transferred all refugees to MHCs in 2018. The fieldwork and the interview data suggest that in April 2025, the transfer process was completed. Both FHCs and MHCs provide care and monitoring services during pregnancy and post-natal care including refugee women:

Table 1: Prenatal and Postnatal Care Provided for Women in FHCs and MHCs in Türkiye

	During Pregnancy	Post-natal
Aim of the care	Prenatal care to minimize the risks of mother and baby mortality rates, diseases, and disabilities.	Postnatal care to minimize the risks of mother and baby mortality rates.
When	Women are advised to have four health visits: during week 14, weeks 18-24, weeks 24-28, and weeks 36-38 of the pregnancy.	Women are advised to have four health visits after childbirth: in the first 24 hours; between day 2 and 5, 13 and 17, 30-42, and after 42 days.

¹⁶ Migration Board under the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) is responsible for “determining Türkiye’s migration strategies related to foreigners and following the coordination and implementation; and is chaired by the Minister of Interior and consists of representatives from ministries, institutions and establishments determined by the Ministry of Interior” (the Presidential Decree No. 1, 2018).

Health services provided	a) Iron and vitamin D tablets are distributed free of charge. b) Each health visit incorporates the following examinations: -Anamnesis -Physical and pregnancy examination -Weight, height, blood pressure monitoring and pregnancy week and fetus monitoring -Blood and urine tests -Risky pregnancies are determined and referred to the hospital. -Vaccination for pregnant women -Training for general hygiene procedures, breastfeeding techniques, sexual life, diet, and contraception methods.	a) Physical care after birth b) Support breast milk and breastfeeding c) Monitor unexpected health risks such as infection, and bleeding. d) Monitor vitamin D and Iron levels e) Consultancy on contraceptive methods f) Vaccination
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Source: Created by the author using the information from the Ministry of Health (2023)

Refugee women receive secondary care in hospitals by booking appointments directly using the same system as Turkish citizens. Pregnant refugee women go to hospitals for ultrasound monitoring, childbirth, caesarean, and other postnatal and baby-related treatments. In E/MHCs, there may be a gynecologist and ultrasound facilities that permit refugee women to go in lieu of hospitals. However, the number of E/MHCs and Syrian gynecologists is quite low, so most refugee women go to hospitals for advanced monitoring and treatment.

Findings from Participant Observations of Maternal Care Centers/Units in Türkiye

Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method

This section discusses data from participant observations conducted in two FHCs, two E/MHCs, a hospital's breastfeeding support unit (BSU), a maternal unit (MU), and a caesarean intensive care unit (CICU) in Bursa, Türkiye. Bursa was chosen for the field-work study as it has one of the highest numbers of refugees, especially Syrian, at 162,928 (PMM, 2025). These health centers/units are in areas with high refugee populations from Syria or Turkic countries such as Azerbaijan (see Table 2, Appendix 2 for demographical data). The overt observations in closed non-public settings are planned strategically with consent¹⁷ from the health centers to access these health facilities.¹⁸ The carefully selected

¹⁷ The consent is sought after negotiating with the health care professionals and management in each centre or department. This project is funded by the British Academy Leverhulme Small Grants. Favourable Ethical Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Lincoln (Ethics Reference: UoL2023_16174).

¹⁸ There had been a challenge to gain access to some units which required rigorous negotiations with gatekeepers, but

settings fit with the research aims; thus, observations enable us to understand Turkish healthcare services providing maternal care to refugee women.

This study employed a multi-method ethnographic approach incorporating participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and photo elicitation technique (Hodkinson, 2002, cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 441; Gorli et al., 2012, p. 291, 302-304). This paper focuses on findings from observational data collected during fieldwork in December 2023 and January 2024 (see Table 2, Appendix 2). The participant observation followed the key stages as outlined by Dewalt and Dewalt (2002): “active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed fieldnotes, and patience” (p. vii, 18). Due to time constraints and the sensitive nature of healthcare settings, the researcher maintained minimal participation in core clinical activities (e.g., meetings and direct conversations with patients). Greater time was spent in FHCs, E/MHCs, and the hospital’s breastfeeding unit, where the intensity of care provision allowed for extended observation. Conversely, time in high-intensity settings such as the MU and CICU was necessarily limited. Despite these constraints, the observations provided meaningful insights into the organizational culture and behavioral dynamics of healthcare settings. Using a sensory and contextual approach, the researcher created detailed “written photographs”¹⁹ of the structures and environments under study (Erlandson et al., 1993). The observations aimed to understand the health care system and to observe the communication and interactions between the health care professionals and refugee women receiving maternal care.

The observational data is analyzed using thematic analysis and focused on two themes: a) the institutional practices in maternal care and b) interactions between refugee women and healthcare providers. These themes enable us to make sense of refugee women’s experiences of maternal care at the meso-level (hospitals, health centers) and micro-level (refugee women) (Diagram 2). The writing style of the observations in these sections falls somewhere between “realist tales” and “structural tales.” The former allows the writer to adhere to the strategy of realism through third-person accounts of behavior and culture (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 47), and the latter enables the researcher to link observation of everyday interactions and momentary practices to broader social, political, and institutional structures (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 166). By drawing these connections, the researcher incorporates interpretative analysis that situates behavior and institutional dynamics within the wider societal context.

as Bryman (2012, p. 435) describes “sheer perseverance pays off”. The researcher used contacts from the healthcare sector and the health NGO for necessary permissions.

¹⁹ The researcher preferred taking mental notes where it was not possible to take notes in the setting as well as taking written notes where it was possible as the recording was not allowed by the healthcare professionals due to privacy regulations of the patients and the healthcare providers.

Observations on Institutional Practices in Maternal Care

The observational data in health centers and hospitals corroborate the official document analysis (see Section 5), which outlined the maternal health care provision to refugee women within the Turkish health system. Observational data illustrates the provision of maternal care focusing on two system-based categories: primary care (FHCs and E/MHCs) and secondary care. The observations took place in the FHCs' maternity monitoring and baby monitoring rooms and vaccination rooms upon the healthcare providers' suggestions. In the MHCs, the researcher was immersed in the ultrasound admission unit and the examination rooms. Although the MHCs and FHCs are designed to serve as the initial point of contact for pregnancy care and monitoring, the observational data reveal a common pattern: many refugee women tend to bypass primary care facilities and seek care directly from hospitals once they receive a positive pregnancy test. One of the E/MHCs had a gynecologist who refugee women preferred for ultrasound examinations.

Observational data and informal discussions with healthcare professionals in the FHCs suggest that pregnant women, both Turkish and refugee, initially present at FHCs, while refugee women also utilize MHCs, for the following procedures: an initial health record including pregnancy status; health registration; routine health checks (i.e. blood count, tests for infectious diseases, height and weight, blood pressure, pulse, and baby's heartbeat); provision of comprehensive information about pregnancy and postnatal processes; starting on folic acid and training on the importance of the deficiency during pregnancy; first tetanus and flu vaccines; antenatal classes after 20 weeks of pregnancy to receive guidance about caring for a newborn, breastfeeding, staying healthy, making birth plans and information about health arrangements for labor and childbirth. All these procedures are compulsory including follow-up checks during antenatal and postnatal states.

One notable observation was the diligence of health providers in FHCs in monitoring women with both prenatal and postnatal health status. If a woman misses a routine appointment, the health providers – nurses and midwives – make every effort to contact these women and process health visits at home, if they continuously miss their appointments. During the observations, this process is recorded on many occasions, as toward the end of each workday the records for missed appointments are checked and women are called to arrange a new appointment or a home visit. Each health professional is responsible for monitoring a group of women. Pregnant women are required to visit the FHCs and MHCs four times during pregnancy and seven times if it is a risky pregnancy. Both Turkish citizens and refugees with TP and other legal statuses benefit from these health checks and procedures.

Both FHC and MHC facilities were spacious and well-equipped, allowing healthcare providers to deliver care in a comfortable environment. This spatial relationship reflects the high quality of interactions between health providers and care recipients. In both

FHCs, referrals to the hospitals were made when necessary. The following excerpt is from my fieldwork observations at FHC2:

“My observations took place in the immunization and pregnancy unit at FHC 2 which was well equipped with spacious rooms. In each room, there were two midwives and two nurses, computers for data entry and monitoring, an examination area, space for routine checks with equipment, and a desk and seating space for the midwives and women... a Syrian refugee woman, 21 weeks pregnant in her late 30s...came...was her second visit...the nurse carried out routine checks including drawing blood for tests (glucose tolerance test), weight and height records...arranged a follow-up appointment.” (FHC2, 2 January 2024, 9:00 am-11:30 am)

This process was carried out for all women regardless of their legal status, thanks to a centralized official approach managed by the Municipal Health Authorities appointed by the Ministry of Health. The health providers stated that if they have any missing records or when the authorities notice a lack of monitoring of a woman, there are financial repercussions on their salaries with fines. The central checks are carried out every month through a management system. I was permitted to analyze the online recording system, which was very intricate and detailed.

The health providers in MHCs also followed the same data entry/recording procedures for refugee women they monitored by using a separate online system, managed by the SIHHAT system which was ultimately overseen by the MoH. The health providers in MHCs were equally taking these procedures very seriously. Although MHCs are EU-funded centers, the Turkish health system is responsible for regulations/monitoring etc., where routine checks are carried out by the Municipal Health Authorities. This illustrates the hybrid management of MHCs by the EU and the Turkish national health system and the strong collaboration for quality maternal care for refugee women.

The hospital where the observations were conducted is located in a region with a high concentration of refugee populations. Observations were carried out in three hospital units, MUs, BSUs, and CICUs, during peak hours in the mornings and early afternoons. BSUs were established in most hospitals in Türkiye since 2022, including the one in which this fieldwork occurred. At the BSU, pregnant women or women in postnatal status visited the unit to receive support and training on breastfeeding and healthy maternal care/well-being:

“The BSU nurse provided support and training to a refugee woman in postnatal health status using a supplemental nursing system (SNS) device (which could be obtained from pharmacies) to support new mothers to teach effective breastfeeding especially babies with low weight. The nurse raised awareness

about the health benefits of breastfeeding for women's bodies, hormone systems and well-being after birth." (BSU, 25 December 2023)

Pregnant women and new mothers were also guided to hospital departments if the nurse identified a health problem with the mothers or babies. I witnessed three referrals (informally advised by the nurse) during my observations.

Observations at the MU suggest different spatial interactions from the BSU due to the type of health provision and structural setting. The MU in this hospital is one of the busiest in the city, receiving a high number of Syrian refugees. During the observations, in nearly every room in the MU with a capacity of two or four patients there was one or two refugee women. The interaction between the health providers and refugee women was minimal due to the language barrier and carried out via translation provided by family members or friends. Although the hospital had translation services (health providers said there were two translators in the hospital) for Syrian refugees, they usually did not call for the service, as the refugee women were accompanied by a family member who could help with translation. Some refugee women could speak Turkish and did not need translators.

Interactions Between Refugee Women and Healthcare Providers

The observational data suggest equal treatment of refugee women and native women receiving health services. Health providers at the FHCs where I conducted my observations take a holistic approach to the provision of maternal care to all women regardless of their legal status or ethnicity:

"I conducted observations in the vaccination and baby care room... I witnessed a well-equipped and inclusive environment for both Turkish and refugee women. During my observations, routine health checks provided to Turkish mothers and two Syrian refugee women, one pregnant and one in the postnatal stage. The healthcare professionals treated all women equally and with a positive attitude. One refugee woman inquired about IUD contraception and was referred to a nearby clinic, as such procedures are not carried out in FHCs. Overall, the atmosphere was respectful, and the service delivery appeared equitable across all patients." (FHC 1, December 2023, 9:00 am-11:00 am)

The researcher observed similar scenes in both FHCs and the BSU:

"I was simultaneously conducting observations and conversing with health providers which indicated a relaxed atmosphere in this health space...two Syrian refugee women came, one of whom was 36 years old and five months pregnant...she spoke limited Turkish, and her teenage son accompanied her for

translation. The nurse carried out routine procedures without any issue with communication with the refugee woman who expressed gratitude for the positive treatment.” (FHC 2, January 2024, 9:00 am-11:30 am)

Interactions between health providers and refugee women were positive despite the FHC 2 receiving a high number of Syrian and Turkic refugee women from Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkmenistan, who are called ‘Meskhetian Turks’.

A similar positive relationship between health providers and refugee women was observed in the E/MHCs, even though they were busier than FHCs due to having consultants such as a gynecologist and a pediatrician. E/MHCs seem to overcome cultural and language barriers as most healthcare professionals could speak Arabic, including the gynecologist, and there were translators. Thus, refugee women appeared to be pleased with the healthcare provided. Despite the busy corridors and examination rooms, there was a synergy and a feeling of ease in terms of interactions between refugee women and health professionals:

“...in a health reception of the E/MHC 1, two nurses recorded the refugee women in the system who came to see the gynecologist for pregnancy monitoring and ultrasound. The interaction of refugee women with the nurses was positive and straightforward, and I could see the exchange of jokes and comfortable conversations during the process. There was a male Syrian gynecologist with a very positive attitude toward the pregnant women... the atmosphere was extremely relaxed and inclusive in this space where refugee women seemed to feel safe and happy. Although the examination room was small and a bit packed with furniture, and there was a curtain that separated the room from the reception section, no one seemed to be uncomfortable about it.” (MHC, 1 January 2024, 9:00 am-4:00 pm).

The observations in the BSU suggest positive spatial interactions like the FHCs, which are more relaxed and accessible. The time spent by healthcare providers on each woman was longer than in the MU or CICU. Women who visit the BSU seem to have a positive interaction with the health provider (nurse) and the space that is accessible. During the observations, refugee women (mainly Syrian) and Turkish women (largely members of the hospital staff on maternity care) visited the unit.

I also observed cultural differences between refugee women (mainly Syrian) and Turkish women about family structure, gender roles, and expectations. All Turkish women came to the BMU with their husbands, who were present during the routine checks and breastfeeding training, whereas most refugee women came with a female family member or friend. One refugee woman who was seven months pregnant came with her husband, who waited outside the hospital, which was also the case during interviews. My observational

data notes collected in the field illustrate the spatial interactions in the BSU:

“A refugee woman (Syrian) with a newborn came with her friend (Syrian) who was helping with translation. The nurse carried out routine monitoring of the baby, i.e. weighing and recording the baby’s development since the last visit. She was very caring when asking questions to the mother through a translator. I was impressed with the nurse’s enthusiasm with each patient when providing support and training to mothers about breastfeeding techniques. The nurse treated the refugee woman as same as the native women who visited the unit.”
(BSU, 25 December 2023)

The spatial interactions did not suggest a direct cultural stigma when the care was being provided. Although the health provider shared with me her concerns about the high fertility level among Syrian refugees and its implications for their well-being, this attitude did not affect the quality of the maternal care provided. However, the maternal health guidance and advice provided by the nurse included some cultural stigma (based on the difference) despite the positive attitude.

The observations emphasize two key barriers that undermine positive spatial interactions in the MU: the “language barrier” and the “(direct or indirect) stigma attached to the Syrian culture.” The former stems from refugee women who could not speak Turkish, whereas the latter from the health providers (Turkish) or in some cases from both sides. The observational data coupled with the informal conversations with the refugee women and the healthcare providers suggest that these barriers increase workload and generate frustration for healthcare providers. Minimal interaction due to language barrier and a lack of understanding of the healthcare system impacted the refugee women’s well-being and in receiving quality maternal care.

The barriers mentioned above are observed in the CICU, which was a small health setting, with a four-bed capacity and the presence of two nurses. Because the type of healthcare provision required intensive treatment and close monitoring, the researcher spent limited time in the CICU compared to the other two units. Two Syrian refugee women were in the CICU in post-op status, who had had caesarean operations one day earlier. I did not have any interaction with the refugee women but had informal conversations with the nurses. The spatial interaction was highly limited due to the type of care given, but the nurses were providing special care using sophisticated monitoring equipment.

During an informal conversation with the nurses, they described one full workday at the CICU. Their focus shifted to a heavy workload because of the high number of Syrian women giving birth, and their descriptions were laden with stigma about their (refugee women’s) patriarchal culture and expectations. Two refugee women in the CICU were

conscious, and their communication with the consultants and nurses was extremely limited. These observations suggested that maternal care provision is affected by barriers that are multi-faceted such as lack of communication and cultural stigma. However, despite these barriers and the prejudice against these women, the nurses carried out the health provision without discrimination. The nurses described the same health concerns about the refugee women under their care within the CICU where the observations occurred.

Conclusion

The paper examined refugee women's access to maternal care services in Türkiye through qualitative data from participant observations and official document analysis. Methodologically, the study offers a novel contribution to the literature by integrating ecological and human rights-based frameworks to analyze maternal health among refugees in Türkiye. The human rights approach aimed to re-humanize this marginalized group by moving beyond statistical abstraction and affirming their dignity, worth, and agency within the context of quality maternal care. By placing health equity at the core of the normative argument for the right to health, the study underscores the moral and legal obligations of states toward refugees.

Simultaneously, the ecological model facilitated a holistic and intersectional examination of key determinants such as gender, social status, legal status, and culture background allowing for a nuanced understanding of refugee women's experiences across macro and meso levels of the health system. Through this approach, the study reveals how refugee women's intersecting identities shape their engagement with health institutions, challenging monolithic or stigmatized representations and instead highlighting their diverse needs and lived realities. In doing so, the paper contributes meaningfully to broader discourse on migrant rights and reproductive justice.

The paper highlights the heightened vulnerability of refugee women in host countries, stemming from their precarious legal and social position. It argues that the temporariness of their legal status exacerbates these vulnerabilities, limiting their ability to claim rights and entitlements in the healthcare system. Through in-depth qualitative data, the study illustrates rich data about social work practices through illustrating spatial interactions (at the meso-level and micro-level) between refugee women and healthcare providers. The findings reveal a spectrum of positive and challenging experiences that refugee women encounter while navigating the Turkish health system. Key challenges identified include:

- Language barriers, which hinder effective communication with health-care providers;
- Cultural stigmatization and prejudice, particularly surrounding perceptions of high fertility among refugee women, which shape health providers' attitudes and public discourse;

- Systemic pressure on health services in regions with dense refugee populations, which contributes to negative public sentiment;
- Gendered roles and expectations within refugee communities, which influence women's reproductive decision-making and overall well-being.

The observational data suggest that the Turkish health system provides maternal and reproductive healthcare to refugee women under TP without discrimination. This suggests that the principle of health equity is embedded within the operational framework of the Turkish health system. Furthermore, official document analysis highlights a coordinated effort involving national (Türkiye Ministry of Health), regional (EU), and international (WHO and UNICEF) institutions to ensure the delivery of quality maternal and reproductive care for refugee women.

We acknowledge the limitations of the study in terms of geographical scope, sample size, and diversity of refugee backgrounds, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. However, it offers a nuanced qualitative account of the maternal healthcare experiences of a marginalized population within Türkiye's national health system. The research contributes meaningfully to healthcare practice and informs policy development by highlighting both structural and interpersonal challenges faced by refugee women. The findings lead to several practice recommendations aimed at enhancing social inclusion and improving the quality of maternal care for refugee women:

- Sustain and strengthen collaborations between state and non-state health institutions providing maternal and reproductive care to refugee women.
- Increase investment in prenatal and postnatal education programs to improve the health literacy of refugees.
- Develop and implement training programs for health providers to enhance their cultural competence.
- Introduce structured educational and social integration programs for refugee women in FHCs, MHCs, and other public health facilities to increase health literacy, cultural competence, and social integration.

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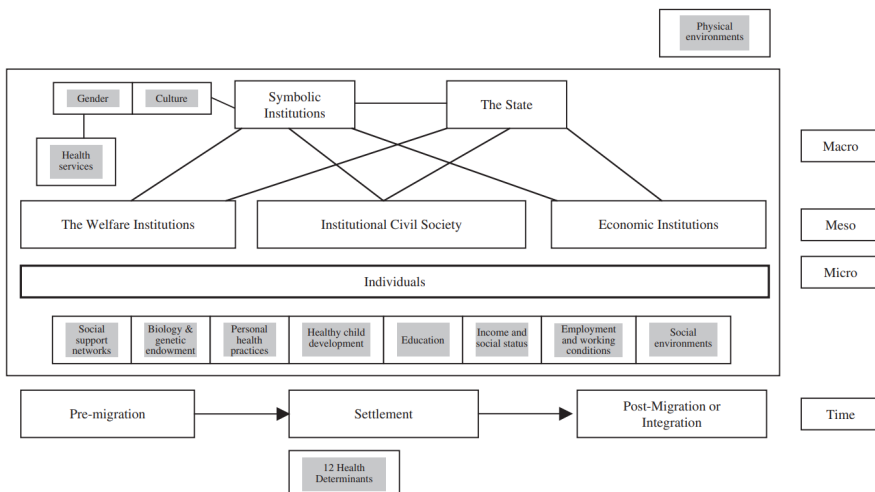
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Appendix 1

Diagram 2: Ecological model of migration, gender and health



Source: 'An ecological model for understanding culture as determinant of women's health' (Thurston and Viss-adjee, 2005, p.231)

Appendix 2

Table 2: Health Centers/Units that are included in participant observation for this study.

The type of center/unit	The key services provided for women	Health professionals present during observations	Population receiving care in the centers during the observations	Time spent on observation
FHC 1	-Pregnancy care and monitoring -Prenatal vaccination -Provision of Vitamin D and Iron (free) -Postnatal care and monitoring -Consultation and education for family planning -Free blood and other tests -Referrals to hospital -Other pre-hospital health services	-Midwives -Nurses	-Turkish Women -Refugee women from Syria	1 Full day
FHC 2	-Pregnancy care and monitoring -Prenatal vaccination -Provision of Vitamin D and Iron (free) -Postnatal care and monitoring -Consultation and education for family planning -Free blood and other tests -Referrals to hospital -Other pre-hospital health services	-Midwives -Nurses	-Turkish Women -Refugee women from Syria -Migrant women from Turkic nations (Ahiska)	1 Full day
MHC 1	-Pregnancy care and monitoring -Prenatal vaccination -Provision of Vitamin D and Iron (free) -Postnatal care and monitoring -Consultation and education for family planning -Free blood and other tests -Gynecology consultancy -Referrals to hospital -Other health services including primary and secondary care	-Health administrators -Gynecologist -Interpreters	-Refugee women (all Syrians)	1 full day

MHC 2	-Pregnancy care and monitoring -Prenatal vaccination -Provision of Vitamin D and Iron (free) -Postnatal care and monitoring -Consultation and education for family planning -Free blood and other tests -Gynecology consultancy -Referrals to hospital -Other health services including primary and secondary care	-Health administrators -GPs -Interpreters -Midwives	-Refugee women (all Syrians)	Half day (after-noon)
Hospital Breastfeeding Unit	-Provide breastfeeding training to women before and after childbirth -To provide and/or advice on the breast bumps or breastfeeding methods -To monitor new mothers about breastfeeding progress -To monitor babies' health, and development on each training session i.e. measuring babies' height and weight -To keep a report of the data from the training, and monitoring of babies and mothers -To provide and facilitate mandatory educational training to hospital staff about breastfeeding	-Nurse	-Turkish women who are pregnant or on maternal care in the hospital -Turkish women discharged from hospital after childbirth (walk-in) -Health professionals who are pregnant or on maternal care -Refugee women who are pregnant or on maternal care in the hospital -Refugee women discharged from hospital after childbirth (walk-in)	2 Full days

Hospital Maternity Unit	-Admission of the pregnant women -Examination and monitoring of pregnant women in labour -Monitoring and caring women after childbirth -Providing breastfeeding training -Guidance on postnatal care including physical and emotional support	-Nurses -Midwives -Obstetricians	-Turkish women mostly postnatal care (who had either natural birth or caesarean section) -Refugee women mostly postnatal care (who had either natural birth or caesarean section)	3 days (2-3 hours each day)
Caesarean Intensive Care Unit of a Hospital	-Examination and Monitoring of women after caesarean operation	-Nurse -Midwife - Obstetrician (briefly came in to examine a patient)	-Turkish women who had caesarean delivery -Refugee women who had caesarean delivery	2 hours

Source: The content of the table is created by the author based on the primary data collected during the fieldwork studies between December 2023 and February 2024.



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Dirk Tröndle

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Reconsidering Multidirectional Dynamics of German-Turkish Migration Relations: German Construction Workers in Ankara between 1924-1925

Dirk Tröndle* 

Abstract

German-Turkish migration relations are usually discussed in the context of Turkish labor migration to Germany beginning in the 1960s. This article highlights a largely forgotten counter-movement: the recruitment of 40 to 60 German construction workers and engineers by the Ankara city administration in 1924/1925 to help build Türkiye's new capital. The analysis shows that this migration was not driven by individual "push" or "pull" factors, but functioned as part of a state-controlled, symbolically charged modernization project. The case is situated within the field of tension between bureaucratic selectivity, prestige migration, and institutional continuity in German-Turkish relations. It illustrates how labor migration was intertwined with foreign policy interests, national prestige, and diplomatic crisis management. Furthermore, it adds a multidirectional perspective to historiographical migration research and demonstrates how migration could serve as an instrument of national representation just as quickly as it could be restricted. Overall, the case exemplifies the ambivalence of modern migration regimes.

Keywords : Migration History, Transnational Mobility, Modernization Regimes, Weimar Republic, German Mission, Türkiye-Germany Relations

Alman-Türk Göç İlişkilerinin Çok Yönlü Dinamiklerini Yeniden Düşünmek: 1924-1925 Yılları Arasında Ankara'daki Alman İnşaat İşçileri

Özet

Almanya-Türkiye göç ilişkileri genellikle 1960'lardan itibaren Türkiye'den Almanya'ya yönelik işgücü göçü bağlamında ele alınmaktadır. Bu makale ise büyük ölçüde unutulmuş bir karşı hareketi öne çıkarmakta ve 1924/1925 yıllarında Ankara şehir yönetimi tarafından Türkiye'nin yeni başkentinin inşası için 40 ila 60 Alman inşaat işçisi ve mühendisin işe alınmasını mercek altına almaktadır. Analiz, bu göçün bireysel itici ya da çekici faktörlerden kaynaklanmadığını, aksine devlet kontrollü ve sembolik açıdan yüklü bir modernleşme projesinin parçası olarak işlediğini ortaya koymaktadır. İncelenen vaka, Alman-Türk ilişkilerinde bürokratik seçicilik, prestij göçü ve kurumsal süreklilik arasındaki gerilim alanına yerleştirilmektedir. Bu örnek, işgücü göçünün dış politika çıkarları, ulusal prestij ve diplomatik kriz yönetimi ile nasıl iç içe geçtiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, göç tarihine çok yönlü bir perspektif kazandırmakta ve göçün, ulusal temsiliyetin bir aracı olarak kullanılabildiği kadar hızlı bir şekilde sınırlandırılabileceğini de göstermektedir. Böylece, modern göç rejimlerinin çelişkili doğasına ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Göç Tarihi, Ulusötesi Hareketlilik, Modernleşme Rejimleri, Weimar Cumhuriyeti, Alman Misyonu, Türkiye-Almanya İlişkileri

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Introduction

The question of why people migrate is not only highly topical but has been a recurring theme throughout human history. The phenomenon of migration is not an exceptional situation, but rather a constant feature of human existence. The motives for migration are manifold, ranging from coercion, hardship, and persecution, to hope, curiosity, and strategic life planning (Massey et al., 1993, p. 432). The scientific study of migration has produced a multitude of theoretical approaches, and no single theory can fully capture the phenomenon in all its complexity, but together they offer a heuristic panorama of economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.

This article focuses on a hitherto largely overlooked episode in German-Turkish relations: the recruitment of an estimated 40 to 60 German skilled workers and engineers by the then city planning officer Professor Max Rabe for construction projects in Ankara from 1924 to 1925 and the rapid, conflict-ridden end of their employment and return. German-Turkish migration research often focuses heavily on Turkish labor migration to Germany beginning in the 1960s, which Abadan-Unat has repeatedly criticized in various publications (Pusch, B., Split, J., 2014, pp. 9-10). This one-sided perspective sometimes obscures earlier, multidirectional mobility, as exemplified in the present case.

The hypothesis of this article is that the recruitment of German skilled workers was part of a larger, symbolically charged modernization project of the young Turkish Republic. The case exemplifies how migration is embedded in political representation logics: German engineers were regarded as bearers of technological progress, as a visible expression of Western connectivity, and thus as objects of prestige. However, this episode also highlights the ambivalence of such strategies: as soon as conflicts in everyday working life came to a head and the symbolic added value threatened to be lost, migration was abruptly restricted—an indication of selective and contradictory mechanisms of state control. This dynamic can also be interpreted as an expression of bureaucratic selectivity (Bonjour, 2011), in which migration was not a spontaneous but an actively regulated process. Nevertheless, it would be a significant overstatement to assess the city of Ankara as a gatekeeper of institutional modernization based on these minority events. Admittedly, the rapid expulsion of German skilled workers does testify to the fragility of symbolic state projects in a certain sense. Also, statements made by the mayor of Ankara to the German embassy, in which he expresses his regret at the failure of the employment and articulates his desire to continue benefiting from German construction expertise, have the potential to confirm this thesis (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [6], 1924, p. 1). However, the subsequent process of building a new capital city demonstrates precisely the opposite development.

The recruitment of skilled workers also appears to have served to symbolically elevate Ankara's status as the new capital, and technical expertise appears to have been

understood as cultural capital, the loss of which would have been seen as a loss of prestige. Here, the concept of prestige migration (Amelina & Bode, 2018) is a useful analytical category. As we will see, this resulted in a balancing act between promoting and controlling migration. This case exemplifies the precarious use of migration to represent sovereignty and modernity in nation states and demonstrates that labor migration in this context was neither random nor solely economically motivated, but part of a deliberately orchestrated and politically charged agenda.

This article shifts the perspective and aims to reconstruct this early phase of German-Turkish labor migration on a microhistorical basis and to show how the recruitment of German workers was part of the modernization project of the young Turkish Republic. Traditionally, many German-Turkish narratives focus on the antagonisms between East and West, the Orientalist concepts of Orient and Occident, or between Islam and Christianity. Instead of different worldviews and polarization, the portrayal of German-Turkish migration history has recently begun to focus more on connecting elements (Fuhrmann, 2014, p. 24). Finally, the case study points to institutional continuities in German-Turkish relations: despite the formal break after the First World War, a functioning structure remained in place on the basis of which migration and technical cooperation were organized. German labor migration was not based on existential hardship but was the result of a deliberately initiated recruitment process, and is therefore of particular interest in terms of migration history.

Methodologically, the article adopts a multidimensional approach. It begins with a microhistorical case study based on diplomatic sources, which makes it possible to trace migration processes at the level of specific actors and institutional practices. This is complemented by a discourse analysis of diplomatic communication, in which perceptions of expertise, migration, and national prestige are embedded. Third, the findings are situated within debates on migration and modernization theory in order to identify the structural logic of selective labor migration. The aim is to interpret this seemingly marginal episode as a crystallization point of state migration policy in the early Turkish Republic. The case enables a dual perspective: on the one hand, on the selectivity of labor policy, and on the other, on the often-overlooked multidirectional dynamics of German-Turkish migration relations. Moreover, the study contributes to the historical contextualization of current migration debates—not as a direct analogy, but as a historical example of structurally comparable control mechanisms. This reveals the fundamental ambivalence of modern mobility regimes: migration is promoted as an instrument of national representation and, at the same time, strictly restricted when there is a threat of loss of prestige. The episode examined here demonstrates how closely migration was intertwined with the assertion of state sovereignty, symbolic politics, and institutional selectivity, a logic that continues to shape contemporary migration policy discourse.

The analysis draws on a corpus of 42 diplomatic sources from the Political Archives of the Federal Foreign Office (AA) (PA-AA RAV 128-537/538) that have scarcely been evaluated to date. These include reports from the German legation in Ankara and İstanbul, transcripts of Turkish press articles, and extensive correspondence with the Federal Foreign Office, the Ankara city administration, and German companies involved. The selection of primary sources is based on a targeted and systematic review of the archives of the Federal Foreign Office for the years 1924–1937, originally focusing on the construction of the German Embassy in Ankara from 1924 and its subsequent relocation from İstanbul to Ankara. To this end, all relevant file folders were researched using a search application of the Federal Archives as an independent database, and the file folders that, based on their designations such as 1. Relocation of the Embassy to Angora, 2. Embassy Garden Angora, 3. Embassy Ankara, House Building, Gardens, 4. Embassy Ankara Construction, 5. Embassy Angora, and 6. Angora as Capital were ordered for the reading room of the Political Archives. This was followed by a review of roughly 500 documents in the 13 file folders, mainly according to their headings, and 409 documents were identified that were directly related to the construction of the embassy and the move to Ankara. Copies of these documents are available to the author in his private archive. The documents had already been organized by the Foreign Office according to thematic focus and chronological sequence, which facilitated structured navigation within the source base.¹

The 42 documents analyzed in this study on German professionals in Ankara were discovered somewhat by chance as a secondary outcome of research on the construction of the German Embassy in Ankara and its relocation from Istanbul to Ankara. Although not directly relevant to research on the construction of the embassy or the move, they appeared in broader files on diplomatic and construction matters. For the analysis, a multidimensional approach was adopted: The documents were first arranged chronologically in order to trace the sequence of recruitment, labor disputes, and expulsions. They were then grouped thematically according to content-related focal points such as political motivation, social tensions, and the symbolic significance of the skilled workers. Finally, a discursive interpretation examined the perception of German workers in diplomatic correspondence as an expression of institutional and symbolic logics.

Although the selective source material does not allow for a complete social history, it does offer a detailed insight into the political, economic, and symbolic logic of this historical migration event, from the political motivation behind the recruitment to the social tensions in everyday working life and the diplomatic handling of the failure. The

¹ A large part of these documents formed the basis for an article entitled “From Pera to Angora - Construction of the German Embassy in the Context of the Birth of a new capital,” which is to be published in a commemorative publication in 2025/2026.

historical names Constantinople and Agora² are still used in the written records; except in quotations, İstanbul and Ankara are used throughout the following text.

Conceptual Framework and Thematic Context

To conceptualize this, the analysis draws on a range of migration theories. Neoclassical theory interprets migration as a rational response to expected income differences (Hicks, 1932; Todaro, 1969). According to this logic, individuals migrate from low-income regions to more prosperous areas in order to maximize their economic benefit. The theory of the new economy of migration (Stark & Bloom, 1985) supplements this perspective with collectively made decisions within the family, whereby remittances serve as a means of income diversification and risk minimization. Both models primarily explain so-called push factors such as poverty, unemployment, or persecution.

In contrast, the dual labor market theory (Piore, 1979) emphasizes structural pull factors on the part of the receiving societies, such as the demand for cheap and flexible labor. Better living conditions, educational opportunities, and political freedoms are also relevant incentives for migration from this perspective. World-system theory (Wallerstein, 1974) and its continuation by Saskia Sassen (Sassen, 1988) situate migration in the context of global capitalist expansion, with peripheral regions becoming increasingly integrated into urban centers.

Complementing this, the theory of bureaucratic selectivity considers migration as a state-regulated process that is controlled through legal classifications (e.g., labor migrant, refugee) and institutional practices such as visas, border regimes, and documentation requirements (Bonjour, 2011). Closely related to this is the concept of prestige migration, which understands migration as symbolic capital: states recruit highly qualified migrants to demonstrate technological progress and modernity (Amelina & Bode, 2018). Finally, historical-institutional approaches (Fahrmeier, Lucassen & Gatrell, 2010) offer a further analytical perspective by highlighting the roots of modern migration control in colonial and nation-state administrative practices since the 19th century.

Against this conceptual backdrop, the question arises whether these theories can be meaningfully applied to the case of German labor migration to Ankara in the period 1924–1925 or whether doing so risks anachronism. If this hurdle is considered surmountable, the central research question is: Were the recruited German skilled workers viewed by the Ankara city administration not only as a technological resource, but also

² In correspondence, reference is usually made to the legation, namely the Constantinople Legation and the Angora Legation Department. Even though the German Empire was one of the first states to recognize Ankara as the new capital and opened an embassy in a portable wooden building in 1924, the construction of the actual embassy building took several years and the final move did not take place until 1928. The German ambassador Rudolf Nadolny only stayed in Ankara temporarily during these years and continued to reside in Istanbul with a large staff.

as symbolic representatives of Western modernity? This further prompts consideration of whether this represents an early instance of symbolic prestige migration deliberately controlled by a local government migration regime.

Chronology of Migration Phenomena between Germany and Türkiye

The shared German historical memory prominently recalls Prussian military aid in the late Ottoman era, which is documented in publications such as the 63 letters written by Helmuth Graf von Moltke (1800-1891),³ who as a military advisor at the court of Mahmud II gained insights not only into the Ottoman administrative and military apparatus but also into social developments and everyday life. The joint commemoration also refers to “the brotherhood in arms” during World War I and the German military mission, when hundreds of German officers and thousands of soldiers served in the Ottoman army and fought against the Allies at the Dardanelles-Gallipoli and in the Hejaz, among other places.⁴

The German community in İstanbul emerged in the wake of the German-speaking emigration movement that began in 1820, which primarily involved millions of Germans emigrating to South and North America. Compared to this mass exodus, the Ottoman Empire played a much smaller role; the number of German-speaking immigrants in the 1850s is estimated at around 1,000 (Pschichholz, 2014, p. 47). In particular, impoverished craftsmen who could not afford the passage to America tended to emigrate to nearby European countries and the Ottoman Empire, primarily to İstanbul. Emigration was particularly attractive and successful when skilled craftsmen or tradesmen did not face much competition in their new home, such as a Bavarian beer brewer who founded a brewery in the İstanbul suburb of Bebek in 1847 (Fuhrmann, 2015, p. 29). By 1904, the German population was estimated at 3,400 (Geser, 2016, p. 19).

In addition to İstanbul, Germans also migrated to other regions of the Ottoman Empire. In 1882, the total German population in the Ottoman Empire was estimated at 3,400, rising to 5,500 by 1911, including the territories in Palestine, Beirut, and Damascus (Türk and Kaya, 2020, p. 61). From the Turkish-Ottoman perspective, other migration movements are relevant that are often overlooked or unknown from the German

³ Collected writings and memoirs of Field Marshal Count Helmuth von Moltke in eight volumes. Including *Unter dem Halbmond: Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei in den Jahren 1835 bis 1839* (*Under the Crescent: Conditions and Events in Turkey from 1835 to 1839*).

⁴ Above all, General Otto Liman von Sanders (1855-1913), who was commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army during the defense of the Dardanelles in 1915 and later commander-in-chief of the Yıldırım Army Group, which was tasked with defending Palestine and Syria against British troops. Liman von Sanders was honorary chairman of the German-Turkish Association (DTV), founded in 1914, for a time. He recorded his memories in: *Five Years in Turkey*. By Cavalry General Liman von Sanders.

perspective. Nazan Maksudyan's monographs (Maksudyan, 2014; Maksudyan 2019) on Ottoman orphans and Ottoman women in Germany during World War I are particularly noteworthy, as is the research by Nurçin İleri (İleri, 2025) on the fate of Turkish-Ottoman apprentices and students as well as labor migration to Germany in the shadow of World War I. The sending of students and skilled workers for training had been state policy in the Ottoman Empire since the Tanzimat period and was carried out regularly from the time of Sultan Abdülhamit II. Initially, the preferred destination was France, but during the Second Constitutional Period, the German Empire increasingly became the focus. "The brotherhood in arms" between the two countries during the First World War strengthened relations not only in the military sphere but also in cultural and economic domains (İleri, 2025, p. 30).

The migration of Ottoman workers to Germany aimed at acquiring technological knowledge and adopting technological progress. From a German perspective, the strategic plan was to curb French influence in the Ottoman Empire and align the Ottoman education system more closely with the German model (İleri, 2025, p. 31). Behind this strategy of closer ties with Germany was also the intention to further open the Ottoman market to German industrial products. The German-Turkish Association (DTV) in Berlin and its counterpart, the Turkish-German Association (TDV) in İstanbul, underscored this rapprochement, supported by both German industry and politics. Malte Fuhrmann interprets this policy as driven by semi-colonialist motives and a cultural imperialist mentality (İleri, 2025, p. 31). From the perspective of the Young Turk government, this long-term national economic policy strategy was intended to initiate contributions to the development of Ottoman industry, make it less dependent on foreign influences, adopt technological advances, and train its own experts and skilled workers. During the First World War, we know of three different groups of Ottoman apprentices, students, pupils, and engineers, who together made up a group of approximately 2,000 people (İleri, 2025, p. 32). The first Turkish pupils and trainees in Germany are often referred to as the first guest workers (Gencer, 2015, p. 329). However, the work was arduous, and the trainees were often exploited by the companies.

After the First World War, the issue of war guilt led to a break in the previously close diplomatic, military, and economic relations between the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire prompted by the victorious powers. Under the Armistice of Mudros, signed on the Greek island of Limnos on October 30, 1918, the Ottomans not only lost control of the Straits but also had to relinquish all imperial territories outside Anatolia, while İstanbul was placed under occupation. The terms of the armistice also stipulated that, in addition to German officers and soldiers serving in the Ottoman Army, much of the German-speaking community (Germans and Austrians) had to leave İstanbul and Türkiye (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 31). The German-speaking communities in İzmir and İstanbul had existed since the first half of the 19th century, and in İstanbul, German schools,

a German hospital, and meeting places and clubs such as Teutonia and Alemania (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 307) had developed a presence and infrastructure that was clearly visible in the cityscape. Mangold-Will estimates that those forced to leave included "(...) 10,000 soldiers present due to the war and the long-established Turkish Germans – an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 people (...)" (Mangold-Will, 2014).

A notable episode was the arrival of more than 1,000 mostly German-Jewish scientists and cultural figures who fled to Mustafa Kemal's Türkiye to escape the Nazis and helped build the new republic. Particularly noteworthy here are German-speaking architects and urban planners such as Bruno Taut (1880-1938), Paul Bonatz (1877-1956), and Ernst Arnold Egli (1893-1974), who are immortalized in the cityscape of Ankara with countless buildings (Goethe-Institut Ankara. *Das Werden einer Hauptstadt*, 2020). The two urban planners Carl Christoph Lörcher (1884-1966) and Hermann Jansen (1869-1945) are also part of this narrative. In May 1924, Lörcher was commissioned by the new Turkish government to draft the first urban development plan, in which the contemporary concept of the garden city (Cengizkan, 2003, p. 157) played a central role. According to Lörcher, the new government district was to be built on both sides of a large boulevard modelled on *Unter den Linden*, with the parliament building and its large dome enthroned at the upper end. However, in a letter to the German legation, he expressed little hope that his plan would be implemented because: "The Turks will fragment their resources, waste them on trivialities, and, above all, fail to proceed in a systematic manner. Of course, little or nothing can be achieved in this way. It's a shame."⁵ (PA-AA RAV-128-537 [20], 1925, pp. 1-2). Based on Lurcher's development plan for the *Turkish capital and residence city of Angora*, Prof. Hermann Jansen won the competition announced by the Turkish government for the redesign of Ankara in 1929.

German-Turkish relations – whether through the deployment of military advisors to Turkey or the migration of students and trainees to Germany in the late Ottoman era or of scientists during the Nazi period – have been well researched. The reverse phenomenon, labor migration from Germany to Turkey, remains comparatively understudied and, in some places, a research desideratum. Only a few sources, such as the monograph by Türk and Şanda, show that since 1880 German civilian advisors have also come to the Ottoman Empire in addition to military exchanges (Türk and Şanda, 2020, p. 128). After the re-establishment of bilateral relations between the two countries, the recruitment of skilled workers from Germany resumed, as the newly founded Republic urgently needed experts to build its administrative and state system. In February 1924, the representation in Ankara reported on the visit of a delegation to prepare the German-Turkish friendship

⁵ "Die Türken werden ihre Mittel zersplittern, in lauter Nebensächlichkeiten verpuffen, und vor allem, was das Wichtigste wäre, ein planmässiges Vorgehen unterlassen. Auf solchen Wegen lässt sich natürlich nichts oder wenig erzielen. Schade drum."

treaty, noting that the Turkish government wanted to recruit almost 100 German experts to reorganize the administration (Türk and Şanda, 2020, p. 130), including ministerial officials, civil servants in the postal and telegraph services, customs administration, and the surveying department (Türk and Şanda, 2020, p. 136). Alongside these German experts, the new government's state-controlled labor migration program recruited specialists from countries such as Austria, Hungary, England, Italy, Belgium, and even the United States.

German Specialists for the Construction of the New Capital

German-Turkish relations during the Ottoman Empire are extensively documented in both German and Turkish sources, providing broad overviews as well as accounts of specific phases and events. According to Mangold-Will, however, there is a gap in our knowledge of relations between the two countries in the period following the First World War and before the National Socialists' rise to power and the end of the Weimar Republic in 1933 (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 11). The fact that the Weimar Republic's policy toward Türkiye is less well described may be due to the interruption of diplomatic relations after the end of the war, which was, however, only of short duration. The Young Turk triumvirate around Enver, Talat, and Cemal Pasha, as well as other leaders of the Committee of Unity and Progress, fled to Germany in a German submarine via Crimea. In exile in Berlin, they maintained ties with trusted contacts in the ministerial bureaucracy or the military, who had been central to the wartime German-Turkish alliance. "While Berlin became the well-known center for Unionist refugees, Munich developed more secretly into a gathering point for Turkish exiles and resistance against the Allied occupation in Türkiye."⁶ (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 54).

Bilateral relations between the two countries continued secretly via the Swedish representation in İstanbul, which represented German interests in Türkiye, while Turkish policy was handled by the German embassy in Sweden (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 200). Rudolf Nadolny (1873–1953)⁷ had also been working in Stockholm since 1921 and, following the official resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1924, served for many years as the Weimar Republic's first ambassador to İstanbul and Ankara. Nadolny was also the diplomat who, after the early recognition of the Republic of Türkiye by the Weimar Republic, supported the decision to move the German representation from İstanbul to Ankara and remained deeply committed to the construction of a

⁶ "Während Berlin zum bekannten Zentrum der geflüchteten Unionisten wurde, entwickelte sich München eher im Verborgenen zum Sammelpunkt türkischer Exilanten und des Widerstands gegen die alliierte Besatzung in der Türkei."

⁷ Nadolny served as envoy and ambassador to Iran, Sweden, Turkey, and Russia, among other countries, and headed the German delegation at the Geneva Disarmament Conference of the League of Nations 1932/1933. The well-known writer Stan Nadolny is his grandson, and his son Burkhard Nadolny was also a writer.

new embassy building there. He reportedly advocated that the new embassy be designed in the East Elbian style of landowner architecture. Whether he intended to use the Neu-deck estate of the later Reich President Paul von Hindenburg as a model, as is claimed, or “(...) to evoke memories of his home estate Camioken and the associated symbolic political statement on the loss of German territories in the East (...)”⁸ (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 353) is not clearly documented; according to Mangold Will, it was in any case a statement and a symbolic staging of Germanness.

For these reasons, it is not surprising that the official resumption of diplomatic relations between the two states also fostered German-Turkish cooperation in many other areas. The decision to make Ankara in Anatolia the new capital in October 1923 triggered a series of events. For example, foreign companies and urban planners were to be consulted in the construction of the new city, while skilled workers were to be recruited abroad to carry out the work. In the fall of 1924, Berlin newspapers published advertisements seeking a wide variety of skilled workers and professionals in the building trades, architects, and engineers to help build the new Türkiye and its new capital. Similar advertisements also appeared in Bucharest and Vienna (Çapa, 2020, p. 91), cities where the Ankara city prefect Ali Haydar Bey (1879–1937)⁹ stayed during an extended trip to Europe and Berlin to consult construction experts about the capital project. His delegation had brought stone and soil samples from Ankara to obtain the opinions of renowned experts and geologists regarding the suitability of local resources for producing basic building materials such as bricks, cement, and tiles. In Berlin, a scientist specializing in mineral deposits judged the clay samples from the Gazi Paşa Çiftlik agricultural estate to be particularly well suited for producing bricks and masonry blocks (Çapa, 2020, p. 90f). In addition, the Turkish delegation toured factories and ordered machines and furnaces to expand domestic building-material production in Ankara.

The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (DAZ) published an advertisement in its October 1, 1924, edition seeking skilled workers in the construction trades between the ages of 20 and 45 who were “willing to work with the Turks (...) and, if possible, had already worked in Türkiye and were willing to make a new life there”¹⁰ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537

⁸ “(...) Erinnerungen an das heimatliche Gut Camioken und die damit verbundene symbolische politische Stellungnahme zu den deutschen Gebietsverlusten im Osten (...)”

⁹ Ali Haydar (Yuluğ) Bey was a bureaucrat in the late Ottoman era who worked in many regions of the Ottoman Empire. He was appointed governor of Istanbul by the new government in 1923, where he also held the position of city prefect for a short time. On June 5, 1924, he was appointed city prefect (şehremini) of Ankara, where he remained in office until his resignation at the end of 1926. (Dere, 2023, p. 715-16). Until 1930, mayors in the Republic of Türkiye were not elected but appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, like governors, which is why the term city prefect better fits their duties and powers.

¹⁰ “(...) die gewillt sind mit den Türken zu arbeiten (...) und möglichst schon in der Türkei tätig waren und mit besten Willen sich dort eine Existenz schaffen wollen.”

[3], 1924). The advertisement referred to the simple living conditions in Ankara, guaranteed German cuisine, and clarified that the reimbursement of return travel costs before the end of the two-year employment contract was only possible upon presentation of a medical certificate or in the event of a serious illness. As departure was already planned for the following days, the selection committee led by the city prefect and the future city planning officer of Ankara, Prof. Rabe, who conducted the interviews at the Turkish embassy in Berlin, had to act quickly. No references to the course of the interviews can be found in the documents reviewed or in the diplomatic correspondence. However, it can be assumed that, due to the self-imposed urgency, decisions may have been made hastily in one or two cases and that some recruits did not have realistic expectations of the challenges in Türkiye, nor were they necessarily suited for such a demanding undertaking.

An advertisement in the *Berliner Morgenpost* on September 26, 1924, indicated that preference was given to “(...) possibly single skilled workers (...)”¹¹ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [2], 1924). Based on the sources reviewed, it is not easy to determine the number of skilled workers who left for Ankara with Rabe. References in some embassy reports on the Rabe mission suggest that the group comprised roughly 40–60 men from various construction trades, most of whom came from Berlin and the surrounding area. On November 2, 1924, the pro-government newspaper *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* (National Sovereignty) reported on the return of the city prefect, listing the equipment, machinery, and building materials and factory units ordered from German companies. Prof. Rabe is also mentioned in a half-sentence, along with other experts in the fields of water, green spaces, and electrification who were still to arrive, as well as 43 construction workers (*amele*) of various professions who had come with him to Ankara (Karataş, 2019, p. 25). It remains unclear whether these advertisements also appeared in other German cities and whether comparable selection and recruitment measures were carried out outside Berlin.

German City Planning Officer in Ankara

The available documents do not reveal how City Prefect Ali Haydar Bey first contacted his new city planning officer. The contact was likely established during his first trip to Europe in Berlin, and Prof. Dr. Max Rabe from Homburg v. d. Höhe was appointed by Ali Haydar Bey as “(...) technical advisor with the title of city planning officer for the reconstruction of Angora (...)”¹² (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [1], 1924, p. 1) for a two-year term starting on October 1, 1924. He was thus responsible for overseeing all trades involved in Ankara’s reconstruction. Prof. Rabe had a significant say in appointments and was guaranteed a monthly tax-free salary of 200 US dollars, as well as official accommodation and

¹¹ “(...) mögl. ledige Facharbeiter (...)”.

¹² “(...) technischer Beirat mit dem Titel Stadtbaurat für den Neuaufbau von Angora (...)”.

appropriate office space. He ranked directly below the city prefect (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [1], 1924 p. 2).

However, Rabe's tenure was short-lived, ending abruptly after only a few weeks. On December 6 of the same year, Embassy Counselor von Moltke (1884–1943)¹³ reported from the legation in İstanbul about intrigues within the German staff, Rabes' significant loss of authority, and other ominous and unfriendly events which had led to his immediate dismissal by the city prefect of Ankara (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [5], 1924, p. 1). In a newspaper interview on November 18, 1924, Ali Haydar Bey claimed there had been no disagreements between the city and Rabe, but that the problems existed between Rabe and the German workers he had brought with him. On the other hand, contrary statements can be found in which the city prefect described Prof. Rabe as a very angry and nervous contemporary who had submitted his resignation of his own accord (Çapa, 2020, p. 9).

A detailed report at the end of November 1924 from Embassy Counselor Walter Holstein (1881–unknown)¹⁴ in Ankara to Ambassador Nadolny clarified the circumstances of Rabe's dismissal. According to Holstein, Rabe's poor decisions, personal faults, and lack of leadership qualities had turned parts of the workforce against him. They not only refused to follow him but also instigated countless intrigues. Holstein reports on controversial disputes and turf wars, including a confrontation between Rabe and the construction manager Leube, which occurred in front of the workforce, regarding the structural calculations for a car garage and its support beams. The garage almost collapsed three days later if Rabe had not had an additional support beam inserted. "This led to a serious conflict of competence between Rabe, Leube, and Hikmet Bey, with lively participation on all sides (even the interpreters expressed their expert opinions) and finally a complaint to the city prefect by Rabe about Leube's complete incompetence; the result: a serious rift between Rabe and Leube"¹⁵ (PA-AA-RAV-128-538 [1], 1925, p. 2).

The same report describes another dispute that took place a few days later between Rabe and Schwab, the construction manager responsible for the electrical work, in the city prefecture building. During an inspection, Rabe criticized Schwab for a missing

¹³ Hans-Adolf Helmuth Erdmann Ludwig Waldemar von Moltke was embassy counselor in İstanbul between 1924 and 1928 and later envoy and ambassador in Warsaw. He is related to Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke through his grandfather Adolf von Moltke.

¹⁴ Walter Holstein was born in İstanbul and served as a soldier in the Prussian military mission in Mosul, among other places, in the staff of the Turkish army (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 189). He was accredited to the Swedish Embassy in İstanbul in 1921 and held various posts in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Ankara, and Trabzon for more than 20 years (Mangold-Will, 2013, p. 118).

¹⁵ "Darauf schwerer Kompetenzkonflikt zwischen Rabe, Leube und Hikmet Bey, unter lebhafter allseitiger Beteiligung (selbst die Dolmetscher äußerten sich sachverständig) und schließlich Beschwerde beim Stadtpräsidenten seitens Rabes über die gänzliche Unfähigkeit Leubes; Folge: schweres Zerwürfnis zwischen Rabe und Leube."

plug connection. Holstein reports a “violent altercation between Rabe and Schwab, an exchange of words, shouting, various people standing around in the corridors rushing over, and finally Hikmet Bey, who threw the entire group out of the room! As a result, Schwab is also portrayed to the prefect as a completely incompetent man”¹⁶ (PA-AA-RAV-128-538 [1], 1924, p. 3).

Because Rabe publicly humiliated his employees and for other reasons, intrigues developed against him, and within a very short time a large number of workers revolted. After further incidents, the prefect assigned Rabe the new task of drawing up a master plan for the construction of Ankara and relieved him of his previous duties. After a few days, 38 of the German skilled workers nevertheless assured Rabe of their full confidence in a written statement, because they did not want to be subordinate to the new city planning officer. Rabe had this letter translated into Turkish and sent it to the city prefect along with a message stating that he needed other German workers for his new task who might need to be recruited from Germany. Holstein’s report notes succinctly: “These two ‘démarches’ by Rabe finally broke the camel’s back: Rabe received written notice of his dismissal from the prefect on the same day (...); at the same time, the prefect informed Rabe verbally that he did not wish to have any further dealings with him and did not want to see him again”¹⁷ (PA-AA-RAV-128-538 [1], 1924, p. 4). Rabe approached the German embassy and asked them to represent his claim of \$1,000 against the Ankara city administration. He also announced further claims, such as the costs of a spa treatment, which, according to his own statements, he had to undergo due to an illness he had contracted while working for the city of Ankara (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [5], 1924, p. 1).

Rabe wanted to remain in Ankara until the prefecture had paid him the money. Holstein was apparently able to convince Rabe that he would be better off pursuing his claims with the Foreign Office in Berlin, whereupon he returned to Germany (PA-AA-RAV-128-538 [1], 1924, p. 6). Although only seven other skilled workers had left the country with Rabe, and the rest of the nearly 40 experts, wished to remain in Ankara, in the weeks and months that followed, the vast majority of German construction workers and engineers who had come to the city with him and the city prefect at the beginning of October 1924 were dismissed or resigned for personal reasons. In both cases, they were unable to claim reimbursement of their return travel expenses, an issue that occupied the legation and the Foreign Office for a long time.

¹⁶ “Heftiges Aneinandergeraten zwischen Rabe und diesem, Wortwechsel, Geschrei, Herbeilaufen verschiedener auf den Gängen Herumstehender, schließlich Hikmet Beys, der die ganze Gesellschaft aus dem Saal raussetzte! Folge: Auch Schwab wird dem Präfekten als ein ganz unfähiger Mann dargestellt.”

¹⁷ “Diese beiden „Démarches“ Rabes schlugen dem Fass endlich den Boden aus: Rabe erhielt noch am gleichen Tage vom Präfekten schriftlich die Kündigung, (...); gleichzeitig ließ der Präfekt Rabe mündlich mitteilen, er wünsche keine Auseinandersetzung mehr mit ihm, wolle ihn überhaupt nicht mehr sehen.”

Diplomacy between Complaint Management and Foreign Trade

During those years, the German legation in İstanbul and the representation in Ankara performed a wide range of delicate complaint-management tasks and obviously exercised great moderation in order to mediate between the various demands of the German workers and the Ankara city administration. Since Ali Haydar Bey and Prof. Rabe had recruited the construction workers in Germany on their own initiative, without involving the Foreign Office, the latter did not initially see itself as the primary point of contact for the misconduct of some Germans or for their contractual claims. The German diplomats were keen to smooth over any unease on the Turkish side and to avert any negative effects of these isolated incidents as well as potential damage to the strengthened bilateral relations between the two countries. The documents in this collection reinforce the impression that there was particular concern about foreign trade relations and contracts for German companies exporting goods, building materials, and machinery to Türkiye.

Admittedly, there was also a willingness to listen to the concerns of the German skilled workers and their individual fates, as evidenced by the extensive correspondence in the fall of 1924 and winter of 1924/1925 between Ankara and İstanbul, as well as to and from Berlin, regarding various complaints, demands, and requests from relatives in Germany. However, when assessing most of the skilled workers who had lodged complaints, a very clear stance and critical opinion quickly emerged internally. In a lengthy concluding summary on the Rabe case and his expedition, Embassy Counselor Holstein reported: "(...) 90% of the Rabe people can only be described as adventurers and rabble who (...) hoped to establish a 'comfortable' existence here as a kind of master race among Negroes"¹⁸ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [11], 1925, p. 2). This assessment of Embassy Counselor Holstein reveals a clearly racist and colonial mindset that was widespread in parts of European foreign policy during the interwar period. This phrase testifies to a colonialist superiority complex and reflects a deeply rooted hierarchy of people based on racial categories and shows a sweeping devaluation of the Rabe participants, while at the same time conveying an Orientalist view of the African population. Such discourse often served to legitimize colonial intervention and delegitimized local or migrant actors across the board. Only about half of the construction workers who had traveled to Ankara with Rabe resigned shortly after Rabe's departure or were dismissed, and many of them sought new employment. At the end of March 1925, the embassy reported that a total of 21 Germans were still in the service of the Ankara city administration. Nevertheless, Ali Haydar Bey made it unmistakably clear in a conversation with Holstein that he could not tolerate construction workers who had come to Ankara at the expense of

¹⁸ "(...) 90% der Rabe-Leute kann man nicht anders als Abenteurer und Gesindel bezeichnen, die (...) hoffen, sich hier eine "gemütliche" Existenz als so eine Art Herrenmenschen unter Negern gründen zu können."

the city administration now taking up employment with other companies in Ankara or the surrounding area. He had to “(...) solely out of consideration for his own prestige, insist that these people be expelled from Türkiye as troublesome foreigners (...) May I respectfully request the ambassador (...) to provide financial assistance to the Rabe people who are loitering here without jobs so that they can return to their homeland”¹⁹ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [11], 1925, pp. 2–3).

The city prefect’s position must have reached all other German companies and construction sites in Ankara and Anatolia, as almost none of the affected workers were able to find other employment. Furthermore, the conflict in Ankara alarmed the embassy and prompted Holstein to argue that the *German Reich* should bear the costs, as otherwise negative effects on German-Turkish relations were to be feared. In the same letter, Holstein put it quite clearly: “If a few dozen unemployed Germans are lying on the streets begging in the large international port city of Constantinople, this is hardly damaging to our prestige; but here it is different; here it could cause us serious and lasting damage”²⁰ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [11], 1925, p. 3). Ambassador Nadolny agreed with Holstein’s request and telegraphed Holstein’s assessment word for word to Berlin, adding that deportation should be prevented by immediate removal at the expense of the Reich “(...) since the people in Romania and Bulgaria would probably not find work there either and would have to be transported back to their homeland at the expense of the Reich”²¹ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [12], 1925, p. 2).

The failed Rabe case was therefore regarded by German diplomats not only as an embarrassment, but also as a growing threat to the reputation of the German Reich and the foreign economic relations of both countries. Diplomatic correspondence between the Foreign Office and the embassy contains many critical references to the arbitrary actions of the city prefect, who hired these skilled workers and Rabe without consulting the German authorities. After some initial hesitation, however, there was a fundamental change of heart, especially after the city prefect’s request for help, as “(...) everything will be done to ensure that the German company as a whole does not fail”²² (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [5], 1924, p. 2). The embassy and the Foreign Office developed ideas on how best to

¹⁹ “(...) allein aus Rücksicht auf sein eigenes Prestige darauf dringen, dass diese Leute als lästige Ausländer aus der Türkei ausgewiesen würden. (...) Darf ich Herrn Botschafter gehorsamst bitten, (...) die hier stellungslos herumlungenden Rabe-Leute mit Geldmitteln zwecks Rückkehr in die Heimat unterstützen zu dürfen.”

²⁰ “Wenn in der grossen internationalen Hafenstadt Konstantinopel einige Dutzend stellungs- und arbeitslose Deutsche bettelnd auf den Strassen liegen, ist es unserem Prestige wohl kaum schädlich; anders hier; hier kann uns daraus ein schwerer, nachhaltiger Schaden entstehen.”

²¹ “(...), da die Leute in Rumänien bzw. Bulgarien voraussichtlich auch keine Arbeitsmöglichkeit finden würden und von dort aus ebenfalls auf Reichskosten in die Heimat zurücktransportiert werden müssten.”

²² “(...) alles daran setzen wird, damit das deutsche Unternehmen als ganzes nicht scheitert.”

respond to the request for assistance from Ali Haydar Bey, who was looking for a successor for Rabe as well as additional skilled workers. Holstein suggested to Ambassador Nadolny that, given the low salaries paid by the Ankara city administration, it might be possible to recruit civil servants in Germany and grant them leave of absence, who would then receive "sufficient remuneration" from the city administration. "It is unlikely that we will be able to attract skilled workers here on the salary offered by Haidar Bey alone. And now, if anything, we must send only the very best people (...)"²³ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [11], 1925, p. 1).

Regarding the question of the costs for the repatriation of the Rabe people, Nadolny again instructed Holstein to seek talks with Ali Haydar Bey and find a middle ground for sharing the costs. The German diplomats had not failed to notice that Ali Haydar Bey's trips to Europe and the failed recruitment of German skilled workers were now being viewed critically by the Turkish press, and that the city prefect was facing strong criticism from his opponents (PA-AA-RAV-128-538 [1], 1924, p. 7). However, as there was little hope of this happening, the ambassador recommended that the total costs be covered so that those who had fallen out of favor could be brought out of the country and back to Germany as soon as possible. For future ventures of this kind and further recruitment of German skilled workers to Türkiye, Nadolny also proposed that the Reich Ministry of Labor be involved in such a way that only contracts for employment abroad that contractually regulated the costs of the return journey would be permitted (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [12], 1925, p. 3). The Foreign Office responded quickly, and Berlin decided to advance the costs of the Rabe people's return journey as an exception, with those affected having to commit in writing to repay the expenses (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [14], 1925). The documents available do not reveal how many of the Rabe people ultimately returned to Germany at their own expense or took advantage of the embassy's offer. By the end of March 1925, the problem in Ankara seemed to have resolved itself, at least to a greater or lesser extent. Holstein reported: "(...) None of the Rabe people are currently unemployed or wandering around"²⁴ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [15], 1925).

Complaints and Other Tragic Individual Cases

The German diplomats in Türkiye and Berlin were clearly trying to smoothe things over and had to act against the alleged malicious intentions and unfair motives of some people in Rabe's expedition. The Foreign Office reported on the engineer Bever, who had been recruited by Ali Haydar Bey as Rabe's deputy and had terminated his contract at the same

²³ " (...) gezahlten Romuneration über durchaus hinreichende Bezüge verfügen würden. Für das von Haidar Bey ausgeworfene Gehalt allein dürfte man wohl kaum Corifeen hierher locken können. Und wir müssen jetzt, wenn überhaupt, nur die ausgesucht besten Leute hersenden, (...)."

²⁴ " (...) Stellungs- und arbeitslos treibt sich von den Rabe-Leuten zur Zeit niemand mehr herum. "

time as Rabe after only a short period. Bever had returned to Germany and frequently appeared at the Foreign Office in his capacity as representative of his own consulting firm. It was feared that he was posing as a negotiator for the city of Ankara vis-à-vis several companies in Jena, Dresden, and Dessau, which is why it was decided to warn the companies concerned in advance and thus avert further trouble and damage to bilateral relations (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [5], 1924, p. 2). Bever had already promoted the idea of establishing an information center for German skilled workers in Türkiye within the German community in İstanbul and immediately recommended himself as the representative responsible for such a contact point. He obviously found support for this idea from, among others, the president of the German Teutonia Association in İstanbul and representatives of the legation in İstanbul. The campaigning for this project must have been so vehement that the Foreign Office felt compelled to instruct the legation to warn the relevant persons in İstanbul about Bever. "Bever gives the impression of a mentally unstable person who overestimates his abilities and likes to play the busy pompous person. The legation is kindly requested to inform Mr. Ruff of this in an appropriate manner"²⁵ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [10], 1925, p. 2).

At the end of 1924, the Ankara city administration had complained to the embassy in a letter from Ali Haydar Bey regarding delays in deliveries of materials and machinery or the failure of some German companies to comply with agreements, and requested that the embassy mediate (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [6], 1924, p. 1). Ali Haydar Bey's opening statement emphasized the great importance of cooperation between the two countries, the Turkish side's strong trust in Germany, and the desire to benefit from the knowledge and experience of the German people in the construction of the new capital. The city prefect then listed a number of orders he had personally placed with German companies during his visit to Germany. Although he had made cash payments on site and immediately instructed the Ottoman Bank to issue the necessary letters of credit for the remaining amounts upon his return, Ali Haydar Bey believed that some of the companies had only partially or inadequately fulfilled their contractual obligations. For example, some machines and manufacturing parts that were strategically important for producing the necessary building materials had not been delivered as contractually agreed, according to the accusation, leading to fears of considerable delays in the further construction of the city.

Specifically, the city prefect complained about delays in the delivery of a wood factory and a wood-cutting machine that he had ordered from the *Allgemeine Werkzeug-Maschinen-Gesellschaft* in Berlin, and in the shipment of the brick factory and the kiln from the

²⁵ "Bever macht den Eindruck eines geistig nicht ganz normalen Menschen, der seine Fähigkeiten überschätzt und gern den geschäftigen Wichtigtuier spielt. Die Gesandtschaft wird ergebenst gebeten, Herrn Ruff davon in geeigneter Weise mündlich zu verständigen."

Nienburger Maschinenfabrik in Nienburg a. d. Saale (Niemag) for the construction of a strategically important brick factory in Ankara. In both cases, he had paid 15 percent of the purchase price in cash (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [6], 1924, p. 2), and both parties had different interpretations of the installment amount. In its reply to the AA, Niemag, as an export-oriented company, made it clear that customer satisfaction was its highest priority and that it would not engage in any behavior that could damage the reputation of German industry. This was particularly important, as this first major order in Türkiye was intended to test the market for further follow-up orders (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [7], 1925, p. 1). Niemag was able to demonstrate, through the enclosed purchase agreement, that there had been a misinterpretation on the part of the city prefect. The written agreement regulated the sale of materials, fittings, and plans for the construction of a kiln for a brick factory, but not a complete kiln, as claimed by the city prefect. In addition, there had been delays in the contractually agreed opening of the letter of credit at the Ottoman Bank, which had led to a series of rejections and further delays in the letters of credit deposited and the payment of the installments due.

However, in another case of delay, there was particular urgency for reasons of public health. The city prefect had paid 80 percent of the purchase price in cash for several “(...) Etuve machines (...) which are related to public health in the country (...)”²⁶ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [6], 1924, p. 1). The correspondence available does not reveal the purpose for which these drying ovens were purchased. Since such machines were used for disinfection and sterilization for medical purposes, it can be assumed that they were intended for use in the health sector. With one exception, all disputes with German companies including Niemag had been resolved by March 1925, and Ali Haydar Bey thanked the ambassador for his intervention (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [13], 1925).

The embassy was also informed of many individual cases, some of which were very specific and unique. For example, a rumor was spread that the construction worker Rudolf Prien, who had been dismissed for refusing to work and who, unlike most others, had been able to find employment on the construction of the railway line between Ankara and Sivas, had been detained against his will and raped (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [8], 1925, p. 1). However, Prien personally rejected these outrageous allegations as untrue and mere rumors in a written statement; he had neither been detained nor raped. Further individual cases were pursued by relatives in Germany who contacted the Foreign Office in Berlin. One such case was that of the mother of 22-year-old Eugen von Niessen, who was concerned about her son's health because he suffered from a lung condition and had been recruited by Rabe despite being certified unfit for tropical service by a doctor. The mother expressed her fears that “(...) her son would not be able to tolerate the climate

²⁶ “(...) Etuve-Maschinen, (...) die in Verbindung mit der Volksgesundheit im Lande stehen(...)”.

and would perish”²⁷ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [9], 1925) and asked the Foreign Office to arrange for his early release from the two-year contract and reimbursement of his return travel expenses. Niessen returned to Germany early and unharmed. This case may be further evidence that the recruitment campaign in Berlin did not have the desired response and was not as successful as had been hoped or imagined, and that the Turkish authorities had not examined the suitability of the men with the desired depth and seriousness. In another case, that of 19-year-old bricklayer Bruno Köpke, whose father also approached the Foreign Office in Berlin, the embassy or legation councilor Holstein was able to act as a mediator. Köpke was referred by Holstein to another German company, Firma Heusler from İstanbul, which was building the new post office in Ankara. But his employment there was also short-lived, until he found a job with Philipp Holzmann in Diyarbakır on the construction site for the railway line (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [16], 1925, p. 2).

Although the embassy had been able to prevent vagrant Germans from straining bilateral relations by advancing their travel expenses, there were still a number of cases in which those affected asserted claims against the AA after their return to Germany. For example, civil engineer Wilhelm Panzenhagen claimed wages withheld by the AA and also complained in Berlin to Counselor Holstein, who, despite Panzenhagen’s request, did not want to intervene with the city prefect without instructions from Berlin (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [17], 1925). The Panzenhagen case was delicate for another reason, because he threatened to go to the German press if necessary and seemed prepared to cause negative headlines. This was taken very seriously by the German Embassy and the AA. “In my opinion, this man’s flight to the German press must be prevented at all costs and by all means in the interests of our work here,”²⁸ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [19], 1925, p. 2) according to Holstein in Ankara.

Finally, there were also accidents that strained bilateral relations on more than one occasion. For example, two workers were injured in an accident while building a silo under the supervision of the mechanic Börnicke; one Hungarian worker died and a Turkish worker was seriously injured. Börnicke was temporarily taken into police custody and Envoy Holstein held talks with the city administration for his release. However, the person concerned had already attracted negative attention on several occasions due to drunkenness in public and had “(...) caused a completely scandalous incident one evening in a state of total intoxication at the Fresco restaurant (...), which (...) gave rise to a temporary surge of anti-German sentiment here”²⁹ (PA-AA-RAV-128-537 [18], 1925, p. 2).

²⁷ “ (...), daß ihr Sohn das Klima nicht vertragen wird und zugrunde geht.”

²⁸ “Eine Flucht dieses Mannes in die Öffentlichkeit der deutschen Presse müsste meines Erachtens im Interesse unserer hiesigen Arbeit unter allen Umständen und mit jedem Mittel verhindert werden.”

²⁹ “ (...) in total betrunkenem Zustande im Lokal Fresco eines Abends einen ganz skandalösen Auftritt verursacht (...), der (...) Anlaß zu einer vorübergehenden stärkeren antideutschen Hetze hieselbst geboten hat.”

Conclusion

The episode surrounding the recruitment and subsequent expulsion of German skilled workers in the context of the construction of the new capital, Ankara, points to fundamental dynamics of modern migration regimes. It shows that migration in the early 20th century was not only motivated by economic factors or individual motives, but was also deeply embedded in state modernization projects, national representation interests, and diplomatic constellations. Migration was selectively controlled, symbolically charged, and politically instrumentalized, and it could be quickly reversed or terminated if expectations were not met. The case exemplifies the ambivalence of selective migration: while foreign skilled workers were initially welcomed as bearers of know-how and civilizational progress, within a few months they became “annoying foreigners,” whose mere presence was perceived as a threat to national prestige. This episode not only underscores the fragility of early Republican labor migration projects but also points to a deeper tension between technocratic modernization and cultural sovereignty that continues to shape many states to this day.

In the case studied, the recruitment of German engineers and skilled workers was part of a symbolically charged prestige concept: the presence of these experts was intended to demonstrate the young Republic of Türkiye’s ability to connect with “Western modernity” and to showcase the new capital as a place of technological progress and international recognition. At the same time, the episode highlights the ambivalence of such strategies: as soon as conflicts in everyday working life came to a head, and the symbolic added value threatened to be lost, migration was abruptly restricted. This selective control shows that migration must be understood here not as a spontaneous flow but as an actively regulated process, whose decisions were closely linked to the protection of prestige and political sovereignty. The city of Ankara acted not only as a recipient of technical expertise but also as the guardian of a fragile symbolic order, in which the loss of the hoped-for prestige was perceived as a crisis-ridden disappointment.

Furthermore, the article adds an important perspective to the history of Turkish-German migration: it shows that the direction of migration is historically contingent and did not only run from the global South to the global North but also in the opposite direction, in specific political and institutional constellations. German-Turkish relations in the interwar period thus appear less as a linear precursor to later labor migration from Türkiye and more as a complex space of exchange in which migration was a central instrument of diplomatic, economic, and symbolic-political interests. In addition, the individual fates of German workers in Anatolia in 1924–1925, briefly described here, are a historical footnote, which is presented from the very narrow narrative perspective of diplomatic reporting. However, this account breaks down the great symbolism of Ankara’s rise to capital-city status from the meta-level to an everyday cultural dimension, making

the ideological spaces of the new Türkiye tangible and experienceable. This footnote also represents an expansion of German-Turkish migration history to include a lesser-known migration route from Germany to Türkiye.

This historical episode reminds us that migration is not a one-dimensional or timelessly stable process but is always caught between political interests, institutional orders, and symbolic attributions. The failure of the Rabe mission, in particular, shows that migration is not only shaped by economic needs or individual mobility but is also strongly regulated by state selection mechanisms, diplomatic considerations, and social notions of belonging. The history of German construction workers in Ankara therefore raises further questions: under what conditions is migration constructed as desirable? When does it tip over into state-legitimized exclusion? And how do national modernization efforts relate to global migration dynamics? This episode not only adds a historically neglected dimension to the conventional narrative of Turkish-German migration history, but also illustrates how closely labor migration, state formation, and international relations have been intertwined throughout history—and continue to be so today.

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External Voting and the Democratic Boundary Problem: A Democratic Inclusion Analysis of the Turkish Case

Süleyman Furkan Çobankara* 

Abstract

Türkiye's external voting reforms highlight the challenges of defining democratic boundaries in a transnational era. This article addresses these reforms across four historical phases (1950–2014) through the lens of the “democratic boundary problem,” assessing how non-resident enfranchisement interacts with the All Subjected, All Affected, and Stakeholder principles of democratic inclusion. Drawing on a qualitative, interpretive analysis of primary legal sources, this study finds that Türkiye's gradual extension of external voting rights reflects an evolving and often conflicting interplay among inclusion principles, rather than a coherent normative trajectory. In practice, legal reforms frequently outpace theoretical justifications, producing hybrid and contested boundaries of the demos. By situating Türkiye's experience within global debates, the article develops a comparative and pluralist framework for evaluating external enfranchisement, offering conceptual tools for research on transnational democracy and policymaking.

Keywords : Democratic Boundary Problem, External Voting, Türkiye, All Subjected Principle, All Affected Principle, Stakeholder Principle

Yurt Dışı Oy Hakkı ve Demokratik Sınır Sorunu: Demokratik Kapsayıcılık Bağlamında Türkiye Örneğinin Analizi

Özet

Türkiye'nin yurt dışı oy hakkı reformları, ulusötesi çağda demokratik sınır sorununu ortaya koyar niteliktedir. Bu makale, Türkiye'nin yurt dışı oy hakkı reformlarını dört tarihsel dönemde (1950-2014), “demokratik sınır sorunu” bağlamında incelemekte ve yurt dışı oy kullanma hakkının meşruiyetini üç temel demokratik kapsayıcılık ilkesi (“Tüm Tabi Olanlar,” “Tüm Etkilenenler,” “Paydaşlık”) ışığında değerlendirmektedir. Bu çalışma niteliksel ve yorumlayıcı bir yaklaşımla, birincil hukuki kaynaklar temelinde analiz edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, Türkiye'nin yurt dışı seçmenlerine tanıdığı hakların tutarlı bir kuramsal gerekçeden ziyade çoğunlukla pratik ve mevzu bahis ilkelere göre çelişkili politik uzlaşmalar ile şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Makale, Türkiye örneğini küresel literatüre yerleştirerek, yurt dışı oy hakkı uygulamalarının değerlendirilmesinde karşılaştırmalı ve çoğulcu bir kavramsal çerçeveye geliştirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Demokratik Sınır Problemi, Yurt Dışı Oy Hakkı, Türkiye, Tüm Tabi Olanlar İlkesi, Tüm Etkilenenler İlkesi, Paydaşlık İlkesi

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Introduction

External voting rights have become a defining feature, raising critical questions about the boundaries of the political community and the legitimacy of enfranchising non-resident citizens. As of 2024, more than 140 countries have adopted some form of external voting rights, highlighting its emergence as a global democratic norm (Allen et al., 2024; Wellman et al., 2023, p. 898). Within this global expansion, Türkiye was a relatively late adopter, granting full external voting rights only in the early 21st century (Yener-Roderburg, 2020, p. 5). In contemporary democratic theory, the demos is considered the ultimate basis of political authority and the arbiter of disputes. Yet the absence of a definitive answer concerning the boundaries of the demos, known as the democratic boundary problem (Ginnane, 2021), poses a fundamental normative challenge. As Dahl (1990) and Näsström (2011) argue, democratic procedures themselves cannot decide who rightfully belongs to the demos, creating a paradox at the core of democratic institutions.

The history of Türkiye's democratic boundaries, particularly regarding extraterritorial enfranchisement – from exclusion to the institutionalization of external voting – offers a critical lens for examining how the boundaries of democracy shift. Although there has been a global move toward the enfranchisement of non-resident citizens, normative justifications and conceptual implications remain underexplored in Turkish scholarship.

This article addresses the following question: How has Türkiye's external voting regime evolved in alignment with the three core principles of democratic inclusion – the All Subjected (ASP), All Affected (AAP), and Stakeholder (SP) principles – and what does this reveal about the changing boundaries of the demos in transnational political contexts? Using primary legal sources and secondary research, the study conducts a qualitative, theory-guided examination of significant legislative and institutional reforms addressing this topic. Beyond tracing the evolution of political inclusion for Turkish non-resident citizens, the article situates Türkiye's case within broader global debates on the democratic boundary issue and the validity of external voting practices by systematically applying normative democratic theory. The main contribution is a conceptual framework that links Türkiye's external voting history to fundamental questions of democratic theory, offering analytical tools for assessing external enfranchisement in other countries.

The article is organized as follows. The next section introduces the normative principles of democratic inclusion, which serve as the analytical lens, followed by a review of the literature on democratic boundaries and external voting. The empirical analysis then examines Türkiye's adoption of external voting across four stages, using the three selected normative principles as a guide. Finally, the article considers the broader implications of Türkiye's case for global research on the democratic border issue in the context of external voting.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Reviewing the research on democratic inclusion and external voting in this section facilitates the identification of significant arguments and empirical gaps. This body of work provides the normative theoretical framework for analyzing the evolution of Türkiye's boundaries of demos in the context of external voting. The section shows how foundational democratic principles can clarify boundary-setting in a transnational era.

At the global level, research on external voting and democratic boundaries has expanded in recent years, reflecting the worldwide diffusion of extraterritorial enfranchisement (Lafleur, 2015; Wellman et al., 2023; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023). Comparative studies have mapped the institutional variety of external voting systems, therefore revealing the spectrum of legal and political arrangements through which non-resident citizens are included or excluded from elections (Collyer, 2014; Lafleur, 2015). However, much of this scholarship emphasizes empirical mapping and typology over methodical normative analysis (Caramani & Grotz, 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019).

With attention to institutional reforms (Köse, 2020), diaspora engagement (Akse, 2022; Arkilic, 2021a, 2022), party (Çobankara, 2023; Yener-Roderburg, 2020; Yener-Roderburg & Yetiş, 2024), party mobilization (Yener-Roderburg, 2022, 2024), legal approaches (Bayraktar, 2024; Egeliği, 2024) and electoral focus (Arkilic, 2021b; Kadirbeyoğlu et al., 2017; Kadirbeyoğlu & Okay, 2015; Şahin-Mencütek & Erdoğan, 2016; Sevi et al., 2020; Topkan, 2022; Uslucan & Sauer, 2020; Yener-Roderburg, 2024), recent studies have extensively documented the political and historical development of Türkiye's external voting. However, most of these studies employ empirical or descriptive methods, therefore neglecting the normative and theoretical aspects of external enfranchisement. Despite the global trend toward enfranchising non-resident citizens, there is a notable lack of systematic, theory-guided analysis regarding the normative principles shaping the boundaries of Türkiye's demos. This study places Türkiye's case within the global debate, using a comparative normative framework to assess how external voting reforms reshape the boundaries of the demos.

This study contributes to the discussion on the “democratic boundary problem”—the normative challenge of determining who should be included in the political community for democratic decision-making purposes (Ginnane, 2021; Valentini, 2024). To analyze Türkiye's external voting reforms, three key principles of democratic inclusion, widely discussed in normative theory, are utilized. The selection of the All Subjected Principle (ASP), the All Affected Principle (AAP), and the Stakeholder Principle (SP) as analytical lenses reflects their prominence in the literature (Ginnane, 2021, pp. 27–35; Valentini, 2024). As Ginnane (2021) and Bauböck (2018) show, these three principles represent the core theoretical responses to the democratic boundary problem and have become central to evaluating transnational enfranchisement.

Moreover, Bauböck's (2018) pluralist theory of democratic inclusion justifies analyzing Türkiye's external voting regime, as it treats the three principles as complementary rather than competing (Bauböck, 2018; as cited in Bloks, 2024, p. 13; Erman, 2022; Magaña, 2024). Each principle stresses a distinct basis for inclusion, and their relevance varies depending on the context and nature of the polity. This pluralist approach enables a nuanced and comprehensive assessment of Türkiye's external enfranchisement by addressing diverse legitimate claims – such as policy impact, legal subjection, and enduring stakeholder ties – without reducing democratic legitimacy to a single criterion (Bauböck, 2018). Therefore, it provides both empirical flexibility and conceptual clarity for assessing the changing boundaries of Türkiye's demos. Employing this triadic framework also ensures both conceptual rigor and methodological transparency, following best practices in comparative and interpretive research design (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013), while allowing for a nuanced yet focused assessment of shifting democratic boundaries. Instead of treating these principles as rigid evaluative criteria, they are applied as interpretive heuristics to analyze the evolving logic of inclusion and exclusion in Türkiye's external voting reforms.

By situating Türkiye's case within global debates on democratic boundaries, this study not only clarifies the theoretical rationales at stake but also offers a methodological template for evaluating external voting reforms in other national contexts. This framework facilitates a structured yet flexible examination of how different historical stages reflect shifting conceptions of democratic legitimacy and boundary-making.

According to scholarly literature on normative democratic theory, the principles can be summarized as follows:

The ASP: All individuals who are subject to the laws and authority of a state should have a voice in creating those laws (Goodin & Arrhenius, 2024; López-Guerra, 2005; Owen, 2010).

The AAP: All individuals whose interests are affected by government decisions should have the right to participate in those decisions (Bengtson, 2021; Boudou, 2023; Goodin, 2007; Näsström, 2011; Tanasoca, 2018).

The SP: Those with a durable stake in a self-governing polity should be included (Bauböck, 2005, 2015; Ginnane, 2021).

Global Trends in External Voting and Normative Debates

The concept of external voting has been described with a range of terms, such as 'external, emigrant, expatriate, diaspora, absentee, out-of-country, extraterritorial, voting, distance, and remote voting' (Lafleur, 2015, p. 841). In this study, these terms are used interchangeably. This paper adopts the definition of external voting as "the ability for a

non-resident citizen to vote in elections in the country where they hold citizenship from outside of the country's physical boundaries" (Wellman et al., 2023, p. 900). This definition aligns with global comparative standards and enables precise analysis of Türkiye's approach. Collyer (2014) classifies the electoral systems and voting practices of countries into five types: (1) countries without electoral practices, (2) countries where expatriates cannot vote, (3) systems requiring diaspora members to return physically to their home country to vote, (4) systems allowing overseas voting, wherein ballots are either transferred to the voters' last registered electoral district or distributed among parties nationwide, and (5) systems with dedicated electoral districts that allow the diaspora to elect their own representatives (Çobankara, 2023; Collyer, 2014, p. 64; Köse, 2020, p. 134). Non-resident citizens are defined as those holding citizenship but living mainly abroad (Wellman et al., 2023, p. 900).

Today, approximately 140 states include provisions for external enfranchisement in (Nyblade et al., 2022; Fliess et al., 2025), and external voting rights are expanding worldwide (Peltoniemi et al., 2022). Some studies place external voting rights within democratization literature (Caramani & Grotz, 2015; Lafleur, 2015). Scholars conceptualize the "third wave" as the transnational expansion of political rights, including extending suffrage to resident aliens and non-resident citizens, as a natural progression of prior expansions (Caramani & Grotz, 2015). Conversely, certain studies focus on the actors, such as states (Lafleur, 2011), political parties (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019), or regimes (Nyblade et al., 2022; Umpierrez de Reguero & Jakobson, 2023; Fliess et al., 2025; Jakobson et al., 2023; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2021). Umpierrez de Reguero et al. (2021) present an updated typology of external voting models, demonstrating that although technical implementation varies greatly, most regimes share a normative ambiguity about which citizens "deserve" a vote. Their research highlights the global tension between state inclusion strategies and democratic theory. Vink and Bauböck (2013) contend that external voting is often driven more by domestic political interests than by normative commitments to democratic inclusion. Additionally, research on 'homeland populism' by Jakobson et al. (2023) shows that when external voting becomes institutionalized, parties begin mobilizing non-resident citizens as part of "the people."

External Voting History of Türkiye

Türkiye's path toward enfranchising non-resident citizens can be divided into four distinct stages. The periodization is based on the actual implementation, rather than merely on legal or constitutional changes. Each stage reflects not only legal and institutional developments but also the shifting position of Türkiye within Collyer's (2014) global typology (Köse, 2020).

Before 1950, there was no legislation or external voting for non-residents. In the second phase, the 1950 Election Law introduced provisions for registering non-resident

citizens as voters within the territory (Köse, 2020; Milletvekilleri Seçim Kanunu, 1950). However, the absence of clear administrative procedures for registration severely limited their practical enfranchisement. During this phase, voting in national elections of Türkiye was limited to in-person voting and was only possible within Turkish territories. Therefore, Türkiye aligns with Collyer's (2014) third category, which stipulates that non-resident voters must physically return to their homeland to cast their votes.

A major development occurred in 1987, marking the third stage. That year, an amendment to the Law on Basic Provisions of Elections and Voter Registers (Law No. 298) introduced voting at customs points (Köse, 2020; Yener-Roderburg, 2022). As Yener-Roderburg (2022) notes, this reform symbolically acknowledged non-resident citizens as legitimate members of the electorate, though participation remained limited to customs points and subject to restrictive eligibility rules. The revised Article 94 of Law No. 298, as amended, permitted Turkish citizens living abroad for over six months to cast votes at customs points during national elections. However, practical and legal restrictions persisted, such as the exclusion of those already on the Turkish electoral rolls and the requirement for physical presence at customs, which limited the full realization of non-resident enfranchisement. Whether this approach qualifies as external voting is still a matter of discussion (Köse, 2020). To vote in this manner, individuals had to have lived abroad for more than six months and could not already be registered to vote in Türkiye. Despite residing abroad, those who were on Türkiye's electoral roll were ineligible to vote at the customs. Until 2014, many non-residents voted in this method. Nonetheless, this approach did not entirely adhere to the standards for external voting. From 1987 to 2014, Türkiye's external voting status was classified within the third category of Collyer's (2014) classification, according to Köse (2020, p. 136).

The third stage witnessed a pivotal constitutional development: the 1995 amendment to Article 67 of the Turkish Constitution, which for the first time recognized the external voting right of non-resident citizens (Yener-Roderburg, 2022). This change gave the necessary legal basis for later statutory changes and marked a significant shift in norms: external voting became a constitutional right, not just a legislative option, though it did require enabling legislation. Even though a new legal guarantee was in place, practical enfranchisement remained limited due to the absence of procedures to implement it (Kadirbeyoğlu & Okyay, 2015). The 1995 amendment thus represented a transitional moment: a formal recognition of non-resident citizens' voting rights, but not yet a realization.

The fourth stage began with the 2014 presidential election, allowing non-residents to vote abroad directly. This marked Türkiye's transition to Collyer's (2014) fourth category: countries enabling voting from abroad.

Normative Principles of Democratic Inclusion

The All Subjected Principle (ASP)

The ASP holds that all individuals who are subject to a state's laws and coercive authority ought to have a voice in the democratic decision-making (Goodin & Arrhenius, 2024; López-Guerra, 2005; Owen, 2010). Rooted in classic social contract and political legitimacy theories (Dahl, 1990), this principle centers on the idea that political rights – particularly voting – should reflect the contours of legal subjection. Democratic legitimacy, therefore, is tied to those who bear the obligations imposed by state authority.

In the context of external voting, López-Guerra (2005) argues that non-residents cannot be subject to the laws of their state of citizenship, thus advocating for the disenfranchisement of non-resident citizens (Himmelroos & Peltoniemi, 2021; Song, 2012). In contrast, Owen (2010) contends that non-resident citizens are subject to specific laws and decisions of their country of citizenship, necessitating their enfranchisement. Despite their differing conclusions, both scholars rely on the ASP to assess the democratic legitimacy of external voting, differing only in how they interpret its application. This illustrates a commonality in their structural approach, akin to using the same principle but interpreting its measurements differently.

In the context of this study, this principle aids in interpreting the extent to which Turkish non-resident citizens were perceived as legal subjects whose voices should be considered in political decision-making (as cited in: Ginnane, 2021, pp. 30–32; López-Guerra, 2005; Owen, 2010).

The All Affected Principle (AAP)

The AAP argues that individuals affected by state decisions should have the right to participate in the decision-making process (Dahl, 1990, p. 64; as cited in: Ginnane, 2021, p. 51; Goodin, 2007, p. 32). This principle, rooted in the concept of self-rule, interprets democracy in negative terms, asserting that individuals should not be subject to decisions beyond their control (Ginnane, 2021, p. 32; Näsström, 2011, p. 122).

The scope of this principle raises questions about who qualifies as “relevantly affected,” considering factors such as potential interests and strategic cultivation. Some proponents, like Goodin (2007), advocate for a broad interpretation, proposing almost universal enfranchisement. This wide perspective challenges the idea of “external voting,” which assumes democracy functions within territorial boundaries, while the principle connects the demos to political concerns rather than physical presence.

Applied to external voting, the AAP challenges traditional territorial definitions of the demos by linking enfranchisement to the extent of policy impact rather than residence or legal status, thus making the concept of “external” voting conceptually problematic:

if inclusion depends on issue-specific affectedness, territorial boundaries may become irrelevant (as cited in [Ginnane, 2021, p. 33](#); [Näsström, 2011](#)). Recent scholarship further highlights that, under the AAP, the legitimacy of external voting ultimately depends on whether non-resident citizens retain interests sufficiently affected by their home country's policies (as cited in [Ginnane, 2021, p. 32–34](#); [Tanasoca, 2018](#)).

Ultimately, the debate between the AAP and the ASP centers on differing standards for democratic inclusion rather than contesting the necessity of such standards in evaluating the legitimacy of external voting.

The Stakeholder Principle (SP)

The SP proposed by Bauböck (2005) introduces a membership-based model of democratic inclusion, emphasizing that citizens should be enfranchised if they have a durable stake in the self-governance of a polity. The SP posits that individuals should be enfranchised if they maintain a genuine, durable stake in the polity's collective self-government ([Bauböck, 2005, 2018](#)).

The SP conceptually positions political rights as flowing from an individual's continuous relationship with the polity, encompassing both instrumental interests (the protection of fundamental rights) and intrinsic interests (participation in self-government, which is crucial for self-respect and equality) ([Bauböck, 2018, p. 41](#)). Tanasoca (2018) interprets the SP as a variant of the AAP, but stresses that stakeholding requires more than exposure to policy impacts; it demands a substantive and enduring connection to the community (as cited in: [Ginnane, 2021, p. 34](#); [Tanasoca, 2018, p. 114](#)). The SP endorses enfranchisement primarily for first-generation emigrants who preserve active ties, and only conditionally for second-generation non-residents ([Bauböck, 2015, p. 825](#); as cited in [Ginnane, 2021, p. 35](#)). In this study, the SP highlights how Türkiye's reforms implicitly framed non-resident citizens in generational or participatory terms, either as legitimate stakeholders or external observers ([Bauböck, 2005](#)).

Bauböck (2015) argues that the SP is uniquely capable of solving the democratic boundary problem ([Bauböck, 2015](#)). Despite focusing on adapting to changing political spatialities, the SP structurally aligns with previous principles, as it seeks to define morally legitimate democratic boundaries against which boundary-making practices are assessed for compliance ([Ginnane, 2021](#)).

Integration and Analytic Bridge

Normative analyses of democratic inclusion principles ([Ginnane, 2021](#)) often reach different conclusions but share structural similarities, each establishing a standard for assessing the legitimacy of external voting. While these frameworks are primarily grounded in theoretical ideals, the perspectives of practitioners may further refine them and enhance

democratic openness. According to Bauböck (2018), the principles should be viewed as complementary, each offering a distinct normative basis: legal subjection, policy impact, and enduring stakeholder ties. Together, these three principles offer complementary perspectives for interpreting the evolution of Türkiye's external voting laws, not as static legal changes, but as moments of changing normative imagination regarding who belongs in the political community. Applied empirically, the ASP highlights the evolution of legal and institutional boundaries in Türkiye's external voting reforms; the AAP emphasizes the range of interests and actors substantially influenced by these reforms; and the SP brings key generational and membership-based distinctions to light, reflecting ongoing debates over diaspora engagement and belonging.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach rooted in normative political theory. In addition to secondary academic literature, it systematically incorporates primary legal sources as core empirical materials. These primary documents provide both a factual basis for reconstructing the evolution of Türkiye's external voting regime and evidence for evaluating the extent to which legal reforms have embodied or resisted the normative principles of democratic inclusion. The legal provisions are author translations due to the lack of official English versions.

These materials are interpreted using process tracing logic, examining how legal and institutional changes reflect evolving ideas of the demos. Instead of focusing on individual behavior or causal mechanisms, the analysis tracks the normative logics embedded in Türkiye's external voting history. This approach aligns with an interpretivist methodology that views theories as heuristic tools for exploring meanings, principles, and institutional intentions (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013, p. 38). The principles are used here not as measurable categories but as sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). They serve to illuminate how inclusion and exclusion were framed in different stages of Türkiye's external voting, without making normative judgments or policy prescriptions.

The empirical analysis concentrates on external voting's evolution; conscription is employed comparatively to illustrate state obligations towards non-residents. Conscription exemplifies how ASP extends beyond borders, emphasizing the tension between legal subjection and democratic inclusion.

Findings

Türkiye's path toward enfranchisement of non-resident citizens can be traced through four stages, each reflecting key changes and shifts within Collyer's (2014) typology. In addition to these reforms, relevant primary legal sources that have shaped the boundaries of the demos in the context of external voting are also examined within the historical stage

to which they pertain. This stage-based approach enables a context-sensitive and empirically grounded assessment of how both direct and supplementary legal changes have contributed to the evolving normative foundations of external voting in Türkiye.

Stage One: Absence of Legislation in Pre-1950 Period

During the initial stage, before 1950, Türkiye lacked specific legislation governing the registration or voting of non-resident citizens; namely, there was no external voting. This absence underscores the historically territorial conception of the demos and the state's exclusive focus on the residents as political subjects.

The ASP, as framed by López-Guerra (2005), suggests that people subject to a state's laws should have a say in making those laws. In this context, the absence of external voting rights aligns with López-Guerra's argument against enfranchising non-resident citizens, as they were not lawfully subject to Turkish laws. Accordingly, the absence of external voting in this period reflects adherence to the ASP. However, a deeper interrogation complicates this alignment. The notion of "subjectedness" is not as self-evident as early Turkish law presumes. While non-residents may not have been subject to everyday Turkish jurisdiction, some, such as non-resident citizens with property or unresolved legal ties in Türkiye, might have remained substantively affected by Turkish state actions (Owen, 2010). By equating presence with subjectedness, early Republican Türkiye enacts a binary, formalistic reading of the ASP, neglecting the empirical "grey zone" of absent yet still affected citizens—a tension that recent theory (Goodin & Arrhenius, 2024) exposes as a limitation in the principle's practical utility.

In the context of the AAP, it exemplifies an accepted approach where non-resident individuals were not directly affected by the state's decisions. The lack of any consideration for such transnational effects in law reveals the limitations of territorial understanding of affectedness and the challenge of operationalizing AAP when state boundaries are permeable or citizenship and property persist across borders.

The SP claims that individuals' fundamental rights are tied to the protection and well-being provided by the polity, emphasizing membership beyond specific democratic decisions or rights protection (Bauböck, 2015). Therefore, the lack of external voting rights during this period reflects a conceptualization of citizenship tied primarily to physical presence within the territory, disregarding the stakeholding aspect emphasized by the SP.

In summary, pre-1950 Türkiye exemplifies the territorial conception of the demos; a critical analysis exposes the inadequacy of equating territory with subjectedness, affectedness, or stakeholding.

Stage Two: Limited In-Person Voting between 1950-1987

The enactment of Law No. 5545 in 1950 introduced, for the first time, a legal basis for the registration of Turkish citizens living abroad as voters. Article 11 of this law stated: “Citizens residing in foreign countries, upon their request, are registered in the electoral roll of the district they designate or their last place of residence (Law No. 5545, 1950, Art. 11, author’s translation). Despite this innovation, voting remained strictly limited to those physically present in Türkiye. While the law allowed registration, it included no mechanism for casting ballots from abroad.

Under the ASP, this legal regime raises questions about what it truly means to be “subject” to a state’s laws. Goodin & Arrhenius (2024) clarify that genuine subjectedness requires more than mere formal citizenship; it entails a tangible subjection to the state’s coercive and legal power. In practice, the 1950 arrangement made suffrage contingent on physical presence, effectively assuming that only those who could return to Türkiye were sufficiently subject to its authority. This tension aligns with López-Guerra’s (2005) critique, which argues that non-residents – especially those with no practical ties or exposure to the home state’s coercion – should not necessarily be included as a matter of democratic legitimacy. Moreover, as Owen (2010) counters, certain non-resident citizens (for example, those with property, ongoing legal obligations, or active familial ties) may remain subject to Turkish law in ways that justify their continued inclusion. The law’s exclusive reliance on physical presence as a test of subjection thus failed to distinguish between meaningful and nominal forms of subjectedness. In these terms, compulsory military service continued to bind non-resident male citizens, regardless of their physical presence, under Turkish law until 1980 (Koç, 2021). However, in 1980, a new option was introduced: *dövizle askerlik* (foreign currency military service), which enabled non-resident citizens to fulfill conscription through a monetary payment and limited in-country service (Tavacı & Gündoğar, 2023). This reveals that Türkiye’s ‘subjection’ to non-resident citizens persists, although it takes on different forms.

The period overlooks the AAP by equating affectedness with residence; the 1950 law overlooked the numerous ways in which Turkish state decisions continued to influence the lives of non-resident citizens, including issues such as mandatory military service (Tavacı & Gündoğar, 2023). The lack of provisions for absentee voting thus meant that large segments of the non-residents, regardless of how directly they might be affected, remained without a practical means of democratic expression, highlighting a limitation inherent in approaches that tie enfranchisement solely to residence or physical presence.

In the second stage, Türkiye’s approach to external voting began to reflect elements of the SP. By allowing non-resident citizens to register as voters, albeit with limited in-person voting within Turkish territories, it is acknowledged that a stakeholding aspect of citizenship is tied to the protection and well-being provided by the polity. However, the

restriction to in-person voting and the exclusion of non-residents who are unable to participate in the elections within Türkiye's territory highlight a narrower interpretation of stakeholding, primarily emphasizing physical presence within the national territory over broader membership considerations advocated by the SP.

The 1950–1987 period demonstrates that legal reforms grounded in democratic inclusion principles are insufficient without corresponding mechanisms to ensure the practical realization of rights for non-resident citizens, revealing the limitations of residence-based criteria and underscoring the necessity for more nuanced, empirically attuned approaches to democratic participation.

Stage Three: Introduction of Voting at Customs between 1987-2014

A significant transformation occurred in 1987 with the amendment to Law No. 298. The revised Article 94/2(a) stipulated:

“Voters not registered in the electoral roll and residing abroad for more than six months may vote at ballot boxes set up at customs gates upon entry and exit from the country, starting seventy-five days before and until 17:00 on the day of the general parliamentary elections.” (Law No. 3377, *Amending the Law on Basic Provisions of Elections and Voter Registers*, 1987, Art. 94/2(a), author's translation).

This legal change provided, for the first time, a practical – albeit limited – mechanism for participating in national elections. However, it still required physical return to Turkish territory (customs gates) and excluded anyone already on the domestic electoral roll, as well as those unable to travel. This arrangement introduced residency and procedural barriers that fundamentally shaped the realization of democratic inclusion principles in practice. From 1987 to 2014, Türkiye's external voting status was categorized as part of the third category in Collyer's (2014) classification (Köse, 2020).

From the ASP perspective, the 1987 reform presents an ambiguous and partial approach to subjectedness (Goodin & Arrhenius, 2024), treating it as a matter of demonstrable engagement, such as border-crossing, rather than a general property of citizenship. This was particularly exclusionary for those who might not be able to visit Turkish territories. López-Guerra (2005) supports this caution, arguing that voting rights for non-residents without substantive ties to their homeland are difficult to justify from a democratic perspective. In contrast, Owen (2010) argues that some non-resident citizens may retain significant legal obligations, such as military service, that can justify their inclusion; however, the 1987 law made no such distinction. The 1993 amendment allowing military service abroad did not abolish the obligation but simply altered its form, illustrating that legal subjection can be pragmatically adjusted without necessarily expanding democratic inclusion for non-resident citizens (Goodin & Arrhenius, 2024; Tavacı & Gündoğar, 2023).

The AAP highlights further limitations of the 1987 reform. While the customs voting regime provided a practical channel for some non-residents, it ignored the broader reality that many citizens abroad remained significantly affected by Turkish legislation and state policy, regardless of their ability or willingness to return for elections. Decisions related to inheritance, taxation, or conscription (Koç, 2021; Tavacı & Gündoğar, 2023) could have far-reaching consequences for the non-resident citizens. Moreover, the law's territorial and procedural logic continued to disenfranchise those who were clearly affected but lacked the capacity for border-crossing. The persistence of this exclusionary logic highlights an ongoing challenge within the AAP: the inability of territorial voting regimes to account for the transnational impacts of state actions on citizens beyond borders.

From the SP perspective (Bauböck, 2005, 2018), the period from 1987 to 2014 offered only partial and highly conditional recognition of membership. The ability to vote at customs was practically available only to those with ongoing, active engagement. This overlooked the diversity of “stakes” that non-residents might possess, including cultural, psychological, and economic ties. The focus on border-crossing meant that only certain, verifiable forms of stakeholding were politically valued.

A further normative and legal transformation occurred in 1995 with the amendment to Article 67 of the Turkish Constitution: “However, the exercise of the right to vote by Turkish citizens abroad is subject to the procedures and conditions prescribed by law” (Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye, 1995, Art. 67, author’s own translation).

This normative transformation in 1995 symbolically elevated the right to vote for non-residents from a statutory exception to a constitutionally recognized entitlement. On paper, this broadened the demos and marked a significant step toward inclusive citizenship. However, the realization of these rights remained contingent on ordinary legislation, which continued to introduce procedural hurdles.

From the ASP perspective, the constitutional change broadened formal inclusion, covering all citizens regardless of residence or generation. However, the actual content of subjectedness remained ambiguous, as implementation depended entirely on later statutory decisions (Goodin & Arrhenius, 2024). Thus, while the amendment allowed for the potential enfranchisement of all non-resident citizens, it did not solve the problem of how to meaningfully distinguish between degrees or forms of subjectedness. López-Guerra (2005) would critique this thin conception for failing to account for those with only nominal ties to Türkiye, while Owen (2010) would advocate for flexible statutory mechanisms recognizing various forms of subjectedness.

Regarding the AAP, the constitutional amendment represented a normative opening by recognizing the potential for Turkish decisions to affect citizens abroad. However, because the right remained contingent on further legislation, the practical realization of affectedness as a basis for inclusion was left uncertain.

The SP was only partially satisfied. While the constitution acknowledged non-residents' potential stake in Türkiye's political community, it left the criteria for participation and the recognition of stakeholding – particularly for later generations – to be determined by future legal and administrative decisions (Bauböck, 2018). The constitutional provision's lack of concrete criteria risks granting voting rights to later generations with minimal or symbolic stakes in Türkiye, thereby challenging the core requirement of substantive connections in democratic inclusion (Bauböck, 2015, 2018).

In summary, both the 1987 statutory reform and the 1995 constitutional amendment marked progressive but incomplete steps toward extraterritorial enfranchisement. The 1987 law provided only a restricted practical pathway for participation, and the 1995 amendment formalized inclusion but left substantive access to rights dependent on subsequent legal and administrative interpretation. Together, these reforms reveal the persistent challenge of operationalizing principles of subjectedness, affectedness, and stakeholding in ways that meaningfully accommodate the diversity and complexity of Türkiye's transnational citizenry.

Stage Four: Establishment of Ballot Boxes Abroad Since 2014

The period from 2014 onward represents a watershed in Türkiye's external voting regime, marking the transition from symbolic or highly contingent participation to broad, operationalized enfranchisement for non-resident citizens. The legislative reforms of 2008 and 2012 – culminating in implementation during the 2014 presidential elections – transformed external voting from a restricted privilege into a core element of the Turkish electoral system. With the adoption of Law No. 5749 (2008), the parliament created an institutional and procedural infrastructure for external voting. Article 10 was amended as follows:

“The Supreme Electoral Council shall decide, after obtaining the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and taking into consideration the conditions of the foreign country, by which method – ballot box, mail, customs gate, or electronic voting – external voters shall cast their votes.” (Law No. 5749 Amending the Law on Basic Provisions of Elections and Voter Registers, 2008, Art. 94/A, author's translation)

The 2012 amendment (Law No. 6304) allowed voting at Turkish consulates and designated venues abroad, stating:

“Voters who are registered in the abroad electoral register may cast their ballots at polling stations established at our abroad diplomatic missions, and, where necessary, at other locations deemed appropriate by local authorities, within a schedule determined prior to election day.” (Law No. 6304 Amending the Law on Basic Provisions of Elections and Voter Registers, 2012 Art. 94/C, author's translation)

The 2008 and 2012 reforms operationalized the constitutional promise of extraterritorial enfranchisement by extending voting rights to all Turkish citizens abroad, based solely on citizenship and registration in the abroad electoral register. The first implementation of these mechanisms occurred during the 2014 presidential election, when Turkish citizens abroad were allowed to vote in their countries of residence (Kadirbeyoğlu *et al.*, 2017; Kadirbeyoğlu & Okyay, 2015; Topkan, 2022). These reforms place Türkiye's external voting system in Collyer's (2014) fourth category. By transforming external voting from a largely symbolic provision to an accessible democratic right, the reforms marked a substantial expansion of non-resident citizens' political inclusion.

According to ASP, this expansion reflects a formalistic approach to subjectness (Goodin & Arrhenius, 2024): the voting right is linked to nominal legal status rather than ongoing exposure to Turkish authority. While this satisfies procedural inclusiveness, it leaves the principle substantively underdeveloped, especially for citizens who may lack experience of Turkish law or coercion. The uncritical extension of voting rights to all non-resident citizens risks including individuals who experience neither the obligations nor the consequences of Turkish law, raising complex questions about the legitimacy and substantive quality of this expansion. Thus, while the reforms satisfy the letter of the ASP, they may undermine its spirit, which calls for genuine subjection to the state as the basis for political participation (López-Guerra, 2005; Owen, 2010).

From the AAP perspective, Türkiye's reforms represent significant progress, as the principle acknowledges that state policies can affect the rights, identity, or interests of non-resident citizens, regardless of their physical location (Goodin, 2007). Enabling voting at consulates broadens the demos in line with this normative standard. However, as Näsström (2011) and Goodin (2007) caution, such universal inclusion also risks over-inclusion, since not all registered non-resident citizens are genuinely or substantially affected by homeland politics. This indeterminacy – who precisely qualifies as “affected” – remains a fundamental challenge to the practical application and justification of the AAP (Näsström, 2011, pp. 123–124).

The SP (Bauböck, 2015, 2018) provides the most critical lens for understanding Türkiye's external voting transformation. The legal changes treat all non-resident citizens as potential stakeholders, irrespective of the depth or kind of their ties. For first-generation emigrants with enduring social, economic, or emotional bonds to Türkiye, this extension aligns well with the principle's normative rationale. However, for later generations of non-resident citizens, whose stake may be largely symbolic or attenuated, the reforms risk moving beyond the core demand of the principle—that inclusion be grounded in a genuine, durable, and ongoing relationship with the polity's self-government (Bauböck, 2018; Tanasoca, 2018 as cited in Ginnane, 2021, p. 35). Thus, while administratively inclusive, Türkiye's model may undermine the qualitative standard of stakeholding, making the democratic boundary more porous than the principle would justify.

In sum, the fourth stage represents a transition from restricted, symbolic participation to broad, operationalized enfranchisement for non-resident citizens of Türkiye. While the shift significantly reduces practical and legal barriers, it does so through a procedural logic that privileges formal citizenship over substantive engagement, leaving unresolved the deeper normative boundary problem at the heart of transnational democratic theory.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has systematically traced Türkiye's external voting reforms through the analytical lens of the ASP, the AAP, and the SP of democratic inclusion, providing a comparative normative framework that addresses both the evolution and justification of external enfranchisement. It demonstrates that while Türkiye's legal and institutional trajectory reflects growing openness toward the inclusion of non-resident citizens, the justifications for such reforms reveal persistent normative ambiguities and tensions. Specifically, no single principle fully legitimizes external voting in Türkiye's context; rather, it is the shifting interplay among these principles – subjectedness, affectedness, and stakeholding – that best explains both the incremental expansion and enduring contestation of the demos' boundaries.

Applying this triadic lens clarifies the normative logic underpinning each historical stage of Türkiye's external voting regime. Early exclusions and later limited forms of participation were grounded in a territorially anchored conception of the demos (ASP), while subsequent reforms increasingly acknowledged both the transnational policy impacts on non-resident citizens (AAP) and the ongoing ties that underpin membership-based claims (SP). However, the analysis also reveals that practical legal changes have often outpaced or sidestepped coherent normative justification, resulting in hybrid and sometimes contradictory arrangements. The brief comparative reference to conscription underscores that democratic boundary setting is not limited to participatory rights but extends to other enduring legal obligations, complicating the logic of demos membership in transnational contexts. Comparatively, Türkiye's experience mirrors global trends: as recent scholarship (Lafleur, 2015; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023; Yener-Roderburg, 2024) attests, the worldwide expansion of extraterritorial enfranchisement is typically accompanied by persistent ambiguity regarding who qualifies for inclusion and on what grounds. Türkiye's case thus exemplifies the broader “democratic boundary problem” in the transnational era.

Critically, this study makes an original contribution by situating Türkiye's reforms within a comparative and theoretically pluralist framework, providing conceptual clarity on how democratic legitimacy is negotiated in evolving transnational contexts. The Turkish case both confirms and complicates dominant theories of democratic inclusion. It supports Bauböck's (2018) claim that no single principle can serve as a sufficient or exclusive basis for defining the boundaries of the demos in an era of transnational mobility. At

the same time, the Turkish experience demonstrates the need for pluralist, context-sensitive approaches that recognize the interplay and practical limitations of these logics. Furthermore, the Turkish case challenges any straightforward, universal application of democratic boundary principles. Although reforms have extended rights to millions of non-resident citizens, their implementation has often relied on pragmatic legal and administrative considerations rather than robust normative reasoning. This results in the coexistence of expansive formal enfranchisement with various exclusions and limitations in practice—a pattern echoed globally (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023; Vink & Bauböck, 2013).

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis is conducted primarily at the macro and institutional level, relying on primary legal documents and secondary academic literature rather than original empirical data or fine-grained policy mapping. While primary legislation is systematically integrated, the lack of in-depth examination of administrative practices, more of policy obligations (such as taxation), or first-hand voter experience limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the word and scope constraints preclude extensive comparative analysis beyond Türkiye's case. Future research would benefit from both deeper integration of systematic comparison with other external voting regimes.

The findings have direct relevance for both policymakers and scholars. Understanding the layered normative justifications and tensions underlying external voting reforms is essential for designing enfranchisement regimes that are both democratically legitimate and practically effective. For Türkiye and other states, clarifying the conceptual and legal criteria for inclusion can help prevent both overextension and arbitrary exclusion of non-resident citizens. Future research should pursue detailed, periodized analyses of concrete policy obligations (e.g., taxation), systematic cross-country comparisons, and empirical studies of voter experiences to further illuminate the relationship between external voting, citizenship, and democratic legitimacy.

In summary, this article contributes to the literature by offering a systematic, theoretically grounded, and empirically informed analysis of Türkiye's external voting evolution through the lens of democratic inclusion principles. The Turkish case demonstrates that extraterritorial enfranchisement is best understood as an ongoing negotiation among various normative logics, each with different conceptual strengths and practical limitations. As external voting continues to expand globally, further theory-driven, comparative, and empirically rigorous research will be vital for understanding the democratic boundary problem in a world of increasingly mobile populations and overlapping political communities.

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Zorunlu göç, özellikle 21. yüzyılda ulus-devletlerin klasik sınır, vatandaşlık ve aidiyet anlayışlarını zorlayan, çok katmanlı ve çok aktörlü bir olgu haline gelmiştir. Zorunlu göç ile ülkelerinden ayrılan kişilerin yerel halk ile karşılıklı etkileşimini ve uyumunu sağlamak, göç yönetişiminin temel bileşenlerinden biri olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. Toplumsal bütünleşme ve sosyal uyum süreçleri; göçmenlerin sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik yaşamın içinde yer alarak kalıcı ve sürdürülebilir bir birlikte yaşama zeminini oluşturur. 2011 sonrası Suriyeli sığınmacıların kitlesel ve sürekli gelişle Türkiye, bölgenin en büyük zorunlu göç hareketlerinden birine ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Türkiye’de göç yönetişimi, yalnızca acil durum müdahaleleri ve temel insani ihtiyaçlara yönelik politikalarla sınırlı kalmamakta; aynı zamanda toplumsal uyumu güçlendirmeyi hedefleyen uzun vadeli stratejileri de kapsamaktadır.

Saime Özçürümez ve Ahmet İçduygu tarafından 2022 yılında yayımlanan *Zorunlu Göç Deneyimi ve Toplumsal Bütünleşme: Kavramlar, Modeller ve Uygulamalar ile Türkiye* adlı kitap, Türkiye’nin son yıllarda deneyimlediği yoğun zorunlu göç dalgalarına ilişkin kapsamlı ve disiplinlerarası bir analiz sunmaktadır. Kitap, Türkiye’nin orta gelirli ülkeler arasında benzeri görülmemiş bir biçimde kapsamlı bir zorunlu göç yönetimi geliştirdiği tespitinden yola çıkarak, göç olgusunu hem teorik kavramlar hem de yerel uygulama modelleri üzerinden çok boyutlu bir şekilde ele almaktadır. Ayrıca, Türkiye’ye özgü geliştirilen göç politikaları tarihsel bağlamıyla birlikte incelenmektedir. Esere göre; göç mevzuatının gelişimi, yönetim modelleri, yerel aktörlerin rolü ve toplumsal bütünleşme yaklaşımları, Türkiye’nin göç yönetimi alanındaki kurumsal ve politik yapılanmasını şekillendiren temel boyutlar olarak öne çıkmaktadır.

Yedi bölümden oluşan kitapta, ilk bölüm, eserin kuramsal ve metodolojik temelini oluşturan araştırma bulgularını kapsamlı biçimde sunmakta; çalışmada referans alınan kavramlar, modeller ve analitik çerçeve bu bölümde sistematik olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Kavramlara dair tanımlamalara yer verilen bu bölüm, izleyen dört bölümün kurgu ve içeriğini de belirleyici bir biçimde şekillendirmektedir. Bu bağlamda yazarlar, “sosyal uyum” ve “toplumsal bütünleşme” kavramlarına odaklanarak, göç çalışmaları literatüründe sıkça

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karşılaşılan kavramsal karmaşayı gidermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Özçürümez ve İçduygu, entegrasyon kavramının zaman zaman sosyal uyum ve toplumsal bütünleşme kavramlarının yerine kullanılması nedeniyle literatürde anlamsal bir karışıklık yarattığını öne sürmektedir (s. 28).

Türkiye örneğinden yola çıkarak sosyal uyum ve toplumsal bütünleşme; toplumdaki tüm bireylerin refahını artırmayı hedefleyen, karşılıklı etkileşimi ve birlikte yaşamı destekleyen süreçler olarak tanımlanabilir (s. 36). Aynı bölümde, 2011-2019 yılları arasında hayata geçirilen projeler odağında Türkiye'deki göç yönetişimi pratiğine yer verilmiştir. Ayrıca dönemler arası karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşımla aktörler arasındaki iş birliği ağlarında yaşanan dönüşüm de incelenmektedir. Kitapta ayrıntılı biçimde ortaya konduğu üzere, göç politikalarının, zamanla yaşam destek odaklı uygulamalardan, daha etkileşim temelli toplumsal bütünleşme yaklaşımlarına dönüştüğü gözlemlenmektedir.

Kitabın “Türkiye’de ‘Sosyal Uyum’, ‘Toplumsal Bütünleşme’ ve Çalışma Yaşamı” başlıklı ikinci bölümünde, zorunlu göçle Türkiye’ye gelen bireylerin toplumsal uyum ve bütünleşme süreçlerinde belirleyici bir unsur olan “geçim kaynağı” kavramına odaklanılmaktadır. Geçim kaynağı, bireylerin yaşam kalitesini sürdürülebilir biçimde etkileyen kapasite, varlık ve faaliyetler bütünü olarak tanımlanmakta; çalışma alanları ise sosyal etkileşimin en güçlü gerçekleştiği ortamlar olarak değerlendirilmektedir (s. 55).

Özçürümez ve İçduygu (2022), başlangıçta sunulan insani yardım temelli desteklerin geçici niteliğini vurgulayarak, kalıcı bir yaşam kurabilmek için göçmenlerin kendi geçim imkânlarını yaratmalarının zorunlu olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte; çocuk işçiliği, kadınların istihdama erişimi, kayıt dışı çalışma ve yerel halkla yaşanan ekonomik gerilimler gibi sorunların bu süreçte önemli engeller oluşturduğu vurgulanmaktadır (s. 61, 64).

Yasal zemine ilişkin olarak da mevzuattaki değişiklikler ayrıntılı şekilde incelenmiş; Türkiye’de göçmenlerin istihdamını düzenleyen yasal çerçevenin evrimi ortaya konmuştur. Ayrıca, istihdam süreçlerinde etkin rol oynayan çok sayıda aktörün (Avrupa Birliği, Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı, Türkiye İş Kurumu, yerel sivil toplum kuruluşları, Ticaret ve Sanayi Odaları gibi) katılımı ve bu aktörler arasındaki ilişkiler ayrıntılı bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir.

İkinci bölüm, kitabın genel yaklaşımını belirleyen kavramsal ve yöntemsel çerçeveyi sunarak sonraki bölümler için bir referans noktası oluşturmaktadır. Aynı metodolojik yaklaşım doğrultusunda; üçüncü, dördüncü ve beşinci bölümlerde sırasıyla eğitim, sağlık ve barınma alanlarında sosyal uyum ve toplumsal bütünleşme, çok katmanlı toplumsal yapı içinde ele alınmaktadır. Her bölümde önce kuramsal çerçeve sunulmakta, ardından ilgili yasal düzenlemeler ve aktörler tanıtılmakta; saha uygulamalarına yer verildikten sonra genel bir değerlendirme yapılmaktadır.

Kitabın “Türkiye’de ‘Sosyal Uyum’, ‘Toplumsal Bütünleşme’ ve Eğitim Ekosistemi” başlıklı üçüncü bölümünde, zorunlu göç deneyimiyle travmatize olmuş çocuklar açısından eğitimin iyileştirici rolüne dikkat çekilmektedir. Eğitim, yalnızca bireysel gelişim açısından değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal bütünleşme ve sosyal uyumun sağlanmasında da kritik bir araç olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Özellikle akran iletişimi ve dil becerilerinin gelişimi yoluyla göçmen çocukların topluma katılımı desteklenmektedir. Bu kapsamda, Türkiye’deki Şartlı Eğitim Yardımı Programının Suriyelilere ve Diğer Mültecilere Yaygınlaştırılması (Ş.E.Y.) projesi yahut Bölgesel Mülteci ve Dayanıklılık Planı (*Regional Refugee and Resilience-3RP*) kapsamında düzenlenen Kayıp Kuşak Olmasın projesi gibi projeler örnek olarak sunulmuştur. Yazarlar, eğitimin yalnızca bilgi aktarımı değil, aynı zamanda birlikte yaşama kültürünün inşasında da merkezi bir rol üstlendiğini vurgulamaktadır (s. 110,111).

“Türkiye’de ‘Sosyal Uyum’, ‘Toplumsal Bütünleşme’ ve Sağlık Ekosistemi” başlıklı dördüncü bölümde, zorunlu göç sürecinin bireylerde bedensel, ruhsal ve sosyal açıdan bütüncül bir iyi olma halini zedelediği vurgulanmaktadır. Yazarlara göre, göçmenlerin yaşadığı bu çok boyutlu kırılganlık yalnızca kendilerini değil, yerel halkla olan ilişkilerini ve toplumsal uyumu da etkilemektedir (s. 170). Bu çerçevede, sağlık hizmetlerine erişimin iyileştirilmesi sosyal uyumun temel unsurlarından biri olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bölümde ayrıca Dünya Sağlık Teşkilatı (*World Health Organization-WHO*), Birleşmiş Milletler Uluslararası Çocuklara Acil Yardım Fonu (UNICEF), Sağlık Bakanlığı ve Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı (AFAD) gibi uluslararası ve ulusal aktörlerin bu alandaki çalışmaları ayrıntılı biçimde ele alınmakta ve işbirliğinin önemi vurgulanmaktadır.

Önceki bölümlerde olduğu gibi benzer bir yapısal örüntüyü izleyen “Türkiye’de ‘Sosyal Uyum’, ‘Toplumsal Bütünleşme’ ve Barınma Ekosistemi” başlıklı beşinci bölümde, barınmanın sosyal uyumun vazgeçilmez bir unsuru olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Birleşmiş Milletler’in barınmayı temel bir insan hakkı olarak tanımladığına (s. 209) dikkat çeken yazarlar, göçle gelen bireylerin mahalle ya da il düzeyindeki sosyal dokuyla sağlıklı etkileşim kurabilmeleri için insan onuruna yakışır, güvenli yaşam alanlarına ihtiyaç duyduğunu belirtmektedir. Artan kira fiyatlarının yerel halk ile göçmenler arasında gerilim yaratabileceğine işaret edilerek (s. 205), barınma konusunun yalnızca fiziksel değil, toplumsal uyum açısından da ele alınması gerektiği savunulmaktadır.

“Türkiye’de ‘Sosyal Uyum’, ‘Toplumsal Bütünleşme’ ve Yerel Yönetimler Örnekleri” başlıklı altıncı bölümünde ise sosyal uyum ve toplumsal bütünleşme bağlamında yerel yönetimlerin göçmenlere yönelik çok aktörlü ve çok boyutlu uygulamalarına yer verilmektedir. Bu bölümde Sultanbeyli ve Gaziantep belediyeleri örneğinde geliştirilen iki farklı çalışma ağı modeli üzerinden, kuramsal çerçevenin yerel düzeyde stratejik kamu politikalarına nasıl dönüştüğü somut bir biçimde ortaya konmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak eser, göç olgusunu yalnızca yasal düzenlemeler ya da sayısal veriler

üzerinden değil; sosyal uyumun çalışma hayatı, eğitim, sağlık ve barınma gibi somut yaşam alanlarındaki etkileri üzerinden ele alması bakımından oldukça kıymetli bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır. Her bölümde izlenen sistematik yapı, konunun hem teorik boyutunu hem de saha uygulamalarını anlamayı kolaylaştırmaktadır. Özellikle göçmenlerin iyi olma hali ile yerel halkla ilişkileri arasındaki bağın vurgulanması, uyumun karşılıklı bir süreç olduğunu göstermesi açısından dikkat çekicidir. Kitabın en güçlü yönlerinden biri, sosyal politikaların insan onurunu merkeze alan bir bakışla ele alınmasıdır.

Aynı zamanda eser, Türkiye özelinde zorunlu göç olgusunu çok disiplinli bir perspektifle ele alarak; hukuki, sosyolojik ve yönetim odaklı analizleriyle, farklı disiplinlerden okuyucular için anlaşılır ve erişilebilir bir anlatım sunmaktadır. Özellikle hukuk araştırmacıları açısından, mevzuatın gelişim sürecini detaylı ve sistematik şekilde ele alması, alandaki hukuki düzenlemeleri anlamak ve değerlendirmek için önemli bir kaynak niteliğindedir.

Her ne kadar eser kavramsal ve ampirik açıdan literatüre önemli katkılar sağlasa da anlatıma ilişkin bazı biçimsel sınırlılıklar dikkat çekmektedir. Özellikle bölümler arası geçişlerin gereğinden uzun tutulduğu ve her yeni bölüm öncesinde kısa özetlerle sonraki bölümün içeriğinin tekrarlandığı gözlemlenmektedir. Ayrıca “devam eden bölümlerde açıklanacaktır” gibi ifadelerin sık kullanımı, metnin anlatım bütünlüğünü olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir.

Bununla birlikte, toplumsal bütünleşme ve sosyal uyum süreçlerini çok katmanlı bir sosyal yapı bağlamında incelemesi; farklı aktörlerin rollerini, işbirliği ağlarını ve uygulama modellerini kapsamlı şekilde ele alması eserin çokdisiplinli doğasını ve alana katkısını güçlendirmektedir. Bu yönüyle çalışma, Türkiye’nin zorunlu göç yönetimindeki özgün ve çok aktörlü deneyimini akademik literatüre zengin bir şekilde kazandırmakta; aynı zamanda, hem kuramsal hem de pratik boyutlarıyla göç yönetimi çalışmaları için önemli bir referans kaynağı sunmaktadır.



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Kitap İncelemesi / Book Review

Ensar Göçmez, **Sürekli Göç, Kente Uyum, Kimlik ve Din. Zeytinburnu Afganistan Özbekleri**, Çizgi Kitabevi Yayınları, 1. Baskı, İstanbul, Aralık 2022, 328 sayfa, ISBN: 978-605-196-914-5.

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Göçmenler, göç etmeden önce herkes gibi görece sabit bir kimliğe sahip olsalar da, bir yerden başka bir yere göç etmeleri kimliklerinin yeniden inşası ve dönüşümüne yol açabilmektedir. Ensar Göçmez'in Erciyes Üniversitesi'nde hazırladığı doktora tez çalışmasına dayanan *Sürekli Göç, Kente Uyum, Kimlik ve Din. Zeytinburnu Afganistan Özbekleri* adlı eser, Afganistan'ın SSCB tarafından işgalinin ardından önce Hatay'ın Ovakent ilçesine, daha sonra da İstanbul'un Zeytinburnu ilçesine göç eden Afganistanlı Özbekleri konu almaktadır. Çalışma, Ovakent'ten bireysel, gönüllü ve ekonomik nedenlerle Zeytinburnu'na göç eden Özbeklerin kent yaşamına uyum süreçlerini, kimliklerini nasıl inşa ettiklerini ve kimlik inşa süreçlerinde hangi faktörlerin rol oynadığını anlamayı amaçlamakta ve Özbek göçmenlerin Ovakent'teki uyum ve kimlik oluşturma süreçleri ile Zeytinburnu'na göç ettikten sonraki deneyimlerinin etkilerini karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz etmektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda yürütülen saha çalışması analiz edilmektedir. Elde edilen bulgular, mevcut literatürle ilişkilendirilerek okuyucuya sunulmaktadır.

Kitap üç ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde kavramsal çerçeve sunularak göç, kültürleşme, kimlik ve din olguları çeşitli teorik ve kuramsal yaklaşımlar ışığında ele alınmıştır. İkinci bölümde tarihsel bağlam ele alınarak zorunlu göç ile önce Afganistan'dan Pakistan'a, sonra Pakistan'dan Hatay'ın Ovakent mahallesine ardından da gönüllü bir şekilde Ovakent'ten İstanbul'un Zeytinburnu ilçesine uzanan göç süreci analiz edilmiştir. Üçüncü bölümde ise araştırmanın yöntemi ve sahadan elde edilen bulgulara yer verilmiştir.

Yazar kitabın giriş kısmında Özbek göçmenlerin tarihsel arka planını, çalışmanın amacını, hipotezlerini, yöntemini ve ulaştığı bulguları tartışmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, literatürdeki benzer araştırmalar ve çalışmalar ile ilgili de analiz sunmaktadır.

Çalışmanın başlıca araştırma sorusu şu şekildedir: "Zeytinburnu'na göç eden Özbekler, kente uyum bağlamında kimliklerini nasıl inşa etmektedir?" Çalışma özel bir araştırma grubu üzerinden göçmenlerin kente uyum sürecini, kimlik inşasını ve dini

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inançlarının dönüşümünü araştırmaktadır. Gönüllü ve zorunlu göçü içinde barından bu çalışmanın amacı göçmen Özbeklerin kent yaşamında kente uyum veya uyumsuzluk, kimliklerini koruma veya yeniden inşa etme süreçlerini ortaya çıkarmaktır (s. 6).

Yazar “Göç, Kente Uyum, Kimlik İnşası ve Din Gibi Kavramsal ve Kuramsal Temeller” başlıklı birinci bölümde; önce göç, kente uyum, kimlik inşası ve din gibi kavramları ayrı ayrı açıklamıştır. Devamında ise bu kavramların karşılıklı ilişkisini teorik düzeyde okuyucuya sunmuştur.

Göçmez’e göre göç olgusu; sebepleri, gerçekleştiriliş biçimleri ve doğurduğu sonuçlar bakımından tek boyuta indirgenemeyecek kadar çok yönlüdür. Her göç, bireyin ya da toplumun tarihsel tecrübesi ve sosyo-kültürel birikimiyle şekillendiği için, “yeni bir yaşam arayışı sonucunda, yeni yaşam alanları ya da imkânsızlıklarla karşılaşma” bakımından özgün bir deneyim olarak değerlendirilir. Bu yönüyle göç, yazar tarafından “bilinmeyene yapılan bir yolculuk” olarak tanımlanır (s. 12).

Kitabın “Zeytinburnu’ndaki Afganistan Özbekleri’nin Tarihi ve Göç Süreçleri” başlıklı ikinci bölümünde yazar Afganistan Özbekleri hakkında genel bilgiler vererek Özbek göçmenlerin göç serüvenini tarihsel açıdan detaylandırmıştır. Bu tarihsel anlatı içerisinde, yazarın da üç yıl yaşayarak daha iyi gözlemleme fırsatı bulduğu Ovakent, Afganistan Özbeklerinin Türkiye’deki ilk yerleşim yerlerinden biri olarak özel bir önem taşımaktadır. 1979 yılında Afganistan’ın SSCB tarafından işgal edilmesiyle Özbeklerin bir bölümü önce kendi imkanlarıyla Pakistan’a sığınmışlardır. Ardından 1982 yılında aralarında Özbeklerin de bulunduğu 4195 Türk kökenli göçmen Türkiye’ye getirilerek farklı illerde iskân edilmiştir. 172 aileden oluşup, toplam 759 kişilik Afganistan Türkleri da o tarihte Hatay’ın Ovakent mahallesine yerleştirilmiştir. Daha sonra, aynı kuşaktan olan bu göçmenlerin bir kısmı, 1990’ların ikinci yarısından itibaren ekonomik nedenlerden dolayı, kırdan kente doğru, İstanbul’un Zeytinburnu ilçesine göç etmişlerdir. Özbek göçmenler için bu ikinci göç dalgası, sadece bir iç göç niteliğinde olmayıp, kırdan kente geçişle bağlı olarak kimlik, aidiyet ve yaşam biçiminde önemli dönüşümleri de beraberinde getirmiştir (s. 54).

Ensar Göçmez, “Kente Uyum ile Kimlik İnşası ve Din Etkileşimi” başlıklı üçüncü bölümde araştırmanın amacını, önemini, sınırını, sınırlılıklarını ve yöntemini detaylı bir şekilde açıklamıştır. Yazar, göçmen Özbeklerin kente uyum sürecini kültürleşme kuramı ekseninde değerlendirirken; göçmenlerin asimilasyon, ayrışma, bütünleşme ve marjinalleşme biçimlerinin farklı düzeylerde yaşandığını ifade etmektedir (s. 152). “Felsefi varsayımları ve kuramsal çerçeveleri içeren farklı araştırma desenlerinin kullanılmasını, nitel ve nicel verilerin toplanmasını ve bu iki veri türünün bütünleştirilmesini kapsayan bir araştırma türü” olan iç-içe karma araştırma yöntemiyle yazılan bu çalışmada göçmenlerin kente uyumu nicel, kültürel yaşam biçimleri ise nitel araştırma ile incelenmiştir (s. 156).

Çalışmanın nicel bölümünde, kültürleşme stratejilerini etkileyen faktörler saha verilerine dayanılarak değerlendirilmiş ve demografik değişkenler ile bu stratejiler arasındaki farklar ve ilişkiler analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında 85'i kadın, 91'i erkek olmak üzere 176 kişiyle yüz yüze anket yapılmıştır (s.188). Nitel bölümde ise göçmenlerin kent yaşamında dini ya da etnik kimliklerinden hangisinin daha belirleyici olduğunu ortaya koymak ve kimlik inşa süreçlerinin yönünü anlamak amaçlanmıştır. Bu doğrultuda örneklem grubunun 8'i kadın ve 10'u erkek olmak üzere toplam 18 kişi ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Bu görüşmelerin yanı sıra çalışma gözlem notları ve alandan çekilen fotoğraflar ile de desteklenmiştir (s. 195).

Yazara göre araştırmanın birçok sınır ve sınırlılıkları vardır. Araştırma, 2017-2018 yılları arasında yürütülmüş olup, mekân olarak Ovakent ve Zeytinburnu ilçeleri ile, katılımcı olarak ise yalnızca bu bölgelerde yaşayan Afganistanlı Özbek göçmenlerle sınırlıdır. Sınırlılıklar arasında, yerli halk ve diğer göçmen gruplarıyla görüşülmemesi, nitel kısımda tüm hedef grupla mülakat yapılamaması ve nicel kısımda tümüne anket uygulanamaması yer almaktadır. Göçmen kadınlarla iletişim, kapalı ve geleneksel yaşam tarzları nedeniyle ancak kadın bir akademisyen aracılığıyla sağlanabilmektedir. Bu süreçte en belirgin dil bariyeri de kadın katılımcılarla yaşanmıştır. Araştırmacı, yaklaşık üç yıl Ovakent'te etnografik bir yaklaşımla kapsamlı gözlemler yapmış, ancak Zeytinburnu'na göç sonrası kent yaşamının yoğunluğu ve değişen sosyal dinamikler benzer ilişkilerin kurulmasına engel olmuş, bu durum gözlem olanaklarını da önemli ölçüde sınırlandırmıştır (s.154).

Zeytinburnu'na göç eden Özbek göçmenlerin kent yaşamında kimliklerinin nasıl dönüştüğünü incelemek amacıyla yapılan bu çalışmada yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar sonucunda elde edilen veriler doğrultusunda birtakım sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır. Bu sonuçların ilki Afganistanlı Özbek göçmenlerin kent bağlamında etnik kimliklerinin güçlenmesine karşın, dini kimliklerinin zayıfladığının tespit edilmesidir. Bu bağlamda yazar, Özbek göçmenlerin Ovakent'te ikamet ettikleri süre boyunca kimliklerini "Afgan" ve "Sünni" olarak nitelendirmelerine karşın, Zeytinburnu'na göç ettikten sonra kendilerini etnik kimlikleriyle ifade etme ihtiyaçlarının arttığını ve dolayısıyla "Afgan" ve "Sünni" olan ifade biçimini "Özbek Türkü" olarak değiştirdiklerini ve dini kimlikten daha çok etnik temelli bir kimlik ön plana çıkardıklarını ifade etmiştir (s. 218).

Çalışmanın sonucunda Özbek göçmenlerin, kente yerleştikten sonra etnik kimliklerinin yanı sıra kültürel kimliklerini de korumaya çalıştıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda, göçmenler Zeytinburnu gibi çok kültürlü bir ortama uyum sağlamaya çalışırken, kültürel değerlerini de sürdürmeye çalışmıştır (s. 219).

Yazar, 14 Haziran 1934 tarihinde bir defaya mahsus, özel kanun çıkarılarak iskânlı göçmen olarak Türkiye'ye getirilen Özbeklerin bir taraftan Türkiye toplumuna uyum sağlayıp, bir taraftan da kendi kültürlerini korumalarını kolaylaştıran temel unsurun Afganistanlı Özbeklerin Anadolu kültürü ile tarihsel, mezhepsel ve kültürel benzerlikleri

paylaşması olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bununla birlikte Özbekçe ile Türkçe arasındaki benzerlik, göçmenlerin Türkiye'ye getirildikten hemen sonra vatandaşlık verilip göç politikaları oluşturulması, yerel halk tarafından dışlanmaya maruz kalmamaları vb. sebeplerden dolayı ciddi bir uyum sorunu yaşamadan şehir hayatına kolay bir şekilde entegre olabilmelerini sağlamıştır (s. 220).

Çalışmanın dikkat çekici bir başka sonucu da, göçmen Özbeklerin kentleşme süreciyle birlikte dini kimliklerini kent koşullarına uyumlu şekilde sürdürmeye çalışmalarıdır. Ancak bu süreçte, mevcut dini ritüeller çeşitlenip dönüşmüş ve bunun sonucunda yeni bir dini kimlik biçimi ortaya çıkmıştır. Yazar bu çalışmasında göçmenlerde dini ritüelleri yerine getirme pratiklerinin cinsiyete göre değişkenlik gösterdiğini de iddia etmektedir. Ona göre çalışma sonucunda kent hayatında din olgusu kadın göçmenler tarafından daha özgür bir şekilde yaşanabilmektedir. Kadınlar istedikleri gibi dini pratikleri yerine getirebilme fırsatına sahiptir. Erkek göçmenlerin dini pratikleri ise yoğun çalışma koşulları yüzünden zayıflamaktadır (s. 221).

Bunlara ek olarak, çalışmanın ulaştığı bir diğer önemli sonuç ise Ovakent'te dini eğitim, din adamları tarafından medreseler ve göçmen camilerinde verilirken, gündelik yaşamda da din adamları en güçlü figürler olarak rol oynamaktaydı. Ancak Zeytinburnu'nda göçmenlerin dini eğitimlerinin resmi eğitime dönüşmesiyle birlikte, Ovakent'teki din adamlarının Zeytinburnu'ndaki etkinliklerinin nispeten az olduğu tespit edilmiş ve dini otoritenin kent yaşamındaki dönüşümü ortaya çıkmıştır (s. 222).

Sonuç olarak yazarın bu çalışmasında, başlıkta gördüğümüz üzere ana odağı her ne kadar Zeytinburnu'ndaki Afganistanlı Özbeklerin kent yaşamındaki kimlik inşa ve uyum süreçleri olsa da, araştırmacının yüksek lisans tezini Ovakent üzerine yapmış olması ve bölgede yaklaşık üç yıl yaşayarak uzun süreli saha deneyimine sahip olması sebebiyle yazar doktora tezini Ovakent'teki deneyimleriyle karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alıp güçlü bir şekilde harmanlamıştır.

Çalışma sırasında, özellikle kadın katılımcılarla yürütülen görüşmelerde kapalı ve geleneksel yaşam tarzı ile dil kaynaklı iletişim zorlukları yaşandığı belirtilmiştir. Bu durum, kadınların deneyimlerinin daha derinlemesine aktarılmasını sınırlamıştır. Bu nedenle, gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalarda Özbekçe bilen Türk araştırmacıların veya Özbek kökenli kadın araştırmacıların sürece dâhil edilmesi, toplumsal cinsiyet boyutunun daha sağlıklı ele alınmasına katkı sağlayacaktır.

Türk kökenli Özbek göçmenleri ele alan bu çalışma gibi Afganistan'dan göç eden diğer Türk kökenli grupların örneğin; Türkmenler, Kazaklar ve Kırgızlar veya farklı etnik kökenlere sahip göçmen grupların kimlik inşa süreçlerinin ilerleyen çalışmalarda karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alınması önemlidir. Böylece, Türk kökenli ve Türk kökenli olmayan göçmen grupları arasındaki benzer temalar üzerinden yapılacak karşılaştırmalar alan yazına önemli katkılar sağlayacaktır.

Son olarak, Ensar Göçmez tarafından Özbek göçmenlerin kent yaşamına uyum süreçlerini, kimliklerini nasıl inşa ettiklerini ve geçirdikleri kimlik değişimlerini anlamayı yönelik yapılan bu araştırma önemli ve özgün katkılar sağlamakla birlikte, belirtilen sınırlılıklara sahiptir. Yazarın da ifade ettiği üzere, ilerleyen dönemlerde kapsamlı araştırmalarla katılımcı çeşitliliğinin artırılması, toplumsal cinsiyet boyutunun derinleştirilmesi ve karşılaştırmalı çok boyutlu çalışmaların yapılması, literatürün zenginleşmesine önemli katkılar sunacaktır.

Bu bağlamda, çalışma hem ilgili alanda araştırma yürütmek isteyen akademisyenlere bir rehber sunmakta hem de yeni araştırma alanlarının açılmasına olanak tanımaktadır. Ayrıca, göç politikaları geliştiren karar alıcılar için, sahadan önemli veriler aktardığı için literatüre önemli bir katkı sağlamıştır.