

Syrian Refugees' Integration into Working Life: Qualitative Research in Accommodation and Food & Beverage Enterprises
(Suriyeli Mültecilerin İş Yaşamına Uyumu:
Konaklama ve Yiyecek & İçecek İşletmelerinde Nitel Bir Araştırma)

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MAKALE GEÇMİŞİ

ÖZ

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Mültecilerin çalışma hayatına adaptasyonu mülteci nüfusu olan ülkeler için ciddi bir sorun teşkil etmektedir. Kayıt dışı çalışma, mültecilerin yaşadığı ülkelerde yaygın bir sorundur. Kayıt dışı olarak çalışan mültecilerin düşük ücreti, yerel toplumun kabul etmediği uzun çalışma saatlerini ve sıradışı çalışma koşullarını kabul etmek zorunda oldukları görülmektedir. Türkiye, Suriyeli mültecilere en fazla ev sahipliği yapan ülkedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki konaklama ve yiyecek-içecek işletmelerinde çalışan Suriyeli mültecilerin iş hayatına uyumunun hem Suriyeli mülteciler hem de ilgili STK/hükümet yöneticileri tarafından değerlendirilmesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Hem mülteciler hem de yöneticilerle yapılan görüşmelerde ortaya çıkan en önemli sorun, mültecilerin Türkçe bilmemesidir. Ayrıca, yöneticiler tarafından vurgulanan en önemli noktalar mültecilerin yerel işgücü istihdamında düşüşe neden olabileceği ile uyum sorunlarının azaltılması için mesleki eğitimin gerekli olduğudur. Konaklama ve yiyecek-içecek işletmelerinde çalışan Suriyeli mültecilerin iş hayatında karşılaştığı sorunlar düşük ücretler, uzun çalışma saatleri, dil yetersizliği ve çalışma izinleri ile ilgili problemlerdir. Çalışmanın bulgularına göre, kontrolün artırılması ve yerel toplumun istihdamına zarar gelmemesi için mültecilerin resmi olarak çalışması önemli rol oynamaktadır.

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Integration
Refugees
Syrian refugees
Turkey

The adaptation of refugees to working life is a serious problem for countries with refugee populations. Illicit work is a common problem in countries where refugees live. It is obvious that refugees working informally earn low wages and are obliged to accept long working hours and extraordinary working conditions that the local community does not accept. Turkey is the country that hosts most Syrian refugees. This study aims to assess the adaptation of Syrian refugees to the workplace in accommodation and food & beverage enterprises in Turkey according to both Syrian refugees and NGO/government executives. The most important problem that arose during the interviews conducted with both refugees and managers is that refugees are not fluent in Turkish. In addition, the most important issues highlighted by managers are that refugees can lead to a decrease in employment of the local workforce, and the need for vocational training in order to reduce compliance problems. The problems encountered by the Syrian labor force in accommodation and food & beverage enterprises are low wages, long working hours, lack of language proficiency, and work permits. The findings of the study demonstrate that official work of refugees plays an important role in increasing control and not harming the employment of the local community.

Makalenin Türü: *Araştırma Makalesi*

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INTRODUCTION

Migration refers to individuals leaving their places of residence permanently or semi-permanently and maintaining their lives in another place individually or as a group (Erjem, 2009, p. 8; Stillwell & Congdon, 1991, p. 3; Lee, 1966, p. 49). According to the Migration Terminology prepared by the International Organization for Migration (2009), the term migrant is explained as follows: “It is acknowledged to cover all conditions where an individual decides to migrate without any external force and with his free will, with the purpose of finding personal comfort”. In line with Law no. 6458 about Foreigners and International Protection which came into force in Turkey in 2013, only individuals coming from European countries are considered refugees and those meeting the same conditions but coming from other countries outside the Europe are identified as “conditional refugees” (Law No. 6458, 2013). Under these circumstances, the definition of “conditional refugee” fits the condition of Syrians in Turkey (Tatar & Ülker, 2017). Therefore, instead of the term migrant, the term refugee will be used in the current study.

Since it is not possible for refugees to formally work in labor markets without any work permit, their working conditions are more severe compared to domestic labor. Improving these conditions for refugee employees is possible only by providing them with legal work opportunities (Lordoğlu, 2015). The numbers of Syrian refugees with work permits is very low and the rate of unregistered employment is quite high. People also perceive at high rates that informal employment of Syrians decreases the employment rate and income levels of Turkish citizens (Çoban, 2018). Possible increases in unemployment of local people, decreases in wages and increases in labor competitiveness within the country that may be triggered by the Syrian refugees’ adaptation to working life (İçduygu, 2015) are among the primary concerns regarding Syrian refugees’ migration to Turkey. In this regard, the problems and issues in adaptation to working life encountered by Syrian refugees in Turkey and the observations of NGO/government executives were examined in this study, and the results were discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Refugee Integration

Since the beginning of the 2000s, there has been growing interest in literature about the integration of refugees (Beverluis et al, 2016:109). The word *integration* originates from the Latin word ‘integratio’ and refers to a process which develops within the framework of a set of rules and behavioral patterns that are widely accepted and perceived in the context of moral

values, rather than addressing a physical integration process (Balkır, 2016, pp. 4-6). According to the Oxford Dictionary (Oxford Dictionaries), integration means “the action or process of integrating two different things to create an integrity”, while it is defined as “unification or harmony” in the dictionary of the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2018). The definition of the United Nations refers to “the regulations allowing refugees and minorities to be involved in the host society in all aspects” (United Nations, 1994, p. 43). Refugee integration means that the refugees maintain their own identity, yet become a part of the host society to the extent that they live in harmony with the host population (Kuhlman, 1991: 6). In the study by Demiryürek (2012, p. 17), participation and multiculturalism were provided as alternative terms for integration. The term integration emerged as a result of the integration and adaptation policies and strategies developed by countries, particularly by European countries, with the purpose of finding a solution to identity confusion and social imbalances resulting from cultural and ethnic diversity driven by international migration movements (Unutulmaz, 2012, pp. 137-138).

Refugee integration addresses a period of change (Kuhlman, 1991, p. 8) where the host and refugee communities live together and share common resources (Harrell-Bond, 1986, p. 7). In their present countries, refugees adopt four different cultural interaction strategies, namely assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization (Kuhlman, 1991:5; Buchanan et al., 2016:526) Assimilation means that individuals adopt and live in line with the identity and values of the host community, instead of preserving their own core values and identities (Carmon, 1996, p. 23; Zick et al., 2001:546). It is of vital importance during the subjective and bilateral integration process that refugees be eager to adapt the lifestyle of the host community without losing their own cultural identities. Therefore, integration and assimilation are different terms (The Refugee Council, 2004, p. 4; European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2005, p. 14; Atfield, Brahmhatt & O’Toole, 2007, pp. 12-13; Martikainen & Özmen, 2010, p. 265; Berry, 2001, p. 619; Çağlar & Onay, 2015, p. 56; Karpat, 2010, pp. 27-28). On the other hand, separation means that refugees lose their own cultural values; however, they are not willing to adapt to the culture of the host community either (Carmon, 1996, p. 23). In marginalization, similar to separation, refugees lose their own cultural identity and reject being involved in the culture of the host community (Bloch, 2002, pp. 81-82; Berry, 2001, p. 619; Berry, 1997, p. 10).

Refugee Integration Process

For the last ten years, refugee integration policies have been diversifying and developing in many countries (Strang and Ager, 2010:594). The integration process in the literature is described as a concept that reflects and measures the level at which people are integrated into the social structure (Valenta and Bunar, 2010:465). Laws, policies, skills, educational background, qualifications, and language proficiencies of refugees are the other factors which affect integration. During the integration process, language proficiency and employment are the most important issues (Lichtenstein and Puma, 2018:3; Mestheneos, and Ioannidi, 2002:318). The immigrant integration process starts with immigrants' arrival to the host country and continues even when the immigrant becomes an active member of the host community from legal, social, educational and cultural aspects (ECRE, 2005, p. 18; Strang and Ager, 2010:595; Stenvig et al., 2018: 18). There are at least two parties involved in interaction processes, namely, immigrants with their efforts, adaptation problems and characteristics, and the host community with its reaction towards the immigrants. Interaction between these two parties specifies the direction and consequences of the integration process. Refugees' adaptation to working, education and socio-cultural life does not emerge only at individual level. The adaptation process also occurs at collective level within the immigrant group. Success of the refugee integration process is highly dependent on the acceptance of these organizations by civil society (Penninx, 2004, p. 3). On the other hand, according to Kallen (1955), integration is divided into two: structural and cultural integration. Structural integration has two types: primary and secondary. Primary structural integration refers to the participation of the refugees in friendship networks, family, marital alliances and social institutions. Secondary structural integration refers to the participation of individuals in economics and politics (cited in Valtonen, 2004:75). According to the study by Greeley (1971, pp. 53-58), the integration process consists of six stages and the first stage is culture shock. In the second stage, immigrants learn to speak the language of the host community and start working in qualified jobs. In the third stage, refugees with good qualifications and skills are exposed to assimilation. In the fourth stage, refugees feel self-confident and willing to participate in administration in the region they settled in. In the fifth stage, refugees become completely integrated with the host community. In the last stage, adaptation of refugees who have become very different individuals to their own core identities is initiated.

Successful Integration Process

The integration process should be a natural process in which both the host community and the refugee community are equally involved (Tekin, 2009: 21). Due to the fact that pleasant welcome and adaptation are the building blocks of integration, success in this process depends on ensuring equality in opportunities for all individuals within the society and avoiding discrimination between individuals (UN, 1994, p. 43; Yükleyen & Yurdakul, 2011, pp. 66-67; Valtonen, 2004, p. 87; Çağlar & Onay, 2015, p. 56; Perşembe, 2005, p. 46). According to Kuhlman (1991:7), the participation of refugees in the economy in ways commensurate with their skills and compatible with their values, satisfying living standards of the refugees (access to public utilities, health services, and education), and being psychologically healthy while maintaining an identity of their own are the factors that must be included the process for successful integration. Mutual interaction between resources, strategies and refugees - host society is crucial for refugee integration to be successful (Starng and Ager, 2010: 601).

Refugee integration covers the success of refugees in employment, housing, education and health areas, including access to these areas and the socialization process with groups in society. Successful integration avoids fear and imbalance due to language problems and cultural difference (Ager and Strang: 2008:184). The host community's positive attitudes towards cultural diversity and open-mindedness will contribute to integration with refugees (Berry, 1997, p. 11). In order to ensure that refugees develop positive relationships with the host community without losing their core identities and cultural values, the to-be-applied integration strategy should be considered from all aspects (psychological, sociocultural, economic, legal/political, socio-economic and cultural/religious) (Türker & Yıldız, 2015, p. 26; Penninx, 2004, p. 2). Not only the refugees but also the host community and all institutions and organizations working and not working with refugees should play an active role in the integration process (Akçadağ Alagöz, 2011; Demiryürek, 2012, p. 14; Rex & Singh, 2003, p. 6; International Migration Organization, 2009, p. 17; Burnett, 2012, p. 109; Kirkwood, Mckinlay and Mcvittie, 2014:17). According to the results of research conducted by Li (2003, p. 316), a positive integration process depends on refugees putting in as much effort as the citizens of the country in order to contribute to the host country. Success in integration primarily requires the perception of integration as a process. It should be ensured that prejudices and negative stereotypes are avoided, a perception of cultural diversity within the community is developed, and intercultural education opportunities are accessible by immigrants. Hospitality of the host community, financing and coordinaation of the refugee

integration process by national, regional and local governmental and other organizations and involvement of volunteer groups, refugee communities and refugees themselves in the development of integration strategies address the fundamental principles of integration (The Refugee Council, 2004, pp. 4-5).

Dimensions of Refugee Integration

Integration has two dimensions: the private and public dimension. While the public dimension implies the social and the legal conditions of the society in which the refugees live, the private dimension implies the services received by refugees from the host population, such as employment, education, housing and health (Lomba, 2010:417). According to Valenta and Bunar (2010:466), integration is divided into four as cultural integration, housing integration, economic integration and social integration. The policies for refugees in the host society, the attitudes and prejudices of the society towards refugees affect the integration process of refugees. According to other studies, integration is divided into two categories: system integration and social integration. System integration is usually observed in employee and production sectors, and refugees may develop well-matched relationships with the host community. On the other hand, social integration embodies four components, namely, identity, interaction, acculturation and social-economic-political status (Esser, 2000, pp. 56-61; Löffler, 2011, p. 20). Despite the fact that integration was examined by some researchers (Martikainen & Özmen, 2010, p. 266; Türker & Yıldız, 2015, p. 24; Council of Europe, 1997, p. 9; Burnett, 2012, p. 23; Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Nye, 1971, pp. 26-27; Valenta & Bunar, 2010, p. 466; Hurly, 2015, p. 52; Vrecer, 2010, p. 490) within the framework of many different dimensions, the cultural, structural and political integration are the most examined dimensions of integration in general. Cultural integration focuses on how refugees and the community behave, adapt and react towards each other. Thanks to structural integration, refugees create their own communities in different sectors and areas (economy, religion, politics, education). Political integration addresses the legal rights (acquiring citizenship) granted to refugees by the host state.

According to Crisp (2004:3), the integration process consists of economic integration, in addition to legal and social integration. The economic integration concept is about wages, distribution of professions and contributions of refugees to the economy (Valenta and Bunar, 2010: 466-467). Economic dimensions of integration are as follows: sufficient contribution to the economy, an income providing an acceptable living standard, equal access to goods and services where the right to access is not specified based on income level, the impact of

refugees on the host community, and preserving the conditions of various socio-economic categories within the local population (Kuhlman, 1991, p. 19).

Syrian Refugees' Adaptation to Working Life in Turkey

The problems and conflicts in the Middle East have led to an increase in the number of refugees in many countries accepting refugees, and have led the refugee integration issue to come to the fore (Puma et al., 2018: 2). According to data received from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there were 25.4 million refugees worldwide in 2018 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019). Turkey, hosting more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, is the country with the highest refugee population in the world today (Sunata and Tosun, 2018:2). By 2017, 5.5 million people had migrated from Syria, 95% of whom took refuge in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Temporary protection status, open-door and non-refoulement policies led most Syrians to migrate to Turkey (Çoban 2018, Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, 2018). The majority of immigrant Syrians are accommodated in places other than refugee shelters and make their living through their own economic efforts (Table 1). Policies adopted by Turkey extended Syrian refugees' duration of stay in the country and thus, increased the impacts on the national economy (Yıldız & Yıldız, 2017).

Table 1: Number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey

Status	Number
Those accommodated in temporary shelters	155,410
Those accommodate by their own means, not in temporary shelters	3,438,822
Total	3,594,232*

*Data are valid for December, 2018.

Resource: The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2018 (Access: 09.11.2018)

The main income source for Syrian refugees in Turkey are wages they earn in various jobs, especially in accommodation and food & beverage businesses. The majority of Syrian refugees do not survive based on aid in kind or aid in cash provided by any institution. The aids in question serve as a regular income only for 6% of the refugee families. Significant differences are observed on a regional basis. Of Syrian refugees, 6% indicated that they get financial support from their families and friends, while %3 indicated that they still use their savings. The average family size of Syrian refugees is composed of 6.2 family members and the average number of individuals generating income for the family is 1.4 (Ingev & Ipsos Report, 2017).

A study carried out by The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit in 2007 emphasized the lack of information about the qualifications of the refugees, the refugees' work rights and identities and illegal workers (Cited in Pietka-Nykaz, 2015:526). Similarly, examining the studies carried out about Syrian refugees' adaptation to the labor market since it is the focal point in the current study, it is observed that informal working, unemployment, challenges in acquiring work permits, seizure of wages, low wages, long working hours and language barriers (Çetin, 2016; Lordoğlu & Aslan, 2016; Duruel 2017; Korkmaz, 2018; Şimşek, 2018; Şahankaya Adar, 2018) are the main problems faced intensively by refugees.

With the entry into force of the "Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners granted Temporary Protection", the subject of granting work permits for Syrian refugees was regulated. It is laid down in the Regulation that the number of Syrian refugees under temporary protection cannot exceed the number of Turkish citizens working in the same workplace; however, the quote in question may change in the fields of seasonal agriculture and animal husbandry. In addition, there are certain provisions indicating that those granted a work permit cannot be paid less than the minimum wage in the country (Resmi Gazete, 2016). Nevertheless, the studies carried out so far (Kaygısız, 2017; Mutlu et al., 2018) reveal the fact that there are still serious problems regarding work permits and payments. In essence, it was observed that the refugees devoid of legal rights like work permits tend towards working informally, and as a result, they face problems such as low wages or seizure of wages.

The studies and reports in Turkey (Çetin, 2016; Duruel 2017; Çoban, 2018) show that the unemployment rate of Syrian refugees is dramatically high. Besides the problems faced in relation to Syrian refugees' involvement in labor, remarkable problems exist regarding the working conditions provided for the labor force. Low wages and even not paying wages at all, namely the seizure of wages, are the most common problems in this regard. In other words, the inability of Syrian refugees to get the payment they deserve for their labor is one of the most critical problems (Çoban, 2018, Şimşek, 2018). In a study carried out by Akbaş and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2018) with Syrians in Denizli, Turkey, it was concluded that seizure of wages is pretty common and wages paid are much less than for other employees performing the same work. In addition, the same study also revealed that the qualified labor force cannot find the opportunity to work in businesses where they can use their qualifications. A study conducted by Çetin (2016) about Syrian refugees concluded that the Syrian labor force is paid much less than the minimum wage. The findings in the study also show that some refugees get half of the money paid to their colleagues dealing with the same workload. In the study by

Paksoy and Karadeniz (2016) where socio-economic structures of Syrians refugees in Kilis, Turkey were examined, 35% of Syrian respondents indicated that they earned less than minimum wage.

In the study carried out by Taş et al. (2016) in Bursa and Şanlıurfa, Turkey, Syrian workers who were interviewed in the scope of the research worked illegally, got less payment than minimum wage and had the perception that the amount paid in return for their service was very low. Results of a research conducted by Pınar et al. (2016) and published by ILO, Turkey reveal that 83% of the respondent Syrians have income less than 1500 Turkish liras. This rate shows that majority of Syrians survive at the minimum subsistence level. In the study carried out by Mutlu et al. (2018) with Syrian refugees and Turkish workers with citizenship working in the textile industry in Istanbul, Turkey, it was identified that Syrian workers were paid less than their Turkish colleagues with equal workload. Furthermore, it was observed that Syrian women earn less than Syrian men. Besides working for low wages, the fact that Syrian workers accept the jobs Turkish citizens are not willing to do is an important factor allowing Syrian refugees to find a job (Lordoğlu & Aslan, 2016). The main reason underlying these problems is the high number of workers working without work permits. Although employees are aware that it is illegal to employ refugees without work permits, they believe that they are providing a favor for those people by taking the risk in question. As a result, they have the perception that they have the right to pay less or sometimes not to pay at all.

One of the important consequences of Syrian refugees working for less than minimum wage is that almost all family members have to work, which results in an increase in the number of child workers in the country (Korkmaz, 2018).

In addition to the problems faced with regard to payments, excessive working hours is another important problem (Şimşek, 2018). In the study conducted by Kaygısız (2017), it was highlighted that working hours vary; however, no working time less than 11 hours could be found in any example, and the average working duration was 12.4 hours. Furthermore, no overtime wages are paid. Results of the study carried out by Mutlu et al. (2018) revealed that working hours are much above the legal limits and overtime working is an obligation. Lordoğlu and Aslan (2016) indicated that Syrian workers have low expectations of working conditions, including workplace accidents, which relaxes employers. Şahankaya and Adar (2018) emphasize that Syrian labor force is being forced to accept work under the worst conditions, which lowers the standard of working conditions at large in Turkey.

Studies focusing on refugees' adaptation to working life in the host country were conducted in different countries, as well. In the study by Burnett (2012) carried out about integration of refugees in the Czech Republic, it was discovered that speaking the language of the host country is an important parameter for successful adaptation. The facilitating role of the social environment in integration was emphasized. In the study conducted by Bloch (2007) on the working life adaptation of refugees arriving in England from 5 different countries, it was proposed that language proficiency, practicing their own professions in England, non-equivalency of their qualifications in England and lack of professional experience in England cause serious problems. Revealing the fact that refugees being familiar with the country at moderate level doubles the likelihood of finding a job, Tanay and Peschner (2017) showed that being educated and getting education is as important as speaking the language of the country.

METHODOLOGY

Context

Within the scope of the current study, results of interviews conducted in Ankara and Hatay, were evaluated. In light of data from November 2018, 439,642 of 3,594,232 Syrian refugees in Turkey had settled in Hatay, whereas 86,589 of them resided in Ankara (GİGM, 2018). Syrians under with the status of temporary protection were not allowed to work legally between 2011 and 2016. The entry into force of the "Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners granted with Temporary Protection" on 31.10.2016 paved the way for Syrian refugees to get work permits. Table 2 shows the number of applications for work permits between 2011 and November 2018 in Turkey and in the two provinces where the interviews were conducted. The numbers of applications remained low until 2016, and remarkably increased after 2016. The number decreased in 2018.

Table 2: Number of work-permits applications by Syrian refugees

	Turkey in Total	Ankara	Hatay
2011	155	11	3
2012	350	14	20
2013	1030	38	14
2014	3246	99	43
2015	4907	101	310
2016	15372	370	1110
2017	26562	722	1405
2018*	12493	361	618

*Number of Applications until November

Source: The Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Access: 09.11.2018)

In Table 3, 79.5% of applications until November, 2018 were accepted, 17% of applications were returned and only 3% were rejected.

Table 3: Results of work-permit applications by Syrian refugees between 2011-2018*

Application status	Number	Percentage
Returned	11087	17.29
Accepted	50969	79.50
Pending	31	0.05
Rejected	2028	3.16
Total	64115	100

*Number of Applications until November

Source: The Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Access: 09.11.2018)

The tables above show the number of Syrians who intend to work legally. Nevertheless, the data regarding the number of Syrians (Şahankaya Adar, 2018) who work informally and are considered as precarious labor force in labor market in Turkey are different (Kaygısız, 2017; Çoban, 2018). According to a report prepared by the International Crisis Group (2018), it is claimed that the actual number ranges between approximately 750,000 and 950,000 and the majority of them are males. Precarious industries where the numbers of informal workers are high and the workers are paid low wages are mainly construction, cleaning, maintenance, agriculture, food & drink and hospitality industries (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson & Waite, 2015). A similar situation is observed in Turkey, as well. Agriculture, construction and service industries, respectively, are the areas where illegal work is observed at highest levels. In the service industry, particularly hotels and restaurants employ unregistered workers (Kaygısız, 2017).

Method and Scope

The in-depth interview method was used in order to collect qualitative data. Interviews were semi-structured and all questions were open-ended. Within the framework of the research question, all interviews were conducted with two groups. The first group consists of Syrian refugees (26 refugees) who work in accommodation and food & beverage enterprises, whereas the second group consists of the executives of governmental institutions and NGOs (9 managers) who have knowledge and/or authority and work in the field of employment of Syrian refugees.

Within the scope of the current research, the interviews lasted for 30 min to 90 min. Interviews were recorded by the interviewers and analyzed using a qualitative data analysis program. The first phase where the interviews were conducted with Syrians was performed

accompanied by an Arabic translator. An Arabic translator was used in order to communicate effectively as the incompetence of Syrian refugees for the Turkish language could limit the research. Therefore, opportunities were provided to interviewees to express their opinions in their native language which facilitated the interviews.

Twenty-six refugees (25 male and 1 female) and 2 executives from governmental institutions and 7 NGO executives (8 male and 1 female) attended the interviews. The average age of the interviewees was 27 years for Syrian refugees and 44 years for NGO/government executives. Regarding their education levels, 5 of refugees graduated from elementary school, 14 graduated from high school, 10 graduated from associate degree programs, 5 have bachelor's degrees and 11 hold doctorate degrees. While 3 executives graduated from high school, 6 graduated from undergraduate programs.

Refugees were from Latakia, Hamas and Damascus, particularly from Aleppo (11 refugees) and Idlib (10 refugees). Those who did not use to work in their home country, students and workers in construction, food & drink industries generally work as a wage-earners in food & drink, hospitality or retail sale enterprises in Turkey.

FINDINGS

Based on the interviews with Syrian refugees and NGO/government executives, data were collected about adaptation-related problems and solution proposals as well as about working conditions and wages in Turkey. Since the questions were open-ended, the frequencies of certain statements were higher than the number of interviewees. Responses from Syrian refugees mainly explained the current situation, whereas the data allowing a broader perspective on the issue were collected from the interviews with the executives.

It is indicated in literature that difficulties in acquiring work permits are an important problem faced during refugees' employment process. In order to avoid the feeling of being interrogated by an official body, refugees were not directly asked whether they had work permits. Instead, they were asked whether the non-existence of a work permit caused them any trouble in finding a job. Eighteen of the respondents indicated that they did not face any problem regarding work permits, whereas 7 respondents said that they had troubles related to work permits. Since illicit work is very common, it indicates that they were employed without the work permit:

"...I did not need any work permit in general..." (M1)

“...I could not work for a few months due to the lack of a work permit; I found this job after getting the permit...” (M4)

“...I faced problems. Several companies did not employ me without the work permit. Yet, I managed to work informally, but my salary was very low...” (M14)

“...I do not have a work permit; therefore, they did not employ me in some places. They said they cannot provide insurance for me...” (M17)

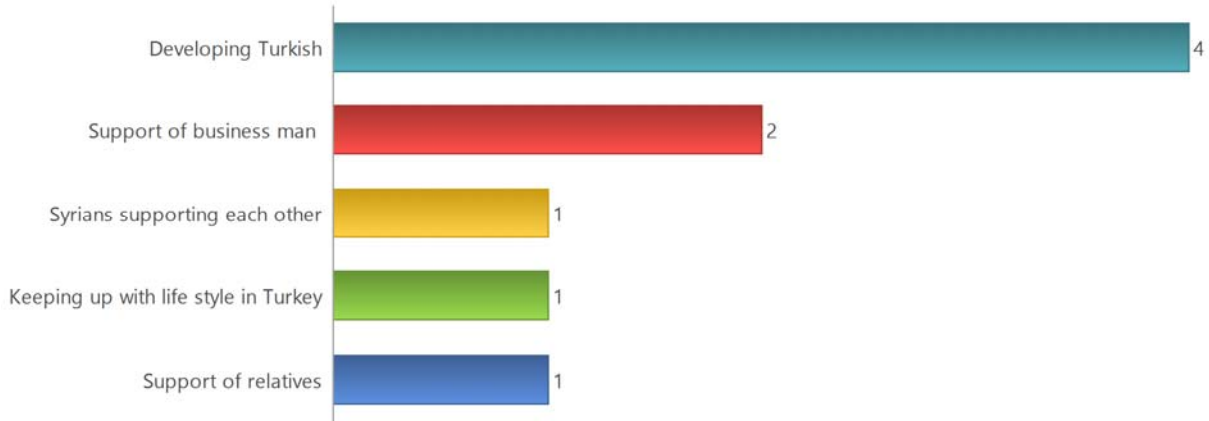


Figure 1: Solution proposals for finding a job

Twelve refugees emphasized that they faced several problems in getting started in working life, whereas 15 refugees indicated that they could not find a job for a while. Solutions proposed by Syrian refugees for finding a job are shown on Figure 1. Despite the fact that they did not express their opinions about this issue, it is understood that the most serious problem arises from the language barrier. Interviewed refugees believe that improving their proficiency in the Turkish language would support them in finding a job. In addition, some respondents emphasized that local business owners and Syrian entrepreneurs can support Syrian refugees in this regard. However, the small number of responses regarding the solution proposals show that they do not have much information about this matter.

“...all Syrians should help each other, as my friends did...” (M4)

Their proficiency in Turkish is seen in Figure 2.

Language levels are indicated by A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C2. A1 refers to basic level, while C2 indicates proficient level. No respondents had C2 level, 10 respondents are at basic level and 7 respondents are at C1 level. This shows that the improvement in language proficiency is important for finding a job.

“...I would like to learn Turkish, but everybody in my neighborhood is Syrian and I do not have time to learn it...” (M4)

“...I practiced speaking in Turkish with a few people, but learning Turkish is very challenging ...” (M10)

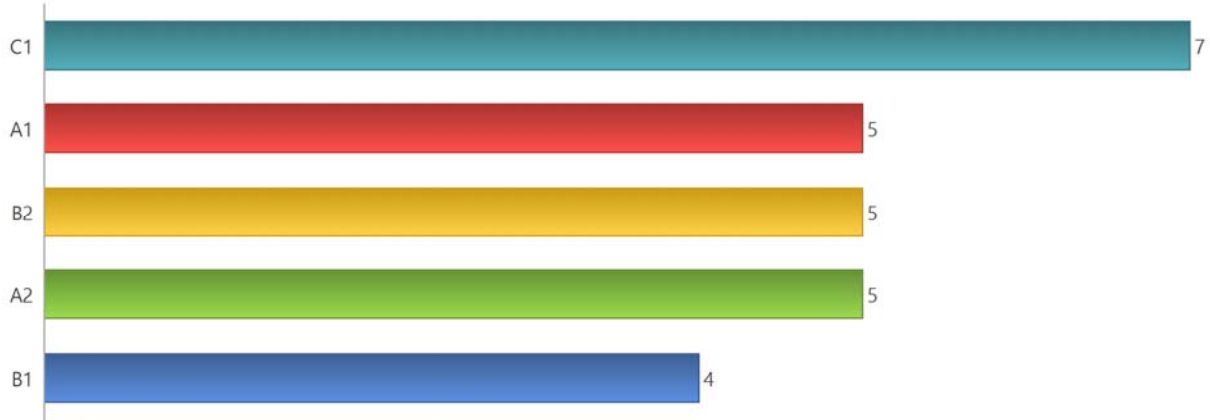


Figure 2: Turkish proficiency level

Regarding the problems faced by refugees in workplaces, they believe that they (20 refugees) work longer hours compared to the local labor force:

“...I used to work for 16 hours at my first job...” (M16)

“...I work for 14 hours...” (M24)

“...As far as I observe in working life, they are forced to work for a very little amount of money and very long hours. Although they should work for 8 hours, they are forced for work for 10-12 hours...” (Y5)

The perceptions that they have higher workload compared to the local labor force (12 refugees) and they work under worse conditions (14 refugees) do not correspond to the majority of refugees. Yet, some statements exist regarding the challenging working conditions:

“... Three years ago, I worked with a Turkish craftsman. I used to do the cleaning, but he did not. I had to, but he did not. My boss said the same: “You will do it, you have to. But he does not. You will work without insurance, you have to. But he will have insurance...” (M14)

“... For instance, in a company where I worked for 2 years, we used to work all the time while Turkish guys were sitting...” (M22)

The majority of the interviewees (21 refugees) think that they work for a low salary, whereas very few (6 refugees) indicate that they suffered from the seizure of wage:

“...Yes, we get lower salaries. To be able get the same amount of salary Turkish colleagues earn by working for 8 hours, we have to work 14-15 hours. When I was in Ankara, I worked in a workplace for 3-4 months. The boss issued me a check in return for my labor, but I could not get my money with this check. I had to leave more than 3 thousand Turkish lira behind me...” (M4)

“...as observed in every sector, Syrians get lower wages in the tourism sector, as well...” (M8)

“...We work for lower wages; however, Turkish citizens say “we pay taxes, you do not. This is why your wages are low...” (M10)

“...just because we are Syrian people, we were forced to work for a lower wage and longer hours than Turkish citizens. For instance, there is a Turkish waiter here. He works less than me and gets 70 lira whereas I get 40 TL... (M17)

“... We do not get the same amount of money as Turkish citizens. We earn the lowest salary. I had to work in a restaurant in Iskenderun when I first arrived in Turkey. I used to work 15-16 hours to get 25 TL...” (M21)

“... They are paid less than Turkish workers, which creates a problem for both Syrians and Turkish workers. For instance, a Turkish waiter in a restaurant is paid 80-100 TL per day whereas a Syrian is paid 20-30 TL. There is an inequality in the amount of wages. These problems should be avoided, the number of inspections should be increased... (Y6)

“... When I was working in Izmir, I agreed with the boss on 2000 TL, but he gave me 1000 TL and said he will give the rest later. But he did not. I waited for 3 months and still could not get the money and gave up on that money. There is nothing to do, 60-70% of Syrians are in this situation...” (M25)

When the respondents were asked about their job-related future plans, it was observed that half of them (13 refugees) were satisfied with their current job, while a few of them (4 refugees) would like to establish their own business (Figure 3):

“...Yes, I am satisfied with it. It fits my capabilities well ...” (M8)

“...I am satisfied because I work and also stay in my workplace ...” (M24)

“...I would like to start an aluminum business in the future ...” (M22)

“...I am planning to open a tailor shop in the future...” (M23)

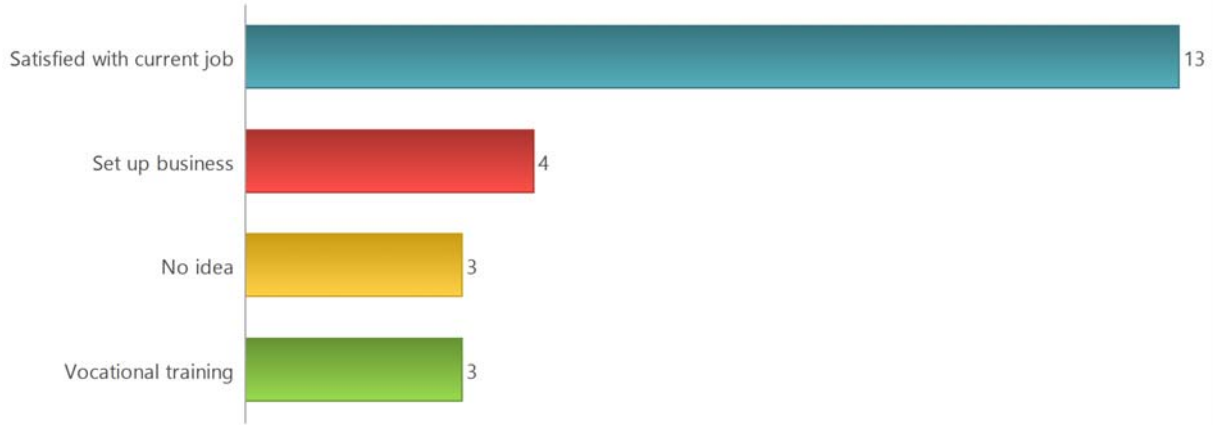


Figure 3: Projected jobs in the future

Refugees were also asked whether they would like to go back to Syria in the future. Fourteen of the respondents intended to go back to their homeland, whereas 3 respondents stated that they plan to stay in Turkey. Results show that the intention to work in Turkey has not prevailed.

“...When everything recovers, I would like to go back to my own country...” (M2)

“...If the situation gets better, I would like to go back to my own country. I do not want to travel to another country...” (M3).

“...I want to go back to Syria because my mother and father are there. My brothers live in Europe but I do not want to go there. Turkey is better...” (M6)

The in-depth interviews conducted with managers focused on their opinions about refugees' adaptation to working life. According to the managers, the most important issue that causes problems in refugees' adaptation to working life is the decrease in employment opportunities for local people. Interviewees agreed that as Syrian workers work in any bad conditions that employers prefer Syrian workers, and therefore, this situation increases the unemployment rate in the country:

“...They decrease the competitive capacity. You know that there are differences between Turkish workers and Syrian workers, they work cheaper. As the Syrians work for less, our local staff or workers suffer from unemployment and complain about the circumstances...” (Y7)

The views about the negative impacts of refugees on the local labor force are unregistered employment, low wages/seizure of wage, linguistic deficiency, and the difficulties faced by the host community in embracing the refugees (Figure 4). Although the problems related to

work permits are not mentioned frequently, the difficulties in obtaining permits cause unregistered employment:

“...workload is heavy, because the state does not know that we are working, ...” (M10)

“...In our country, residence permits are granted by the police whereas work permits are provided by the Ministry. It is the same in other countries, as well; however, the procedural process is much slower in our system, and in my opinion, it hinders employment by employers... (Y1)

“...The most significant problem was the language. Since they do not speak the language, there is no chance to get integrated into the workplace...” (Y2)

“...What I observed in Syrian workers is that they have a serious problem with business discipline, because they had more convenient working conditions in Syria... (Y2)

“... Syrian workers work under the counter a little bit...” (Y3)

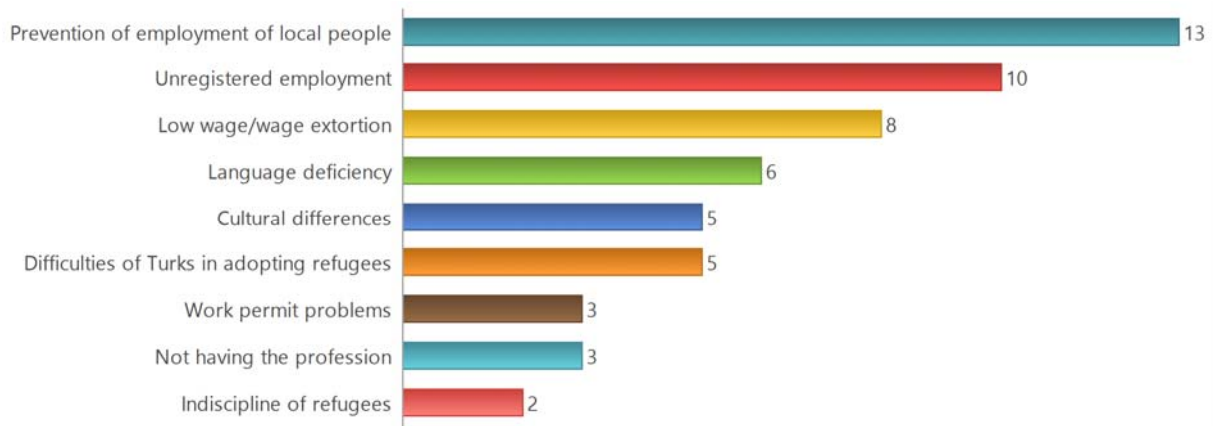


Figure 4: Problems of refugees in business life

“... Right now, Syrians provide services in every field of the labor market. I mean this is a fact, they work in every type of business and illegal work is pretty common. In my opinion, the systematic structure of applications for work permits should be much easier ...” (Y6)

“...From an outsider’s point of view, we see and feel that Syrians’ working for lower wages cause serious troubles in the economy for local people...” (Y4)

“...There is a huge difference between the culture of Turkish people and that of Syrians or of those coming from other countries. Due to the cultural differences, problems occur and incidents happen willy-nilly. And another issue is language. The majority of people in Hatay can speak Arabic. If you would like to employ Syrians, you can employ them in specific areas, not in every field. Because speaking Arabic is not sufficient on its own... (Y5)

During the interviews with managers, the most frequently mentioned recommendation with regard to facilitating Syrian refugees' adaptation to working life is raising the awareness of refugees. This was followed by recommendations about the requirement for registered employment and simplification of the procedures for work permit applications.

Learning the language and increasing the intensity of inspections in relation to refugees in working life are the other proposed solutions (Figure 5.).

"...Another important point is that those who are planning to stay here have to pass through the same education system that every Turkish citizen graduates from. We should accept the fact that not all of them will go back. They cannot. We should somehow integrate them into our education system; however, the right to study at university without any exam requirement should not be allowed, for instance..." (Y2)

"...I think that they should be well-trained. They should be employed following certain training. Because they should be informed about the procedures in Turkey..." (Y3)

"...If these people pass through certain education/training, gain vocational skills and then are employed in the fields they are trained in, they could be more productive..." (Y8)

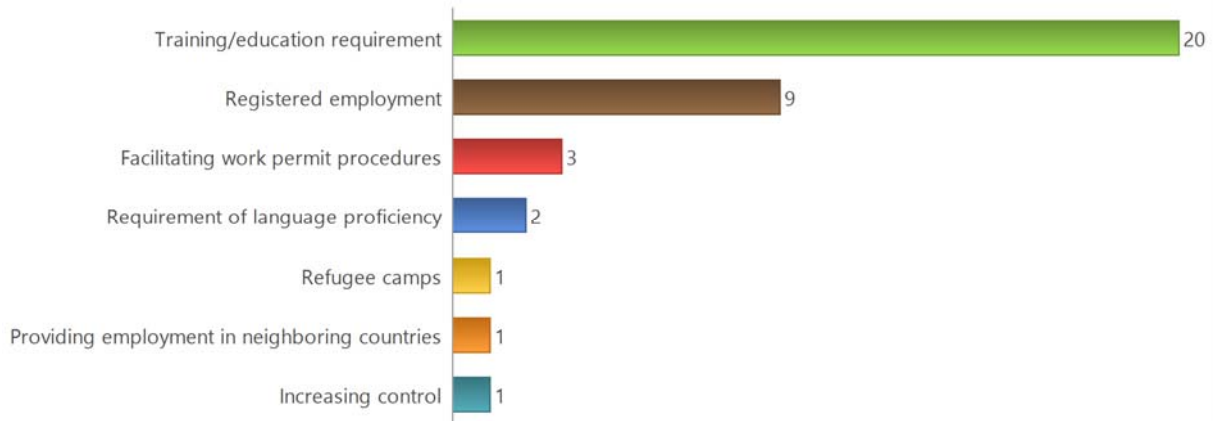


Figure 5: Solution proposals for integrations problems of refugees in business life

"...Syrians in our country are under the status of immigrant, but we wish that these would be supported by law and their legal employment would be ensured...(Y1)

"...In order to avoid our citizens facing any unemployment problems, Syrians should be gathered in a refugee camp. Because they work for low wage..." (Y4)

In light of the interviews conducted with NGO/government executives, it was observed that they highlighted the problems that could create negative outcomes for local people's employment. Resolving the above-mentioned problems will not only pave the way for

registered employment of refugees but also can eliminate the factors negatively affecting the employment of local people.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The main problem faced by Syrian refugees who were interviewed is that they cannot find jobs in a short period of time. Following South Africa (27.23%) and Greece (19.03%), Turkey has the highest unemployment rate among other OECD countries at 11.13% (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Therefore, unemployment in Turkey constitutes a problem for the domestic labor force as well. As well as being refugees, the economy and the employment situations in the country decrease the job opportunities for refugees. The majority of the refugees (23 refugees) did not get any support and/or consultancy on establishing a network in order to integrate into working life. Longer working hours compared to local labor force experienced by most of the refugees shows similarities with the results of research conducted by Şimşek (2018), Kaygısız (2017) and Mutlu et al. (2018). The majority of the refugees (21 refugees) claimed that they work for lower wages. This result is similar with the findings of the studies conducted by Çetin (2016), Taş et al. (2016), Lordoğlu and Aslan (2016) and Mutlu et al. (2016). Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that the seizure of wages is not high and this does not support the results of research carried out by Çoban (2018), Şimşek (2018) and Akbaş and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2018). The most significant problem which came to forefront during the interviews with refugees and managers is that refugees are not proficient in Turkish. It is obvious that the key issue in integration of refugees into business life is learning the language. In order to ensure a smooth process in working life integration, the priority should be to increase the refugees' proficiency in Turkish.

During the interviews with Syrian refugees, it was observed that they cannot find the opportunity to display their vocational skills in Turkey and maintain the same profession they had in their own country. As indicated by Sandal et al. (2016), on the one hand, performing their own professions would not ensure adaptation of Syrian people; on the other hand, the fact that qualified refugees have to work in jobs that do not require any qualification not only lowers the wage level but also decreases the work quality.

Despite the fact that the interviewed refugees complained about low wages and challenging working conditions, they accept working under these conditions which are rejected by the domestic labor force. As indicated by the managers during the interviews, this situation creates the most important unemployment problem for refugees. This significant problem is

the negative impact of refugees on local people's employment. The fact that employment of Syrians increases the unemployment rate of local people is indicated in the related literature as one of the reasons underlying the racist reactions of local people (Kaygısız, 2017; Lordoğlu & Aslan, 2016). The prevalent judgment among employed individuals in Turkey is that Syrian labor force is much preferred than domestic labor due to the fact that they accept lower wages and longer hours, and this situation decreases the employment rate of the domestic labor force (Akbaş & Ünlütürk Ulutaş, 2018). It was observed that majority of the society react against employment of Syrian labor force. In this regard, consideration of Turkish employers that Syrians are an advantageous labor force due to not providing the good working conditions which they deserve, and the judgement of Turkish society that employment of Syrians puts Turkish citizens at a disadvantage are the main reasons underlying the current challenges. In order to soften the negative perception regarding Syrian refugees' impact on employment in the country, several projects were carried out. For instance, temporary employment was provided for Syrians in specific areas within the scope of the "Cash for Work" Project which was jointly conducted by Yuva Association and German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) (Çoban, 2018).

During the interviews, it was observed that the problems faced by the Syrian labor force focused on low wages, long working hours, lack of language proficiency and work permits, and it was concluded that Syrians may cause a decrease in employment of domestic labor force, that integration problems can be decreased by proper education and it is necessary to implement procedures to ensure Syrian refugees gain registered employment under any circumstances.

Findings of this research can be beneficial for theoreticians studying the integration of Syrian refugees. Since the current research covers both refugees and NGO/government executives working with refugees, it does not reflect only one side's point of view. Low wages and unfavorable working conditions which are regarded as a problem by refugees are also considered, as problems restricting the employment of local people from managers' perspective. Therefore, the problems highlighted can be a starting point for future studies to be carried out.

Results are of vital importance for business owners employing refugees and for other stakeholders. The illicit working of refugees proves the negative consequences of unregistered employment. It is seen that work permits were granted for approximately 4/5 of refugees who applied for them (Table 3). Therefore, it is necessary to increase the number of inspections to

avoid refugees working without work permits. It is also essential to carry out inspections of employers, and thus, who intend to infringe upon their rights just because they are unregistered. It is recommended that projects be developed by authorized governmental bodies and NGOs in order to solve the problem of language proficiency.

In countries that have accepted Syrian refugees such as Turkey, support offices are essential, in which information about housing, social services, laws and rules and employment services are provided for Syrian refugees. These offices should also get support from NGOs (Harb et al., 20018:16). In Turkey, civil society organizations play a great role in the integration process of Syrian refugees. NGOs in Turkey support the integration process of refugees by responding in case of emergencies, making donations and implementing various projects (Sunata and Tosun, 2018:2). Results of this study indicate that establishment of support units for Syrian refugees in Turkey is vital. In addition, ensuring the counterbalance in working conditions of Syrian refugees and local people will not only improve refugees' living conditions but also diminish the perception that refugee prevent employment opportunities for local people.

LIMITATIONS

The most significant limitation of the current study is that Syrian refugees, who work or have managed to find a job under challenging conditions, were hesitant to respond to the questions regarding working life. It would be possible to obtain more objective results in studies carried out with a larger data set and in a place where respondents feel more comfortable to express their opinions. In the current study, data were collected only from Syrian refugees who were employees. In future studies, it would be beneficial to collect data from the local labor force working in the same workplace as Syrian refugees and examine both groups on a comparative basis. On the other hand, the fact that the NGO/government executives, who are directly or indirectly involved in matters related to Syrian refugees' working life, were also asked about their opinions reduces the unilaterality of the current study to a fair degree.

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