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Migration and Perception of Refugees: Management of Migration From the Scale of Perceptions and Attitudes of University Students

Göç, Mülteci Algısı ve Göçmenlerin İdaresi: Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Mültecilerle İlgili Algı ve Tutumları Ölçeğinden Göç Yönetimi

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Abstract: Housing over three million Syrian and two million other refugees on its soil, Türkiye has been dealing with migration issues for a long time. With the migration influx, cultural differences began to surface more frequently creating major issues requiring added planning and managing of public policies. Using a convenience sampling technique, we selected 310 students from a state university in the 2021-2022 academic year utilizing the "Attitude Scale Toward Syrian Refugees" methodology to measure subjects' feelings and attitudes toward Syrian refugees. As a result of this research, it has been revealed that students have a negative perception of the Syrian refugees, but they still think those refugees' rights and privileges must be provided according to international agreements and conventions.

Keywords: Migration, Management of Migration, Migrants in Türkiye, Syrian Migrants, Perception of Migration and Migrants.

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Öz: Türkiye'nin jeopolitik konumu, tarihi ve kültürel bağlarının da etkisiyle halen devam eden Suriyeli mülteci göçünden uzun vadede etkileneceği açıktır. Türkiye'ye göç eden Suriyelilerin yeni bir sosyal grup olarak toplumumuza dahil olmasıyla birlikte, kültürel farklılıklar sıklıkla tartışılmaya başlanmıştır. Bu bakış açısı doğrultusunda şekillenen çalışmamız, mülteci olarak tabir edilen ve farklı nedenlerle vatandaşı oldukları ülkeden ayrılmak zorunda kalarak başka bir ülkede yaşamaya başlayan geçici koruma statüsündeki Suriyelilerin, gittikleri ülkelerde nasıl algılandıklarını belirlemeye yönelik olarak hazırlanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2021-2022 eğitim öğretim yılında bir devlet üniversitesinde kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen 310 öğrenci oluşturmakta olup, veriler "Suriyeli Sığınmacılarla İlgili Tutum Ölçeği" kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda; öğrencilerin mülteciler konusunda olumsuz bir fikre sahip oldukları, fakat buna rağmen mültecilerin de insani haklarının olduğunu ve bu hakların kendilerine sağlanması gerektiğini düşündükleri ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Göç Yönetimi, Mülteci, Göçmen ve Mülteci Algısı, Suriyeli Mülteciler.

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1. Introduction

The Anatolian basin due to its geostrategic location, the abundance of natural resources, and the wealth of cultural heritage dating back to pre-historic ages resulted in waves of migrations originating from various parts of the world and resting on this territory with different densities throughout history. Therefore, we can see strata of civilizations over one another, belonging to various civilizations throughout this peninsula, whenever we unearth the ground. These earlier waves of migrations and settlements did not require any management strategy. More powerful groups usually settled wherever they desired to, by use of brute force. The recent modern migration waves, on the other hand, require more professional approaches and management skills to lessen the social and economic effects on the local inhabitants and the economy. Seljuks and Ottomans managed migration or urban development policies, called *istimalet*, which have been regarded as one of the best and most successful of its kind, and had not always been planned, managed, and implemented successfully in the later years of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, emerging migration movements have been significantly affecting the social structure, ethnic makeup, and cultural identity of the Ottoman Empire, and the Republic of Türkiye.

The migration waves that started with the Crimean Tatars in the 1850s of the Ottoman periods, followed by the Georgian migrations that started after the Ottoman-Russian war in 1828-1829, and the migrations from Azerbaijan that continued from the beginning of the 19th century are among the examples that can be evaluated in this context (Presidential Migration Management Administration (PMMA), 2022). When we consider the more recent migration movements toward Turkey, it is understood that hundreds of thousands of immigrants from countries in the regions such as Asia, the Middle East, and Africa came to Turkey. Moreover, this number was not limited to the citizens of the countries in the region. More than two million immigrants from various parts of the globe used Turkey as a transit route between the years 1980 and 1995 (İçduygu, 1996: 128-131 & İçduygu, 2000: 362). To sum it up, Turkey has experienced similar migration events both in the pre-republican and post-republican periods. However, we must evaluate the social, economic, and political effects of the Syrian migration that started with the Arab Spring in 2011 separately. As a matter of fact, this mass migration is the largest migration phenomenon that Turkey has experienced in recent years (Turkish Grand National Assembly-Human Rights Investigation Commission, 2018: 241-242). Along with the Syrian migrants, there have been illegal aliens coming to Türkiye from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran with similar asylum requests. These aliens from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran continue to flow, generally in smaller groups or by individual methods. It should be especially noted that the refugee population whose number is expressed as more than millions has emerged with the Syrian migration movements (Şişman and Balun, 2020: 63-71).

2. Literature Review and Background

According to the statistics of Syrians under temporary protection recorded with the biometric data of the Ministry of Interior and PMMA dated 19.05.2022, the number of registered Syrians in Türkiye has been regularly increasing every year and has reached 3 million 763 thousand 447 people (PMMA, 2022). We must note that this migrant population is larger than the total population of Estonia, the EU member "Cyprus," Luxemburg, and Malta. When the same number of Syrians is compared with the total population of Türkiye, it can be understood that it has reached serious proportions within a short period of the last 3 years. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's (TSI) address-based population registration statistics for 2021, Türkiye's population is 84 million 680 thousand 273 (TSI, 2022). Therefore, from the above-given numbers, we can calculate the ratio of the number of Syrian migrants to the total population to be 4.47%. According to the current demographic distribution of Syrians with Temporary Protection Status is considered, 1 million 956 thousand 548 of them are men, and 1 million 681 thousand 872 are women. The other demographic index shows that there are 1 million 702 thousand 742 Syrian refugees in the country who are 0-18 age group, and 46.79% of the Syrian refugee population is in this age group. At the same time, when we include approximately 600,000 additional people who applied for

international protection between 2010-2021 from Türkiye, the figure that emerges is among the data that most concretely and strikingly describes the extent of the migration process taking place in the country (Türkiye’de Kaç Suriyeli Var, 2022). In addition to the above statistics, the average age of registered Syrian refugees is calculated as 22.5 while the Turkish population’s average age is 33.1 (TSI, 2022). There are currently 7 temporary accommodation centers in 5 provinces in Turkey to house Syrian refugees, and the number of Syrians in these centers is 50,439. According to these figures, only 1.32% of Syrian refugees live in the said temporary shelters. The remaining 3,713,008 temporary protection status holders or 98.68% of total migrants are dispersed and live in the residential areas of 81 provinces of Türkiye (PMMA, 2022).

At this point, what is the legal feature that distinguishes Syrian temporary protection status holders from the others, such as asylum seekers, refugees, conditional refugees, and subsidiary protection status holders? Asylum seeker, refugee, conditional refugee, and secondary protection concepts, in general terms, are as follows: “...who is outside the country of his citizenship and cannot benefit from the protection of that country because he/she is afraid that he/she will be persecuted because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership of a certain social group or political opinions. It is used to describe people who do not want to take advantage of...” an important difference comes into play here due to Türkiye’s geographical reservation to the 1951 Geneva Convention. Turkey recognizes the refugee status of those coming from Europe, therefore, for those coming from outside of Europe and complying with the above definition, the terms also included in international refugee law, such as conditional refugee and secondary protection, are used (Dost, 2014: 46-47). All these mentioned statuses require an individual application based on the existence of specific justifiable grounds. Since the migration movement originating from Syria takes place collectively, the concept of temporary protection, which corresponds to another status in the refugee law, is used for those coming from this country without looking into their individual situation. This status was developed as a precaution against mass migration and is operated when the individual application is not possible (PMMA, 2022).

Regardless of whether it is compulsory, voluntary, collective, or individual, the phenomenon of migration causes different adverse effects for the individual and society. The resulting effects, on the other hand, can be evaluated from different perspectives and maintain their agenda in social debates. However, with the effect of its large size and its rapid development in a very short time, migrations originating from Syria occupy a special place in migration movements and create a major headache for the Turkish administration and its management and organizational professionals. This situation is currently accepted as one of the most important extraordinary developments by various international organizations and is considered one of the biggest international migration mobility problems. For example, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) has developed an incident size classification to provide a comprehensive analysis of the displaced population around the world. According to this model, to express the magnitude of migration depending on their sizes, a 4-level classification was invented according to the number of individuals forced to migrate. The Syrian migration to Turkey was classified as a "mega-event" category, which is the highest level in the above event size category (IDMC, 2018: 2).

The social, and to a degree political impact, created by the Syrian migrants under temporary protection status in Türkiye are in direct proportion to their numerical density, and the negative comments vocalized, and adverse approaches displayed towards them are noteworthy. For example, some of the complaints that are put forward by the critiques, center around an increase in the average housing prices, and migrants’ use of excessive social assistance programs stand out. Various municipal officials throughout the country also confirm these said problems and cite security concerns, rent increases, and social incompatibility as some of the sources of the problems related to migrant issues (Erdoğan, 2017: 111). The incident that took place in the Battalgazi neighborhood of Altındağ district of Ankara on August 10, 2021, where Syrian refugees live heavily, is a typical example of this phenomenon. During this incident, the tension between the refugees and the local community boiled into physical altercations resulting in death and multiple injuries. Similarly, Spanish El Mondo Daily Journalist Lluís Miquel Hurtado’s case, who was beaten up by some xenophobic young kids in Istanbul due to his resemblance to

Syrian or Afghan refugees is again showing the level of charged atmosphere in the country and the greater need to manage and administer refugee-related issues (Darwish, 2022).

As the health expenditures for Syrians have increased gradually, access to health services became more difficult for locals with the increased number of patients using the same health care capacity (Uzun, 2015: 117 & Taştan et al., 2017: 7). The strong public opinion is that Syrians with temporary protection status are replacing the local workers where there are increased unemployment rates (Özpınar, et al., 2016: 4). Some other negative perceptions are the increase of sweatshops and the prevalence of illegal and child labor workers which are believed to have changed the basic dynamics of the Turkish labor market (Çoban, 2018: 212). When the impact of the Syrian migrants created on the local people are coupled with the adaptation problems being experienced by the Syrian community to the local system and the culture are evaluated together, it is seen that the social and cultural problems between the local people and the Syrians are concrete and requires some active management and policy developments. So, how do all these developments reflect on society as a whole?

In a study conducted by Andiç (2018) with civil servants, it was determined that locals perceived forced migration without any major prejudice and welcomed their acceptance into the Turkish community with a more favorable stand. However, it is stated that after the conditions that force people into migration disappear, compulsory migration is expected to turn into a voluntary return. This finding shows that the perception of refugees is dependent on the condition that creates the situation, and this perception is fluid. When focusing on the developments confirming this determination; It is mentioned that there are negative perceptions on the issues of social acceptance, such as working life, cultural harmony, and the right to citizenship. When we consider the issue from this perspective, we understand that the local population is not prejudiced about Syrians living in Türkiye, but when it comes to the right to live together, or Syrians obtaining citizenship, we see that the feeling based on empathy that emerges in the first place turns into a more negative attitude towards them (Çiftçi, 2018: 2253). Therefore, it is possible to make the following statement at this point; the discussions taking place under the headings of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Türkiye are generally explained with the concepts of hospitality and understanding. But this understanding erodes, and concern comes into play if the process reaches a point where it affects the social dynamics of the society and conflicts start. Based on these studies, there are strong indications that hospitality and understanding are not sufficient to solve or dissipate these problems (Ünal, 2014: 86). According to the study conducted by Kardeş and the coauthors, asylum seekers are seen as the source of insecurity and unrest (Kardeş et al., 2017: 198). In another study conducted with social media users examining subjects' thoughts towards Syrians, the source of this negative attitude is mentioned and the thought that the said group is starting to pose a socio-economic threat to the future of the country is shared by the participants (Özdemir & Öner-Özkan, 2016: 235-237). Therefore, it would be appropriate to state that the sense of hospitality and welcome we presented earlier is not sufficient to overcome the ensuing problems and tensions, without any major intervention and the global governance of the migration problem.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Universe and Sample

This study's universe consists of a large public university in Türkiye, and the research subject sample was students studying at this institution. While this research was conducted in the 2021-2022 academic year, the number of active students was 45 thousand, and the total number of students in the three faculties where the study took place was close to 10 thousand students. However, taking factors such as response rate, time, and cost involved with this research into account, a sample selection methodology from the population was used. In this context, a basic sample group was formed according to the convenience sampling method. In the table recommended by Krejcie and Morgan for the sample size, a 95% confidence rate interval was considered and a total of 310 students were reached to satisfy this

requirement. Table 1 depicts the content of the sample size and its demographics (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970: 608).

Table 1: Sample Information

Sample	Gender of sample	Percentage of Total
Male	91	29.4 %
Female	219	70.6 %
Under 20 yrs. old	64	20.6 %
20-22 yrs. old	195	62.9 %
23 yrs. old and older	51	16.5 %
Freshman	78	25.2 %
Sophomore	42	13.5 %
Junior	111	35.8 %
Senior	79	25.5 %

Source: Researchers' own calculations.

3.2. Research Universe and Sample

The face-to-face survey technique was preferred to determine the perceptions and attitudes of students toward immigrants and refugees. The questionnaire used in this research consists of two parts. In the first part, there are three open and closed-ended questions about the demographic characteristics of the students. In the second part, we used the previously developed and tested scale called Attitude Scale Regarding the Syrian Refugees. This scale was developed by Latife Kabaklı Çimen and Seher Ersoy Quadir (Kabaklı Çimen & Ersoy Quadir, 2018). The scale uses Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) coefficient. The KMO value of the five-point Likert-type scale, consisting of 25 items and five sub-dimensions, was found to be 0.878. On the other hand, Having Negative Opinions About Asylum Seekers was found to be 0.878, Generating Radical Solutions for Asylum Seekers 0.775, Generating Moderate Solutions for Asylum Seekers 0.691, Defending the Rights of Asylum Seekers 0.750, and Assisting Asylum Seekers 0.763.

The data collected from the students were analyzed using the Statistical Package program (SPSS 20), and results were developed. In this context, first; the reliability and construct validity of the data sets, which are of great statistical importance, were examined. Explanatory Factor analysis was used to see if the scale was valid in terms of efficiency and other structural considerations. For reliability, the "Cronbach Alpha" coefficient, which is widely preferred in social sciences, was examined. Then, the arithmetic mean values of the scale sub-dimensions were calculated to determine the students' attitudes toward immigrants and refugees. While interpreting the dimensions, the values of 1.00-1.80=strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60=disagree, 2.61-3.40=partially agree, 3.41-4.20=agree and 4.21-5.00=strongly agree were taken into consideration (Özdamar, 2001: 145). Before proceeding to the third stage of the analysis, it was checked whether the data met the parametric test conditions. In order to determine whether the data met the parametric test conditions, their normal values are expected to be $p > 0.05$. If this value is not provided, it is necessary to check whether the kurtosis/skewness values of the data are in the range of -1.5 and +1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In the analysis that we made; it was determined that the data met the parametric test conditions. Based on these results, the T-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two independent groups (Arslantürk, 2001: 140; Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2004: 172). A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was also used to detect significant differences in mean scores between several groups (Pallant, 2005: 214).

4. Findings & Analysis

In this part of the research, the data obtained in the field using face-to-face and questionnaire-style data collection techniques from the students were analyzed and interpreted.

4.1. Findings & Analysis

An Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the structural validity of the Attitude Scale Regarding Syrian Refugees, which was used in this study to determine perceptions and attitudes toward

immigrants and refugees. As stated above, we also used Cronbach's Alpha Test to measure the study's reliability. The EFA and reliability results obtained from the calculations are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2: EFA and Reliability Results of the Attitude Scale.

Items	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5	σ
s3	0,804					0,897
s7	0,776					
s4	0,768					
s9	0,767					
s6	0,750					
s10	0,745					
s5	0,730					
s2	0,728					
s8	0,669					
s21		0,941				0,962
s18		0,940				
s20		0,933				
s23		0,918				
s19		0,910				
s13			0,979			0,984
s11			0,976			
s12			0,974			
s22			0,972			
s17				0,835		0,830
s16				0,813		
s15				0,753		
s1				0,717		
s14				0,702		
s24					0,868	0,718
s25					0,855	
Eigenvalues	5,524	4,198	3,688	3,180	1,321	0,787
Variance Disclosure Rate	22,098	16,791	14,752	12,719	5,286	
The ratio of Total Variance					71,645	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)					0,864	
Bartlett's Test			X2:6250,160		0,000	

Source: Researchers own. Dimension1: Having Negative Opinions About Asylum Seekers; Dimension2: Generating Moderate Solutions for Asylum Seekers; Dimension3: Generating Radical Solutions for Asylum Seekers; Dimension4: Defending the Rights of Asylum Seekers; Dimension5: Assisting Asylum Seekers.

The scale that we used measures perceptions and attitudes towards immigrants and refugees and consists of 25 elements. Explanatory factor analysis was applied according to the varimax rotation principal components method within the framework of the answers obtained. As a result of the analysis, 5 sub-dimensions with eigenvalues above 1 and factor loadings between 0.66-0.97 were obtained. The attitude scale explains 71,645% of the total variance. The KMO value of the attitude scale was 0.864, and the Bartlett Test value was found to be significant at $p < 0.000$. Considering that the KMO value should be at least 0.60; It was decided that the scale was suitable for factor analysis and that the factor loads were at an acceptable level (Büyüköztürk, 2007). Also, Having Negative Opinions About Asylum Seekers $\alpha = 0.897$; Generating Moderate Solutions for Asylum Seekers $\alpha = 0.962$; Generating Radical Solutions for Asylum Seekers $\alpha = 0.984$; Defending the Rights of Asylum Seekers $\alpha = 0.830$ and Assisting Asylum Seekers $\alpha = 0.718$ were found to be reliable values. The fact that these values are above $\alpha = 0.70$ means that the scale's reliability is sound (Kline, 2016).

4.2. Findings on Perceptions and Attitudes of Migrants and Refugees

In this part of the study, students' perceptions and attitudes toward immigrants and refugees were analyzed. In this framework, the arithmetic means, standard deviation results of immigrant and refugee perceptions and attitudes are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Students' Perceptions and Attitudes towards Migrants and Refugees.

Değişkenler	N	X̄	SS
Having Negative Opinions About Asylum Seekers	310	4,711	0,446
Generating Moderate Solutions for Asylum Seekers	310	3,103	1,227
Generating Radical Solutions for Asylum Seekers	310	3,023	1,477
Defending the Rights of Asylum Seekers	310	3,896	0,784
Assisting Asylum Seekers	310	2,885	1,038

Source: Researchers' own calculations.

While students have a negative opinion about immigrants and refugees ($X=4,711$), they think that asylum seekers also have rights, and those remedies and favors should be provided ($X=3,896$). The students partially agreed with the proposals to produce moderate ($X=3,103$) and radical ($X=3,023$) solutions for immigrants and refugees. Despite all these favorable figures, the study shows that they partially help immigrants and refugees in their own personal lives ($X=2.885$).

4.3. Comparison of Attitudes Towards Migrants and Refugees in terms of Demographic Characteristics of Students

In this part of the study, it was analyzed whether there was a significant difference in the demographic characteristics of students' attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. In this context, Table 4 presents the results of whether students' attitudes towards immigrants and refugees differ significantly in terms of their gender.

Table 4: Comparison of Attitudes towards Migrants and Refugees by Participants' Gender.

Göçmen ve Mülteci Tutumu	Variables	N	X̄	σ	t	p
Having Negative Opinions About Asylum Seekers	1. Male	91	4,656	0,533	-1,380	0,169
	2. Female	219	4,733	0,404		
Generating Moderate Solutions for Asylum Seekers	1. Male	91	3,235	1,288	1,215	0,225
	2. Female	219	3,049	1,200		
Generating Radical Solutions for Asylum Seekers	1. Male	91	2,983	1,468	-0,306	0,760
	2. Female	219	3,040	1,483		
Defending the Rights of Asylum Seekers	1. Male	91	3,956	0,936	0,857	0,392
	2. Female	219	3,872	0,712		
Assisting Asylum Seekers	1. Male	91	2,923	1,197	0,410	0,682
	2. Female	219	2,869	0,967		

Source: Researchers' own calculations * $p<0,05$

Our calculations showed that the perceptions and attitudes of male and female students participating in the research toward immigrants and refugees did not show any significant deviation and are at the same level ($p>0.05$).

We also analyzed whether the students' perceptions and attitudes towards immigrants and refugees differ significantly according to the participants' age, and the findings are given in the following Table 5.

Table 5: Comparison of Attitudes towards Migrants and Refugees by Participants' Age.

Göçmen ve Mülteci Tutumu		N	X̄	σ	F	p	Tukey
Variable 1	1. Under 20 yrs. old	64	4,765	0,283	1,486	0,228	-
	2. 20-22 yrs. old	195	4,716	0,449			
	3. 23 yrs. old & older	51	4,623	0,578			
Variable 2	1. Under 20 yrs. old	64	3,181	1,110	0,327	0,721	-
	2. 20-22 yrs. old	195	3,060	1,267			
	3. 23 yrs. old & older	51	3,172	1,229			
Variable 3	1. Under 20 yrs. old	64	3,054	1,503	0,035	0,966	-
	2. 20-22 yrs. old	195	3,006	1,441			
	3. 23 yrs. old & older	51	3,049	1,603			
Variable 4	1. Under 20 yrs. old	64	4,043	0,695	1,556	0,213	-
	2. 20-22 Yaş	195	3,871	0,788			
	3. 23 yrs. old & older	51	3,807	0,860			
Variable 5	1. Under 20 yrs. old	64	3,085	1,002	1,519	0,221	-
	2. 20-22 yrs. old	195	2,838	1,024			
	3. 23 yrs. old & older	51	2,813	1,122			

Source: Researchers' own *p<0,05

It has been determined that the perceptions and attitudes of the students participating in this research about immigrants and refugees did not show any significant deviation and are the same in terms of age (p>0.05).

We further analyzed whether the students' perceptions and attitudes towards immigrants and refugees differed significantly according to their levels of education in their colleges, and the findings are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Comparison of Attitudes towards Migrants and Refugees by Class.

Göçmen ve Mülteci Tutumu		N	X̄	σ	F	p	Tukey
Variable 1	1. Freshman	78	4,782	0,275	3,506	0,016*	1>4 3>4
	2. Sophmore	42	4,634	0,632			
	3. Junior	111	4,770	0,371			
	4. Senior	79	4,597	0,532			
Variable 2	1. Freshman	78	3,361	1,143	1,815	0,144	-
	2. Sophmore	42	2,881	1,062			
	3. Junior	111	3,079	1,323			
	4. Senior	79	3,002	1,229			
Variable 3	1. Freshman	78	3,073	1,526	1,662	0,175	-
	2. Sophmore	42	3,238	1,346			
	3. Junior	111	3,126	1,449			
	4. Senior	79	2,715	1,513			
Variable 4	1. Freshman	78	3,997	0,788	1,665	0,175	-
	2. Sophmore	42	3,666	0,987			
	3. Junior	111	3,915	0,776			
	4. Senior	79	3,893	0,649			
Variable 5	1. Freshman	78	3,102	1,033	1,680	0,171	-
	2. Sophmore	42	2,726	1,042			
	3. Junior	111	2,851	1,034			
	4. Senior	79	2,803	1,032			

Source: Researchers' own calculations *p<0,05

It was determined that the participating students' attitudes towards immigrants and refugees differed significantly in terms of their college seniorities (F=3.506; p<0.05). According to this calculation, It has

been determined that the students studying in the first and third grades have more negative opinions about refugees than the students studying in the fourth grade.

4.4. Other Comments

The data analyzed under this heading consists of open-ended comments of the participants which were allowed at the end of the surveys. To increase simplicity and avoid complexity, the comments in questions were sorted under two headings of negative and positive.

4.4.1. Prevailing Negative Comments on Migrants and Refugees

Syrians who left the war behind and migrated to Türkiye face many problems such as education, health, unemployment, and social exclusion. Especially for the male Syrian refugee population in Türkiye, "why don't you fight in your country?" and similar questions are at disconcerting levels. During our interviews and in our surveys, we came across these kinds of contentious points too. For example, a 19-year-old female freshman participant in our study stated her points, "I am in favor of sending the asylum seekers aged 18 and over, who have been in the country for 2 or more years". Another female freshman subject similarly said, "let our soldiers not die in their country anymore." A male 23 years-old-senior on social aid said, "while my country's military and police are fighting in their country, I do not want refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and other nationalities in my country. If a father, who cannot buy clothes for his child in our country commits suicide, I am not willing to help refugees with our taxes. If there is a problem in their country, they should stay and defend it. As a Turkish citizen, I am uncomfortable seeing them living in Türkiye with pleasure and in luxury." A 21-year-old female senior stated that "It is not right to leave your country despite the circumstances without doing anything. This should not be a solution, especially for men." In fact, similar critiques were witnessed frequently in the earlier field studies with the Syrian migrants. In a study conducted by Vesek, Syrians expressed their discomfort on this issue and stated that they were aware that the local people viewed them as traitors, but there was no enemy to fight for them in their own country, and they were in Turkey due to necessity (Vesek, 2020: 126).

Türkiye is a signatory to many international agreements along with the 1951 Geneva Convention, which protects the rights of refugees. Moreover, Turkish legislators have passed laws, regulations, and directives to make the said legal texts compatible with their own laws. Türkiye is also a party to the readmission treaty. Therefore, we can state that Türkiye is placing utmost importance to comply with these international agreements and act in accordance with its legal obligations regarding Syrians and others. However, it can be understood from the words of a 21-year-old female senior participant that society needs to be informed about this issue and prepared for these kinds of changes. She complains that "considering limited educational and employment opportunities exist in the country, it is very wrong that the refugees can have more rights than the natives." To alleviate locals' resentment and avoid further social conflicts, a total governance type of strategic management approach needs to be implemented (Piper, 2017: 375).

In the studies conducted by Erdoğan (2014), Efe (2015), Gölcü and Dağlı (2017) in which the role of the media and other factors in preventing xenophobia are discussed, it is emphasized that the process regarding asylum seekers should be managed well and pointed out that if an uncontrolled space is allowed, xenophobia will be created and spread. We too saw the traces of these elements reflected in the statements of one of the 21-year-old female senior participants as follows: "I am not against asylum seekers, but I am against them taking refuge in us and causing problems in our country because of the problems in their country. Moreover, they get help from any institution or organization and get used to living like that, and they do not return to their country even if the problem in their country ends. Working in informal jobs illegally poses many problems for the migrants and the communities that they live in. I favor vulnerable people taking refuge in the nearest country when a problem arises in their own countries, but I do not approve of young people, who can work and defend themselves - especially young men - traveling far away and being a burden to another country instead of defending their country. Sir, you must have seen it. It was news on social media for a while. Syrian youth who took refuge in our country -so-called- were enjoying hookah in a cafe on the Antalya coast. At that time, our country's

soldiers were shedding blood and sweat in the Afrin Operation, and we heard the news of martyrdom almost every day. I was really upset and devastated when I saw these two news stories at the same time.”

Among the sources of the negative point of view towards Syrians, there is also the effect of the guest-themed transience approach. Because it is stated that the Syrian policy built on the phenomenon of temporality cannot be sustained with this policy; It is emphasized that the expectation of impermanence delays the solution of problems or prevents the production of real and permanent solutions. This approach has the potential for serious problems to surface in the future. At this stage, while it is estimated that a small part of the Syrians will return, it is stated that life strategies should be produced based on the thesis that a significant part of them will stay in Turkey permanently (Erdoğan, 2014: 8). The main question from the management and organizational point of view is, has the desired level of public policy been produced and made operational for these interpretations and perspectives? The comments of the participants we came across within the scope of our study, although not at a level to generalize yet, show that there has not been an effective reaction from the administration. A 23-year-old male sophomore stated, “Asylum-seekers constitute negativity for our country in every sense and restrict the rights and freedoms of the people. The guests must go when the time comes. As a result, we are responsible for our own people. It should not be confused and lost to the public, but it should be expected to be beneficial economically and should be sent back when the time comes.” Some participants even suggested more radical measures against migrants. A 20-year-old female junior said, “It is a requirement of human rights to allow asylum seekers into a country, but if they are in the country for a long time, it will cause serious economic, cultural, and social problems for the country. Therefore, while policies towards asylum seekers are being relaxed, they should only stay in the country for a certain period and be deported after this time has passed.” What kind of a policy should be produced for this understanding, or in other words, what should be done to soften the level of negative reactions? Undoubtedly, it is very difficult to give a single and comprehensive answer to such a multi-layered complex question. Another 20-year-old female junior stated, “Yes, every person is different, there are bad people and good ones. In my opinion, asylum seekers should be helped for a certain period. As this period increases, it is quite normal for unrest to increase among the citizens of the country that they live in. No one can care for others forever.” From these reactions, we can say that increasing the self-sufficiency levels of this group may be an alternative solution.

It is possible to show cultural differences among the sources of negative attitudes being generated toward the Syrian refugees. As a matter of fact, the efforts of Syrians to continue practicing their own cultural habits in Türkiye may be negatively perceived by the local people. Because it is seen that the problems that arise in the public sphere evolve into exclusionary attitudes and behaviors (Diker and Karan, 2021: 282). For example, a 22-year-old-female senior participant who answered our questions said, “Yes, they can take refuge in Türkiye and other countries in difficult situations, but they should not act like they are the owner of that country. I've seen a lot of people who behave this way. In addition, their very loud conversations are also very disturbing, especially on public transport services. If I were a refugee in another country, I would pay attention to them.” This shows that cultural habits can be interpreted negatively by the local people.

Another problematic area expressed by the participants in this research was refugees obtaining Turkish citizenship. The issue of granting citizenship to Syrians under temporary protection status was also reflected in the discourse of the Government (T.R. Presidency, 2016). However, the process went beyond the rhetoric, and it was announced by the Minister of Interior that 200,950 Syrians already obtained Turkish citizenship as of March 31, 2022 (Kaç Suriyeli Türk Vatandaşı Oldu, 2022). However, research shows that there is a great objection and a clear negative attitude toward granting Turkish citizenship to Syrians (Erdoğan, 2014: 41; Erdogan, 2022: 116). In our surveys and interviews, we came across similar responses and attitudes among university students in terms of citizenship issues. A 21-year-old female senior stated

"I find it very wrong that asylum seekers are especially given the right to citizenship in Turkiye. Everyone must be a citizen of their own countries, not the country that they take refuge in."

Another source of contention we run into during our interviews was the responsibility sharing of the Syrian refugees. A 19-year-old male freshman participant brought up, "Uncontrolled migration is a problem for every country. Turkey is not a refugee camp. I expect the same sensitivity about refugees from the European Union. If they are human rights defenders as they claim, they can allow these refugees into their own countries and care for them." The European Union's migration policy has been discussed and criticized since the beginning of the Syrian migration crisis. At the focal point of the criticism is the fact that the responsibility has been left entirely to Turkey. While Turkey continues to care for the Syrian refugees in this conflict, it seeks responsibility sharing on financial and other fronts from others since it has become the country that hosts most of these refugees (Özcan, 2017: 10-11). Not receiving the funds fully which was promised by the EU, and having some strings attached to these aid packages create negative feelings in the public.

One of the criticisms brought to our attention about the Syrian refugees was that they go to their country for funerals, weddings, and holidays, and return to Turkiye again after their visit. Fundamentally, vital security concerns are supposed to be the root of the refugee status, and the existence of the same justifiable reasons validates the continuation of the status. At this point, an irony emerges. The Syrian refugees' ability to go to their countries for funerals and holidays and return back to Turkiye invalidates the point that their country has life-threatening conditions or poses serious security problems. Responding to our questions, a 20-year-old female freshman criticized this situation of allowing asylum seekers to travel back and forth to their country with the following words, "Only women and children or people who cannot defend themselves should be granted asylum in problems such as war, where people are killed. When the asylum seeker returns to his/her country, he/she should not come back."

4.4.2. Prevailing Positive Comments on Migrants and Refugees

Just like other researchers that carried out studies in this area, we too came across some positive comments about the refugees. One of the most important ones was refugees providing new capital inflows into the Turkish economy. The creation of production, consumption, and employment by opening new workplaces has short and long-term positive effects on the country's economy (Gençler, 2020: 138). Contributing to exports, social wealth, and the development of the multicultural structure was also mentioned by other researchers (Orhan and Gündoğar, 2015: 34). Therefore, making an inference that all immigrants are equally problematic will lead us to a wrong conclusion. As a matter of fact, a 21-year-old female participant confirming the above findings said, "We take all refugees under one umbrella, but even within the current group, there are refugees who are good and bad for the country. I think that the suggested answers will differ according to the group of asylum seekers, depending on if they are beneficial or harmful for the society." We must note that the participants acted somewhat cautiously and said, "I think that if the refugees are taught a proper education and have proper moral values; of course, each country will benefit from them." It is seen that they emphasize the importance of education in terms of social cohesion with the approach of "education and moral rules are necessary," according to another 20-year-old female sophomore. Some of the participants as in the case of a 19-year-old male freshman, vocalized positive comments on the Syrian asylum seekers and approached the issue with a humanitarian perspective saying regardless of the circumstances, "we are all brothers."

Some of the other noteworthy comments that we can include under this heading are as follows: "As human beings, there are good and bad in every society. Having said that when joining a community, the well-being and tranquility of those people must not be disturbed. We are all human beings, and this must be considered before anything else," (a 23-year-old Female senior). "I do not support them to flee their country under any circumstances, but since they are in distress, necessary assistance should be provided," (a 19-year-old female sophomore). "I oppose asylum seekers providing them with the rights that states cannot provide to their own citizens; but I think that certain needs should be met in accordance with the human rights requirements," (a 20-year-old female junior).

5. Result

In our study, we determined that the students have predominantly a negative perception of immigrants and refugees. When we look between the lines of the dynamics that feed the development of this view; we see that the keywords of health, education, housing, security, social assistance, economy, citizenship, and unemployment appear before us. In our view, this could be related to the recent global and national economic downturn. However, it would be appropriate to state that the local people's negative evaluation of the impact of the Syrian refugee population on the local community life is due to the concern that refugees have found an uncontrolled living space for themselves often emphasized in most of the studies. However, we determined that the participants did not develop very rigid negative thoughts, and feelings toward asylum seekers, and their empathy continued. We also observed that the participants are aware of the asylum seekers' rights and privileges and believe that those necessary rights should be provided regardless of their feelings. Parallel to all these findings, we have discovered that they help immigrants and refugees, albeit at a limited level.

While female subjects in this research were more populous than their male counterparts, perceptions and attitudes of male and female students participating in the research about the Syrian immigrants and refugees are close to each other. Additionally, we concluded from our calculations and observations that the perceptions and attitudes towards immigrants and refugees do not differ significantly in terms of the age of the student participants. However, students' attitudes towards immigrants and refugees differ significantly in terms of class standings. While these differences are minimal in the humanitarian areas, such as variable five which measures Helping Syrian Asylum Seekers, the difference became stark when we measured variable one gauging Having Negative Feelings About Asylum Seekers. As a result, we determined that the freshman to junior classes have more negative opinions about refugees while the senior class students have more liberal standings. This could be due to the worsening global and national economic conditions and changing political trends in the country. The recent popularization of negative political trends in the country and the European countries coupled with the lack of global governance and refugee management techniques could be behind these variations.

It was our determination that the students had a negative idea about the refugees and asylum seekers, and we think that this issue should be defined as a social cohesion problem in the context of culture and lifestyle. In addition, ethnic polarizations that emerged in some cities and communities where active social and strategic management is not used, make the process more complex and debilitating. Some of the politicians' heavily charged and sometimes very polarizing comments about the Syrian immigrants, especially after this and similar other incidents, are making already complex migrant problems in Türkiye more unmanageable and out of control.

Policies for refugee groups concern all groups in terms of their impact. Therefore, the success of the policies aimed at the said audience also depends on the perception and acceptance level of the local people. From this point of view, determining the attitude towards Syrians is of particular importance in terms of harmonization efforts. It is possible to evaluate our study in this context, but it gave us results that represent only a small portion of society. It is thought that additional studies with different and larger groups will increase the chances of success of policies and management techniques toward refugees.

The results of our study show that the perception of Syrian refugees needs to be corrected with the help and involvement of international and local actors. In addition to the developments that shape these negative perceptions that we mentioned in the previous paragraphs, polygamy, panhandling, and disharmonious neighborly relationships create and spread negative feelings and attitudes toward the Syrian refugee communities. As a matter of fact, we need special administration of these issues beyond understanding and standard policies to change this infectious perception. Increased art, and cultural

activities that highlight the social differences of Syrians and programs that increase the knowledge of the other side can be introduced or increased among other alternative suggestions.

The power and influence of written, visual, and social media platforms must be utilized fully to carry out these administrative policies to alleviate this social tension. The media, celebrities, and political figures have the influential power to direct society to a more positive or negative perception. We think that it can play an important role in the development of a culture of living together and raising public awareness about dialogue and understanding of one another.

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Data Collection: Author-1 (%30), Author-2 (%70)

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