

Syrian Refugees and Xenophobia: The Role of Gender, Education, Perceived Economic Income, and Age Suriyeli Mülteciler ve Zenofobi: Cinsiyetin, Eğitimin, Algılan Ekonomik Gelir Düzeyinin ve Yaşın Rolü

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Abstract: In the present study, it was aimed to examine the effect of gender, education level, perceived socio-economic status and age on the xenophobic attitudes of local people toward Syrian refugees in Turkey. The data, based on AFAD (2018) refugees' reports, were collected from 604 volunteers aged between 16 and 85 living in six provinces. The Revised Xenophobia Scale was used to collect the data. The relationship between gender and xenophobia was examined by using t-test analysis and the relationship between participants' education level, perceived socio-economic status and age, and xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees were examined by using one-way variance analysis. Interaction effects of gender and education level, perceived socio-economic status, and age on xenophobia were also analyzed with different two-way ANOVAs. The findings showed that being male, having a high school or lower education level, having low socio-economic conditions, and being 46 and over aged increase the xenophobic attitudes of individuals towards Syrian refugees. Finally, it was determined that the source of the relationship between education level, socio-economic status, age and xenophobia came from these variables and was independent of their gender. In other words, the interactions effects of gender and of these variables on xenophobia were not significant.

Keywords: Xenophobia, refugees, local people, Syrians

Öz: Mevcut araştırmada cinsiyetin, eğitim düzeyinin, algılanan sosyo-ekonomik durumun ve yaşın Türkiye'deki yerel halkın Suriyeli mültecilere yönelik zenofobik tutumları üzerindeki etkisini incelemek amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmanın verileri, AFAD mülteci raporları göz önünde bulundurularak yaşları 16 ile 85 arasında olan İstanbul, Hatay, Mardin, Malatya, Batman ve Gaziantep illerinde yaşayan toplam 604 gönüllü bireyden toplanmıştır. Revize Edilmiş Zenofobi Ölçeği veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada cinsiyet ile Zenofobi arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek için bağımsız örneklemeler için t-testi analizi yapılmıştır. Katılımcıların eğitim düzeyleri, algılanan sosyo-ekonomik durumları ve yaşları ile Suriyeli mültecilere yönelik zenofobik tutumlar arasındaki ilişkileri incelemek için ise tek yönlü varyans (ANOVA) analizleri yapılmıştır. Ayrıca cinsiyet ile eğitim düzeyinin, algılanan sosyo-ekonomik durumun ve yaşın etkileşimlerinin (birbiri ile ilişkilerinin) zenofobi üzerindeki etkisi de farklı çift yönlü ANOVA'larla analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular; erkek olmanın, lise ve daha düşük eğitim seviyesine sahip olmanın, düşük sosyo-ekonomik koşullara sahip olmanın ve 46 ve üzeri yaşında olmanın bireylerin Suriyeli mültecilere karşı zenofobik tutumlar sergilemelerinde önemli birer rol oynadıklarını göstermiştir. Son olarak eğitim düzeyi, sosyo-ekonomik durum ve yaş ile zenofobi arasındaki ilişkinin kaynağının bu değişkenlerden geldiği ve cinsiyetlerinden bağımsız olduğu belirlenmiştir. Yani cinsiyet ile bu değişkenlerin etkileşimlerinin zenofobi üzerinde etkilerinin anlamlı olmadığı belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Zenofobi, mülteciler, yerel halk, Suriyeliler

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Giriş

Throughout history, relations between immigrant/refugee and local people have been problematic in many societies around the world. Compared to past societies, the relations between these groups have become more complex and widespread today (Stephan, 2012). There are many factors contribute and lead to this prevalence and complexity as follows, such as ethnic and religious conflicts, political tensions between countries, poverty, civil wars, and globalization and so on. In addition to these factors, it is seen that sometimes people migrate to new geographies and countries in order to build a life they desire.

Mass migrations can cause prejudiced and xenophobia-like attitudes towards immigrants and refugees almost everywhere in the world (Stephan, 2012; Yakushko, 2009). When considered in the context of refugees who had to leave the land where they were born and grew up, refugees may face many problems ranging from language problems to economic difficulties, discrimination, psycho-social problems such as grief and traumatic stress. Therefore, a sense of belonging and psycho-social support in the host country is seen very

important to support resilience, recovery (Silove, 2005) and integration of refugees to host countries. However, refugee-receiving societies may not always offer this much-needed support.

Today, the biggest migration flow has occurred in Syria and people have left their homes en masse. Due to the intense civil war in their country in 2011, many Syrian refugees had to take shelter in neighboring countries. This mass migration was described by Filippo Grandi as the largest refugee influx, which is described as the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time due to internal conflicts, is experienced in Syria (UNHCR, 2018). It is possible for the local people of the migrated country to feel anxious and restless, just as the migrated individuals face difficulties. The intensity of refugees may lead to an increase in the labor supply in the places or countries they migrated to. In addition, it may make local people work cheaper or have feeling of losing one's job which lead to a decrease in income, and thus to an increase in competition for limited resources. For local people, all these cases, can mediate a negative attitude towards refugees (Erdoğan, 2014). Similarly, local people may perceive mass migration as a threat to their well-being, daily routines and

lifestyles. These perceptions could trigger and/or increase prejudices, negative attitudes and even xenophobic reactions towards refugees (Stephan, 2012; Yakushko, 2009).

Although Syrians migrated to other countries neighboring Syria, Turkey is by far ahead of other countries by hosting more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2020 April). The implemented "Open Door Policy" of Turkish government has been very effective in increasing numbers of refugees. This policy assures that for the refugees in Syria, where there is a humanitarian crisis, Turkey's all doors are open, everyone who comes will be accepted, and there will be no coercion or pressure on any refugees to go back to their country unless they want it.

With Turkey's open-door policy, the first refugee groups started to come to Turkey in early 2011. Tent cities and camps have been established to meet the food, shelter, health and education needs of incoming refugees (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). Initially, almost all of the refugees lived in camps and tents built for them, but as conditions changed and the number of refugees coming in exceeded the limits to be dealt with, refugees began to live all over Turkey. When compared the number of refugees living outside the camps to the number of refugees living in the camps was almost twenty to one in ratio, and it was officially recorded with the report of AFAD in December 2018 (AFAD, 2018). According to this report published by AFAD, while there were only 174,256 refugees in the camps in 2018, a total of 3,403,536 refugees resides in different provinces in Turkey. This report briefly shows that very few of the refugees stay in the camps and the overwhelming majority of them live with the local people together. In addition, according to the report of the Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association, Syrian refugees live in almost every city of Turkey, and Istanbul is home to 496,635 Syrians, which constitutes approximately 3.3% of the city's total population. In some cities on the Syrian border, there is now a higher Syrian population than the local population (Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association, 2020).

This massive mass migration has multi-dimensionally affected both the displaced Syrians and the people of countries they took refuge in order to save their lives in a multidimensional way (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). In addition, the large number and density of refugees can play a very important role in the attitudes of local people towards refugees (D'Ancona, 2018; Stephen et al., 1998). The large numbers of Syrians and being scattered all over Turkey, their interaction with the local people has been more than ever. When evaluated in the context of interaction and numerical density, it can be said that there was a positive picture in terms of social acceptance due to factors such as religious brotherhood at first. However, today, as it is clearly seen in the publications in the print and digital media, there are some events that cause anxiety between the Syrians and the local people. One of the problems that may occur due to the density of the refugee population can be that the local people may exhibit xenophobic attitudes towards refugees as seen in Turkey. For example, according to the news of Cumhuriyet newspaper, four Syrians in Bolu were beaten and stabbed by people who came to them while they were sitting in the park, saying, "Why are you sitting here, get out of our country". Later, four Turkish citizens were arrested due to this incident (Cumhuriyet, 2022).

This case is not unique to Turkey, but it is seen that there is a similar pattern all around the world (Lesetedi & Modie-Moroka, 2007). These undesirable situations arising from anti-refugee attitudes and prejudices are not considered as xenophobia (fear of, hating or dislike of foreigners) or cannot be noticed as xenophobic attitudes (Hjerm, 2007).

Etymologically, Xenophobia comes from the words xeno = foreign and phobia = fear. Xenophobia can be defined as "fear of strangers" (van der Veer et al., 2013; Yakushko, 2009). With a more contemporary understanding, xenophobia is also defined as an antipathy towards refugee groups or people perceived as foreigners (Hjerm, 2007). In addition, Lesetedi and Modie-Moroka (2007) define xenophobia as the fear or hatred of strangers who are not similar and different to oneself. In short, xenophobia can be defined as hatred of others, which includes intolerance towards individuals perceived as foreigners.

Limited resources, labor supply, competition or concern for housing or even for physical space can mediate the above-mentioned fear, intolerance, and hate in local populations toward refugees. Such anxieties and fears can cause xenophobia by appearing in the form of extreme anger, verbal and physical violence and hostility towards refugees or people who are perceived as foreigners (Lesetedi & Modie-Moroka, 2007). Based on all these explanations and definitions, xenophobia can be expressed as a form of implicit and explicit prejudice against foreigners based on fear felt.

The prejudiced, negative, and xenophobic attitudes of local people towards refugees or out groups, are not only seen in relatively underdeveloped or developing countries that are exposed to intense refugee flow, but also in almost all over the world, even in people of Scandinavian countries with a developed tolerance (Zeisset, 2016). According to Zeisset, xenophobia is a worldwide and growing problem, regardless of its explanation or what causes it. In addition, no matter where and how it arises, xenophobia is a serious damaging/destructive force and factor for both in-group members and out-group members such as for both local people and refugees (Hjerm & Nagayoshi, 2011).

Xenophobic attitudes could be evaluated as an important source of conflict between refugees and citizens of the host countries. In Turkey, it is possible to say that there are social events based on xenophobic attitudes mediated by the numerical density of Syrian refugees, and the tension between the local people and refugees from time-to-time increases, and the number of these incidents increases day by day. Syrian refugees now have a place in almost every aspect of people's lives in Turkey. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure adaptation and integration between refugees and local people. However, refugee integration does not seem possible without addressing xenophobia. Thus, the present study aimed to examine the role of gender, education level, perceived income level and age in xenophobia. By examining the role of these variables in xenophobic attitudes toward refugees and determining possible associations, it will probably be easier to prioritize people with different characteristics who need urgent interventions. Thus, current study by examining relative relationships to xenophobia should help to gain a more comprehensive understanding of xenophobic attitudes towards refugees.

Method

Design of Study

This study is a correlational study which is used in investigating possible links between variables. Correlational studies also provide an opportunity to determine the nature of any possible relationship between two or more variables (Fraenkel, et al., 2012).

Sampling Procedure and Participants

Before collecting the data of the study, ethical approval from the Middle East Technical University Human Subjects Ethics Committee was granted (Protocol no: 2018-EGT-123) dated 08.08.2018 to collect the data of the current study. After obtaining ethical permission, the data were collected face-to-face and one-to-one by going to the provinces where the participants lived. Each participant was asked whether they had an interaction or relationship with Syrian refugees before data was collected. At this stage, data were collected voluntarily from the participants who had interactions with refugees. Thus, purposive sampling was used, and it is different from convenience sampling. Because in purposive sampling, based on prior information or criteria, researchers select and collect data from participants who may provide related needed data (Fraenkel et al., 2012), as done in the current study.

Firstly, based on AFAD's (2018, June) report where refugees commonly live were determined. Then, among 10 cities, four cities (Mardin, Hatay, Malatya, and Gaziantep) were selected where the refugees' camps are located, and they live commonly. Based on expert feedbacks, Batman and İstanbul cities were also selected as data collection cities. 604 local people living in selected cities participated the study and they aged between 16 and 85 ($M = 29.29$, $SD = 11.68$). While 3 (.5%) of the participants did not specify their gender, 363 (60.1%) of the participants were male and 238 (39.4%) were female. There was also a similarity between men and women in terms of education level. 13 (1.2%) of the participants have master's and doctorate degrees, 281 (46.5%) participants were university students or graduates. The second largest group was the high school graduate group with 181 (30%) numbers. Of the remaining participants, 52 (8.6%) graduated from secondary school, 62 (10.3%) were from primary school, 1 (0.2%) was illiterate, 1 (0.2%) was literate, and 13 (2.2%) participants marked their education level as "other".

In terms of socio-economic status, only 31 (5.1%) of the participants reported that they had a high socio-economic status, while 79 (13.1%) reported that they had a low socio-economic status. 494 (81.8%) individuals reported that they had a middle socio-economic status. When considered in terms of monthly average income (in Turkish Liras), the average monthly income of 136 (22.5%) participants were reported as between 0 and 1.500 of 260 (43%) between 1.500 and 3.000, and of 135 (22.4%) 3.000 and 4,500. While only 67 (11.1%) participants stated that they had an income of 5000 Turkish liras and more, 6 (1%) of participants did not mark their monthly income.

Individuals from 82 different professions participated in the present study. Their jobs and numbers were as follow; 156 (25.8%) students, 71 (11.8%) artisans, 68 (11.3%) teachers, 43 (7.1%) housewives, 38 (6.3%) self-employed, 20 (3.3%)

public servants, 19 (3.1%) workers, 12 (2%) retired, 9 (1.5%) nurses, and 8 (1.3%) of participants were unemployed. The remaining participants were police, doctors, builder, haircutter, farmers, lawyers, and from other professions.

When examined in terms of ethnic identity, it was determined that 280 (46.4%) participants defined themselves as Kurdish, 250 (41.4%) as Turkish, 41 (6.8%) participants as Arab and five (.8%) participants as Armenian. five (.8%) participants were Assyrian, four (.7%) Circassian, one (.2%) Laz, seven (1.2%) Turkish and Kurdish, and three (.5%) of them identifies themselves as Turkish and Arab. Finally, six (1%) participants did not specify their ethnic identity, while one (.2%) participant defined himself as Turkish and Laz.

Data Collection Tools

In the current study, data were collected by using the Xenophobia Scale developed by Bozdağ and Kocatürk (2017). The Xenophobia Scale was developed to determine the xenophobic attitudes of local people towards immigrants. Consisting of 18 items, the scale has three-dimensions as fear, hatred and humiliation. The phrase "immigrants" in the scale was revised as Syrian refugees and was arranged in line with the purpose of the current study.

The scale items are a 5-point Likert scale scored as 1 (I strongly disagree) and 5 (I totally agree). The fear dimension of the scale has 7 items, the hate dimension has 7 items, and the humiliation dimension has 4 items. In the development process of the study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as .87 in the first data set and .86 in the second data set by Bozdağ and Kocatürk (2017). Since the items were revised, the three-factor structure of the scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis in the current study. The findings obtained from confirmatory factor analysis; χ^2/df (4.42), NFI (.98), CFI (.98), SRMR (.04), NNFI (.98), and RMSEA (.075) were found to confirm the three-factor structure of the scale.

In the current study, the composite reliability value was calculated as .95 and the cronbach alpha value as .91. In order to determine whether the scale has convergent validity, the AVE value was calculated and determined as .54. It was determined that this value was smaller than the composite and cronbach alpha reliability values calculated for all three sub-dimensions of the scale and the total score of the scale. The fact that the AVE value of .54 is smaller than the composite and cronbach alpha reliability values and is greater than .50 indicates that the scale has convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), in order to determine the divergent validity of a scale, first the square root of the calculated AVE value should be taken. The value obtained by taking the square root should be greater than correlation coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale. In this context, the square root of the AVE values of all three sub-dimensions was taken. It has been determined that the obtained values are greater than the correlation coefficients between the sub-dimensions. As a result of all these values, it was determined that the revised xenophobia scale also had divergent validity.

Data Analyze

In the current study, the relationship between gender and xenophobia was examined by using t-test analysis for independent samples and the relationship between participants' education level, perceived socio-economic status and age, and xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees were examined by using one-way variance (ANOVA) analysis. In addition, the interaction effects of gender and education level, perceived socio-economic status, and age on xenophobia were also analyzed with different two-way ANOVAs.

Findings

In the current study, firstly, an independent t-test analysis was run in order to determine gender differences in xenophobic attitudes toward Syrians refugees. The findings are given in Table 1 below:

Table 1. T-test results of xenophobia scores of the participants in terms of their gender

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
Xenophobia	Female	238	51.82	16.59	599	-5.82	.00*
	Male	363	60.30	18.03			

*p < .05

The results demonstrated that the xenophobia scores of the participants showed a statistically significant difference in terms of their gender [female (M = 51.82, SD =16.59) and male (M = 60.30, SD = 18.03); t (599) = -5.82, p=.00]. When these findings are interpreted, it can be said that male participants have higher xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees than females.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the education levels of the participants (primary, secondary, high school and university graduates or those with a master's doctorate degree) had a significant mean difference in their xenophobic attitudes toward Syrian refugees. The findings one-way ANOVA are given in Table 2 below:

Table 2. One-way analysis of variance results of participants xenophobic attitudes in terms of their educational background

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P	η^2
Between-group	3	11297.57	3765.86	12.33	.00*	.06
Within-group	585	178701.69	305.47			
Total	588	189999.26				

*p < .05

The results demonstrated that the xenophobia scores of the participants showed a statistically significant difference in terms of their educational level (F (3,585) = 12.33, p =.00). The strength of this relationship was as assessed by η^2 and it was determined as moderate, and it explained 6% of the variance in xenophobic attitudes toward Syrian refugees.

The Scheffe test was run in order to make pairwise comparison between groups and determine significant mean differences. The findings obtained from the Scheffe test showed that the xenophobia scores of the participants with a university and higher education level were significantly lower than those of the participants who were primary school (Md = -12.98, SD =2.44) and high school graduates (Md = -6.46, SD = 1.65). Significant mean differences were not determined

between other groups. This finding showed that participants with university and above education level exhibit less xenophobic attitudes toward Syrian refugees than participants with both primary and high school education level.

One-way analysis of variance was also performed to determine whether the participants' perceived economic status (low, medium and high) made a significant difference in their xenophobia attitudes toward Syrian refugees. The findings one-way ANOVA are given in Table 3 below:

Table 3. One-way analysis of variance results of participants xenophobic attitudes in terms of their economic level

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P	η^2
Between-group	2	3866.29	1933.14	6.12	.00*	.02
Within-group	601	189788.93	315.79			
Total	603	193655.22				

*p < .05

The results demonstrated that the xenophobic scores of the participants showed a statistically significant difference in terms of their perceived economic level (F (2,601) = 6.12, p =.00). The strength of this relationship was assessed by η^2 and it was determined as small and it explained 2% of the variance in xenophobic attitudes toward Syrian refugees.

The Scheffe test was run in order to make pairwise comparison between groups and determine significant mean differences. The findings obtained from the Scheffe test showed that the xenophobia scores of the participants with low economic level was significantly different from middle economic level group (Md =7.53, SD =2.15). According to these findings, participants with low economic level have higher xenophobic attitudes toward Syrians refugees than from middle economic level group. Significant mean differences were not determined between other groups.

Lastly, one-way analysis of variance was also performed to determine whether the participants' age groups (16-30, 31-45 and 46 and above) made a significant difference in their xenophobic attitudes toward Syrian refugees. The findings one-way ANOVA are given in Table 4 below:

Table 4. One-way analysis of variance results of participants xenophobic attitudes in terms of their age

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p	η^2
Between-group	2	9215.62	4607.81	15.04	.00*	.05
Within-group	590	180759.24	306.37			
Total	592	189974.86				

*p < .05

The results demonstrated that the xenophobia scores of the participants showed a statistically significant difference in terms of their age groups (F (2,590) = 15.04, p =.00). The strength of this relationship was assessed by η^2 and it was determined as moderate, and it explained 5% of the variance in xenophobic attitudes toward Syrian refugees.

The Scheffe test was run in order to make pairwise comparison between groups and determine significant mean differences. The findings obtained from the Scheffe test showed that the xenophobia scores of the participants in 46 and above age group were significantly higher than from 16-30 age group (Md =10.82, SD =2.30). Similarly, the xenophobic scores of the participants in 31-45 age group significantly were

higher than from 16-30 age group (Md =6.52, SD =1.80). But, according to the findings, there was not a significant difference in the xenophobic scores of the participants in 31-45 age group and in 46 and above age group. Based on these findings, it can be said that xenophobic attitudes toward Syrian refugees increase as age of the participants increases.

When the analysis were examined, it was determined that gender, education level, economic level and age had a significant effect on the xenophobic scores of the participants. At this point, whether the interactions (relations with each other) of gender and other variables were related to xenophobia was examined with different two-way ANOVA analysis. In the first analysis, the effect of the interaction of gender and education level on xenophobia was examined with

a 2X4 ANOVA analysis and it was determined that the interaction of these two variables did not have an effect on xenophobia ($F(3,578)=2.01, p=.11$).

The effect of the interaction of gender and economic level on xenophobia was examined with 2X3 ANOVA analysis and it was determined that the interaction of these two variables did not have an effect on xenophobia $F(2,595)=1.38, p=.25$. Finally, the effect of the interaction of gender and age on xenophobia was examined with a 2X3 ANOVA analysis and it was determined that the interaction of these two variables did not have an effect on xenophobia ($F(2,586)=.56, p=.57$).

The effect of all demographic variables on the xenophobia was visualized at figure 1 below:

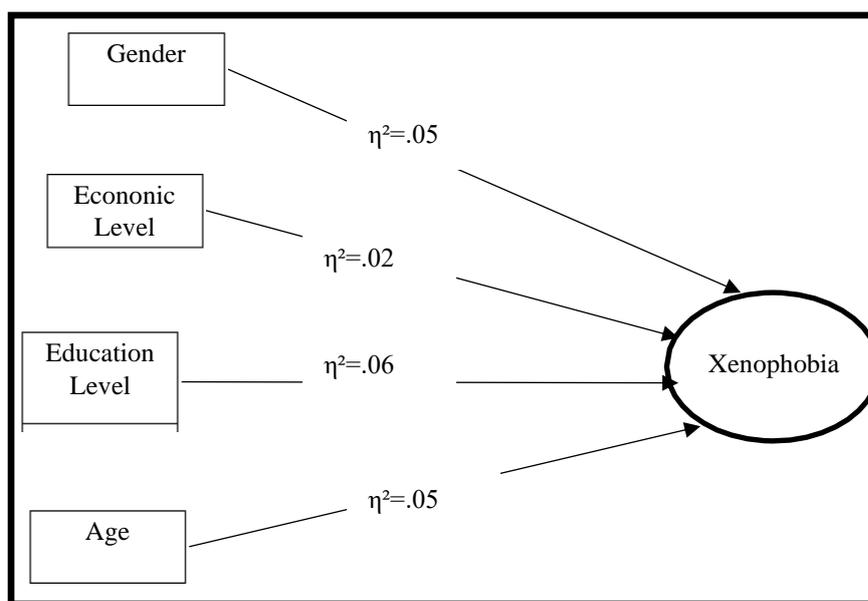


Figure 1. The relationships between demographic variables and xenophobia and explained variances

Discussion

In the current study, it was aimed to examine the role of gender, education level, perceived income level, and age, in the xenophobic attitudes of the local people toward Syrian refugees in Turkey. The findings showed that all four variables play significant roles in the xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees. Findings of the current study showed that men have higher xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees than women. Consistent with the findings of our current study, it was found that when compared to women, men perceive immigrants more prone to commit crimes (Ceballos & Yakushko, 2014), and men have more prejudice attitudes than women (Makashvili et al. 2018). Similarly, Aktaş, Tepe, and Persson (2018) found that men had higher negative attitudes towards outgroups than women, and Ommundsen et al. (2013) found that men had lower tolerance toward refugees. Finally, in the study conducted by Zeisset, (2016), it was determined that men had higher fear-based xenophobic attitudes than women. Zeisset's findings overlap with our findings more than other studies in terms of examining xenophobia. Contrary to finding of current study and other studies in the literature, Scott and Safdar (2017) reported that, in a study conducted in Canada, surprisingly women exhibit more negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees than men. Based on all these studies,

still it can be said that men have higher negative attitudes toward out-groups than women.

As the present study and almost all of the results of other studies conducted in the literature showed that men show higher negative attitudes against out-group than women. The source of such a negative attitude may come from that woman, compared to men, could easily put themselves in other people's shoes and empathize with them more easily than men (Hoffman, 1977; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). These empathic tendencies of women may have enabled them to empathize with Syrian refugees more easily and understand their difficulties, and thus to have a less xenophobic attitude towards them. But this interpretation is speculation and not examined in the current study. It may seem logical to conclude that men living in Turkey feel more responsibility for the economic conditions of the family and that they are more xenophobic because they perceive Syrians as lowering their income levels and they perceive them as a threat. However, in the current study, the interaction effect of the gender and perceived economic level on xenophobia was examined and no significant results obtained. This result showed the fact that men have more xenophobic attitudes, and this is not related to their economic level.

According to the results, participants with a university or higher education level exhibit less xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees than to individuals with primary and

high school education levels. This finding can be interpreted as individuals with a university or higher education level are more tolerant towards Syrian refugees. Consistent with these findings, it was found that people with higher levels of education have less prejudice (Velasco González et al., 2008), have more positive attitudes towards refugees (Anderson & Ferguson, 2018), and have higher tolerance towards refugees (Zeisset, 2016). Similarly, Campbell, Kandala, and Oucho (2016) found that people with primary or secondary education are four times more likely to be xenophobic when compared to people with higher education. This finding also overlaps with our findings.

Education plays an important role in negative attitudes towards out-groups, as the current study and other studies' findings showed. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that as the level of education increases, individuals are more likely to meet and interact with people from different ethnic, religious and cultural groups and become more positive toward out-groups. Similarly, the contents of their education may have adopted the idea that multi-nationality, multiculturalism, and in short, diversity is richness, unlike their previous education. Interactions with these differences and the training they receive may make these individuals more tolerant and open-minded towards out-groups. Thus, it may have been easier for them to empathize with Syrian refugees.

Considering the significant relationship between economic level and xenophobia, people with a high level of education are also more likely to perceive Syrian refugees as not a threat. Because, when the individuals in this group are compared with the individuals with a low education level, it can be said that they are individuals who have regular income or who do not have the responsibility of looking after a family due to being a university student they may experience less economic concerns.

In the current study, it was also determined that participants who perceive their economic status as low have more xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees compared to those who perceive their economic status as medium and high. This finding may be due to the fact that participants with low economic status see refugees as a threat to their economic conditions and think that the country is not even enough for them. In other studies, similar to this finding, it has been determined that seeing refugees as an economic threat is a sign of intolerance against them (Zeisset, 2016) and perceiving refugees as an economic threat causes prejudice (Abrams et al., 2017). Similarly, another study conducted by D'Ancona (2018) demonstrated that there is significant positive link between perceived economic threat and rejection of immigrants (D'Ancona, 2018). It is seen that the increased tension between the local people and Syrian refugees in Turkey comes from the idea that refugees cause excessive rent increases and concerns about individuals will be taken away from their jobs (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). Therefore, it can be said that individuals with low economic status are more likely to perceive Syrians as a threat, and therefore, they are more likely to exhibit xenophobic attitudes compared to individuals who perceive their economic conditions better.

Lastly, finding of present study indicated that elderly participants (46 and over) had higher xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees. Other studies have also shown that individuals younger than 45 have more positive attitudes and

are more tolerant towards immigrants (Blom, 2010) and that the elderly believe that crime rates are higher among immigrants and cause an increase in crimes (Ceballos & Yakushko, 2014). Similarly, in another study, it was determined that younger participants had a higher tolerance towards immigrants (Zeisset, 2016). Contrary to our findings, there are also study results showing that there is no significant link between negative attitudes towards out-groups and age (Anderson & Ferguson, 2018), and on the contrary, fear-based xenophobia decreases with increasing age (Ommundsen et al., 2013). Based on all these results, it can be said that the relationship between age and negative attitudes towards out-group members does not give consistent results and age does not always predict negative attitudes. However, the majority of studies reveal a significant relationship between age and negative attitudes towards out-group. Thus, it can be concluded that age is no significant factor on out-group in-group relationships.

Education may have had a significant impact on the relationship between age and xenophobic attitudes towards Syrian refugees. Because the data of current study were collected mostly from the regions where the education level of the elderly is low. In addition, it is not a surprise that the education rate of the young population in Turkey is higher than of the elderly, and as the results of this study showed, the highly educated people also have more positive attitudes towards refugees.

In addition, the majority of the young population continues their education or works in different cities, and they have a regular income. Thus, young people do not have a high concern about contributing to their families' income compared to the elderly, 46 and over. For all these reasons, it is possible that younger people are less likely to perceive Syrians as a threat and have less xenophobic attitudes.

The xenophobic attitudes towards out-group members from local people are increasing all over the world. Whatever the most accurate explanation for this, the problem is the same and common, affecting even open-minded and tolerant states all over the world (Zeisset, 2016). In Turkey, there are currently no signs of Syrians returning to their homes. In addition, as Yakushko (2009) emphasizes, xenophobia has negative consequences for the welfare of refugees, their integration and the future of the host country. Therefore, the increase in xenophobic reactions towards Syrians will make it difficult for the integration process to be successful and the cost will be high. Because xenophobia is not a simple problem. Therefore, all stakeholders should be involved in the prevention and response process, otherwise it will be very difficult and even impossible to solve the problem.

All in all, it is necessary to develop and implement social-level micro and macro intervention programs for the elderly, individuals with a low educational level and with low socio-economic levels, in which all stakeholders work together. First of all, it is obvious that Syrian refugees and local students are educated and interact with each other in almost all educational institutions throughout the process from pre-school to higher education. For the adaptation and integration of refugees, and for change, studies must first start in schools. In this context, lessons and themes such as respect for differences and diversity and human rights should be added to the education curricula and should be emphasized. While doing this, school

staff should pay attention to being a model for all students in their interactions with Syrians. It is also necessary to give seminars for both local people and refugee families in schools, and to ensure that families become role models for their children in matters such as interacting with different groups.

Based on the fact that we must learn to live together with Syrians, social and political leaders should set an example to the public that they do not approve of all negative attitudes towards refugees by clearing the misconceptions of the people that Syrian refugees cause all kinds of harm to Turkey and that they are a burden to the society, and should give a consistent and clear statement in this regard. Any use of language that is exclusionary and discriminatory towards Syrian refugees in the media and social media and that can lead the public to hatred and hostility should be avoided.

As a limitation and suggestion, in the current study, the roles of few variables which are associated with xenophobia were investigated. Therefore, in addition to demographic variables, the relationship between perceived economic threats, empathy, especially group empathy, personality traits and xenophobia can be examined. In addition, the present study is a correlational study. In future studies, it can contribute to a better understanding of xenophobia by revealing more clearly why individuals have negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees from their subjective perspectives with qualitative phenomenological studies or with mixed method studies.

Author Contribution Rate

All authors equally took part in all processes of the article.

Ethical Declaration

The purposes and procedure of the current study were granted approval from the Ethical Review Board of the Middle East Technical University (Ethics Committee's Decision Date: 08.08.2018, Ethics Committee Approval Issue Numbers: 2018-EGT-123).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with an institution or person within the scope of the study.

Note

Data of current study was taken from PhD thesis of first author.

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