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Araştırma Makalesi * Research Article

Research on Asylum-Seeking Preschool Children In Turkey: A Systematic Review

Türkiye'de Sığınmacı Konumundaki Okul Öncesi Dönem Çocukları Hakkında Yapılan Araştırmalar: Sistemik Derleme*

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Abstract: This study was conducted with the systematic review method to determine the studies conducted on children who are asylum-seekers in preschool period in Turkey and their results. Systematic reviews are important research projects that should be conducted by examining all studies conducted on a certain subject within a certain protocol. For this reason, the current study was carried out with the studies searched in Google Scholar and YÖKTEZ database by using the keywords "asylum-seeking children", "asylum-seeking child", "refugee children", "refugee child" without any date restriction in the research process. While the inclusion criteria for the systematic review were determined as studies conducted with children in the 0-6 age group, the exclusion criteria were determined as studies on children over the age of 6. Because of the keywords determined, a total of 2039 studies were reached and all of them were analyzed one by one. From these studies, 43 studies that were suitable for the study were identified. After removing duplicate studies, 29 studies that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria were included. When the studies were analyzed, it was seen that the problem of asylum-seekers is not limited to adults. Children are most affected by this situation.

Keywords: Asylum-seeking children, refugee children, preschool, 0-6 years, systematic review

Öz: Bu araştırma Türkiye'de okul öncesi dönemde sığınmacı konumunda olan çocuklar ile ilgili yapılan çalışmaları ve sonuçlarını belirlemek amacıyla sistemik derleme yöntemiyle yapılmıştır. Sistemik

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derlemeler, belli bir protokol dahilinde, belli bir konuda yapılmış tüm çalışmaların incelenmesiyle yapılması gereken önemli araştırma projeleridir. Bu nedenle de araştırma sürecinde tarih kısıtlaması yapılmaksızın "sığınmacı çocuk", "sığınmacı çocuklar", "mülteci çocuk" ve "mülteci çocuklar" anahtar kelimeleri kullanılarak Google Akademik ve YÖKTEZ veri tabanında taranan çalışmalar ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sistematik derlemeye dahil etme kriterleri 0-6 yaş grubundaki çocuklarla yapılan çalışmalar olarak belirlenirken, dışlama kriteri olarak da 6 yaş üzeri çocuklarla ilgili çalışmalar olarak belirlenmiştir. Belirlenen anahtar kelimeler neticesinde toplamda 2039 çalışmaya ulaşılmış ve hepsi tek tek incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmalardan araştırmanın amacına uygun olan 43 çalışma belirlenmiştir. Mükerrer çalışmalar çıkarıldıktan sonra dahil etme ve dışlama kriterlerine uyan 29 çalışmaya yer verilmiştir. Çalışmalar incelendiğinde görülmüştür ki sığınmacı sorunu sadece yetişkinler özelinde kalmamaktadır. Bu durumdan, hangi yaş grubunda olursa olsun, en çok çocuklar etkilenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sığınmacı çocuk, mülteci çocuk, okul öncesi, 0-6 yaş, sistematik derleme

INTRODUCTION

The preschool period, which is included in early childhood, is generally a process in which children acquire new acquisitions, prepare for primary education, acquire daily life skills, and learn to speak Turkish correctly and beautifully. Each knowledge and experience they acquire in this process is the basis for the next process. In addition, pre-school education creates learning environments for all children under equal conditions. The preschool education goals of the Turkish National Education have also been established within this framework (Ministry of National Education, 2013). These general objectives are inclusive for all children. However, the fact that the phenomena of war and migration in today's world affect countries deeply and sometimes radically creates a serious obstacle to the generalization of these goals for all children.

Turkey is a country that receives migration for different reasons such as civil war and asylum requests. While migrants are sometimes individuals who come alone, most of the time they migrate together with nuclear and extended family structures. Children constitute the segment most seriously affected by the phenomenon of migration. While children of Turkish origin and asylum-seekers are expected to develop healthy peer relationships in the same schools, it is not known how and in what way children will affect each other and to what extent the targeted goals of preschool education will be achieved (Türker Üçüncü & Aktan Acar, 2021). There are many children who come to Turkey due to migration at all levels of education, starting from pre-school. Although it is assumed that they will return in the short term, and these children are considered visiting students by enrolling them in schools and issuing them diplomas, there has been an attempt to solve the problem of educating asylum seeker children, which has arisen because asylum seekers who are assumed to return cannot return to their countries by enrolling them in public schools (Gencer, 2017; Ergun, 2018). Children who have to study in Turkey for various reasons have to be adapted to the Turkish education system. In this situation, it is important to take integration practices and carry them out in a qualified way (İnce et al., 2022; İnce & Yıkılmış, 2021).

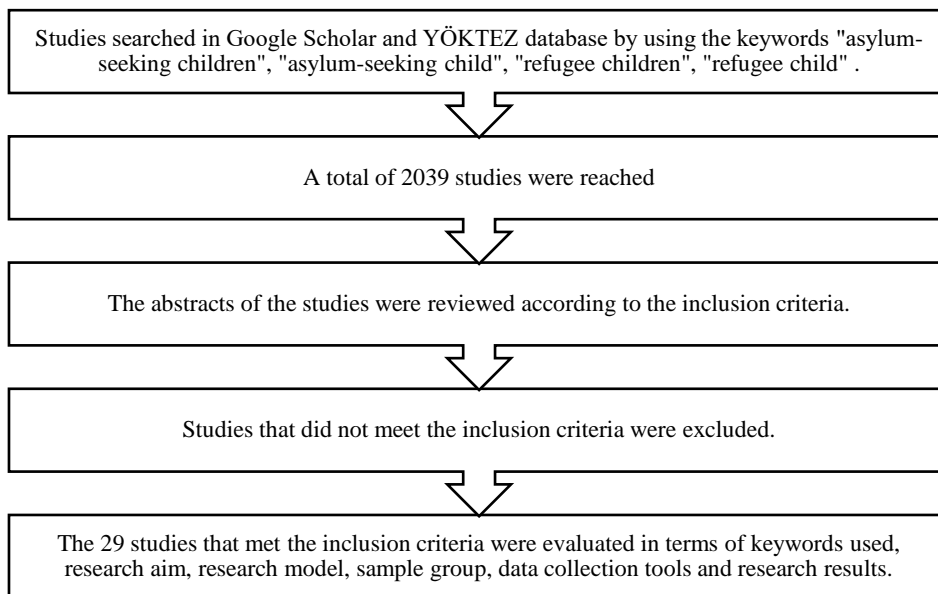
METHOD

This study was conducted with the systematic review method to determine the studies and results of the studies on children who are asylum seekers in preschool period in Turkey. Systematic reviews are important research projects that should be conducted by examining all studies conducted on a certain subject within a certain protocol (Karaçam, 2013). For this reason, it was carried out with the studies scanned in Google Scholar and YÖKTEZ database by using the keywords "asylum-seeking children", "asylum-seeking child", "refugee children", and "refugee children" without any date restriction in the research process.

While the inclusion criteria for the systematic review were determined as studies conducted with children in the 0-6 age group, the exclusion criteria were determined as studies on children over the age of 6.

Because of the keywords determined, a total of 2039 studies were reached and all of them were analyzed one by one. From these studies, 43 studies that were suitable for the study were identified. After removing duplicate studies, 29 studies that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria were included (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Flowchart detailing study selection



FINDINGS

Information on the 29 studies included in the study is presented in Table 1 under the titles of research aim, research model, sample group, data collection tools, and results.

Table 1. Characteristics of the studies analyzed in the study.

Studies	Keywords	Research Aim	Research Model	Sample Group	Data Collection Tools	Results
Mercan Uzun & Bütün, 2016	refugee children, Syrian children, pre-school education	Analyze the issues that the refugee children encounter during the orientation period at the pre-school education	Qualitative	6 preschool teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms.	Semi structured interview	The refugee children have difficulty meeting basic needs like food, shelter, and hygiene because they have not completely settled in Turkey.
Aydın & Kurtulmuş , 2018	Preschool, education problems, migration, migrant child.	Identify the pre-school teachers' perspectives on the issues migrant children face in their school.	Qualitative	15 pre-school teachers working in 8 primary schools	Personal Information Form and Semi-Structured Interview Form	The main issue was communication between the migrant children and the native students as well as between the teachers.
Can Yaşar et al., 2018	Immigrants, refugees, developmental characteristics , language development, social adaptation	Examine how Syrian children aged 48 to 66 months fare in terms of their development after attending preschool.	Mixed	14 children and their mothers and teacher	General Information Form, Early Development Evaluation Form, Interview form for the Effectiveness of Preschool Education, Interview Form for the	Pre-test and post-test results in the areas of language, social emotional development, and motor development all showed significant differences.

					Concepts of Peace and Violence, Game Interview Form and Teacher Interview Form	
Çakan et al., 2018	-	Examine the social emotional development of refugee children who are receiving preschool education.	Qualitative	9 preschool teachers with refugee children in their classrooms	Semi Structured Interview	Four themes were determined for the social emotional characteristics of refugee children which are children's social-emotional development, communication skills, classroom environment and environmental factors.
Güllüce, 2019	Syrian refugee children, Turkish children, social skills, problem behaviours	Examine by using psychometric criteria, the social skills and problematic behaviors of the local and Syrian refugee children enrolled in preschool.	General Survey	275 children aged 4-5 who continue their preschool education in 9 independent kindergarten	Personal Information Form and Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)	The mean social skill scores of local children and Syrian refugees differed significantly.
Ataseven & Çağdaş, 2019	-	Examine the impact of the game Activities Program supporting language development on the language development and daily life skills of 5-6 age group refugee children.	Trial Model	50 children, 5-6 age group consisting of refugee children whose families have stay their country	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PRKT)	The program positively affects the language development and daily life skills of 5-6 age group refugee children.
Avcı, 2019	pre-school education preschool education teacher refugee students adaptation problems	Find out the preschool teachers' thoughts on the difficulties refugee students encounter during the educational process and what kinds of solutions they have to offer to address those difficulties.	Qualitative	8 pre-school teachers	Semi Structured Interview	Due to language and cultural barriers, refugee students found it difficult to communicate with their friends, understand the activities, and follow the rules in the classroom.

Karuç, 2019	Refugee, child, nutrition, breast milk	Examine the feeding habits of the 0-2-year-old children of Syrian refugees' mothers	Descriptive cross-sectional	173 Syrian refugees mothers who have a 0-2-year-old child	Survey	34.1% of the children had weight and 20.8% of their height was below the 3rd percentile
Kaya Değer, 2019	Early childhood period, Syrian children, socioemotional adaptation, refugee, immigrant	Analyze Syrian children's early childhood socioemotional adaptation abilities using various variables.	Descriptive	69 children who attend pre-school education	Personal Information, and Marmara Socioemotional Adaptation Scale	Syrian children's early childhood socio-emotional adaptation abilities are above average, and there is a significant difference between these abilities and those of other children of similar age.
Korkmaz, 2019	Migration, refugee, asylum seeker, preschool education, refugee children.	Evaluation of refugee children's preschool and kindergarten educational experiences	Qualitative	Five asylum seeker students, four school administrators, nine asylum-seeking parents	Semi-structured interview technique and observation	Children who were seeking asylum had issues with language and communication during their education.
Özer Aytekin & Sönmez Ektem, 2019	Preschool education, child, immigration, immigrant children, Syrian immigrants, preschool teacher	To draw attention to the degree of education and training held by teachers in Hatay province who instruct Syrian immigrant children in their classrooms.	Qualitative	18 pre-school teachers	Interview form	Teachers who spoke Arabic interacted with the students directly, as opposed to other teachers who used body language, servants who spoke Arabic, or children in the classroom.
Tuğçe Ayas, 2019	Refugee, war, child, child development, developmental delay.	To asses' Syrian children's developmental status and comparing it with that of Turkish children	Case-control	60 Turkish children between 18-72 months and 60 Syrian children between 18-72 months	Denver II Developmental Screening Test	Compared to Turkish children, Syrian children experienced more developmental delays. Turkish children who performed the Denver II Developmental Screening Test were found to be normal in 82.1% of cases, suspicious in 10.7% of cases, and abnormal in 7.1%. In the study group, patients were found to be normal in 22.2% of cases, suspicious in 33.3% of cases, and abnormal in 44.4% of cases.
Yanık Özger &	Syrian children, preschool,	Understand the experiences of	Qualitative	17 children, five-year-old and	Participation observation, semi	The language spoken, the attitudes of Turkish

Akansel, 2019	ethnographic research	Syrian children in preschool class and the peer culture they create		their parent	structured and unstructured interviews, observation, document analysis	families, and the popularity of Turkish children within the classroom are all critical factors in shaping peer culture
Alabay & Ersal, 2020	Different culture, preschool education, child, preschool teacher.	Determine the experiences of pre-school teachers with 48-72 months old children from different cultures.	Qualitative	13 preschool teachers	Semi-structured interview	Teachers often did not make changes to the classroom environment because they felt inadequate.
Alkan, 2020	Early childhood, language development, second language acquisition	Examine the communication skills in Syrian children attending kindergarten with Turkish students	Qualitative	Three Syrian students who continue their education in two kindergartens within a public elementary school	Observation	Those who came from Syria and speak Kurdish as their mother tongue are more successful. speaking Turkish.
Bozkurt Polat et.al., 2020	Social adaptation, social skills, problem behaviour, values behaviour, migrant child, early childhood Education.	"To investigate the effect of the Social Skill and Social Adaptation Program on problem behaviors and value competencies in war-affected migrant children who face significant challenges in adapting to social life due to negative experiences.	Semi-experimental design	17 migrant children who are between 60 and 72 months	Social Skill Scale, Problem Behaviour Scale, Values Scale	The Social Skill Education Program is effective, children's social skills and value behaviors have increased and problem behaviors have decreased
Karabulut et.al., 2020	Refugee student, pre-school, picture interpretation, socializing, content analysis, refugee children.	Determine the problems of Afghan students forced to migrate and their adjustment to school through the images drawn by refugee students.	Qualitative	24 students who are between 3-6 years child	Draw and Tell Technique	Based on the pictures drawn by the refugee students, a number of problems such as trust issues, dominance, perfectionism, closeness, anger, and happiness could be identified considering the age and developmental level of the refugee preschool children.
Kuru, 2020	Refugee children, early intervention, self-esteem, social skill, resilience, bioecological theory	Researching the impact of laughter yoga, as a supplementary intervention program, on social skills,	Randomization Experiment	76 refugee children, born in 2013,	Demographic Information Form, Early Childhood Social Skill Measure (ECSSM), State	The experimental group and control group displayed a notable disparity in total scores for social competence, self-esteem, and resilience

		self-esteem, and resilience in refugee children			Self-Esteem Scale, and Child and Youth Resilience Measure-Revised	
Yalçın & Simsar, 2020	School adjustment, pre-school education, Syrian refugee children	Identifying the preschool adjustment problems of a Syrian refugee child who fled his home country and found refuge in Turkey.	Qualitative	Child's family, teachers, and the principal of the school where the child was educated at pre-school.	Interview	One of the most important factors affecting children's adjustment to school is the communication problem
Zindar, 2020	Refugee, nutritional anemia, B12 deficiency, vitamin D deficiency, iron deficiency	Comparing the incidence of nutritional anemia among Syrian immigrant children and Turkish children	Case-control study	109 healthy Syrian immigrant children who are between 6 months and 6 years old and 109 healthy Turkish citizen children at the same age range	Hemogram, iron, iron binding capacity, transferrin saturation, ferritin, vitamin B 12 and vitamin D levels	Syrian immigrant children face significant health concerns related to nutritional anemia and vitamin D deficiency
Ayyıldız, 2021	Immigrant, nutrition, growth, underweight, stunting	Determination of nutritional and growth status of 0-60months old children living in immigrant camps in Kilis province.	Cross-sectional and descriptive	Children of 253 volunteered families aged 0-60 months.	Questionnaire and the anthropometric parameters	"Turkey offers support and aid to immigrants, who may encounter unfavorable circumstances such as insufficient and improper nourishment, inadequate access to healthcare services, and inadequate identification of deficiencies during the migration process..
Bozkurt Polat et al., 2021	Self-perception, social adaption, social skill, preschool education	Researching the effects of a social skills training program on self-perception of 60-72-month-old Afghan immigrant children	A pre-test - post-test experimental design	17 immigrant children of ,60-72 months.	DeMoulin Self-Perception Scale	The child's self-perception is significantly influenced by the family, and it has been suggested that educating parents about child rearing would go a long way toward helping children achieve a positive self-perception
Konan & Gürsul, 2021	Syrian children's education, pre-school education, pre-school teacher	Identify the problems that preschool teachers who have Syrian children in their classes face during the	Qualitative	25 pre-school teachers	Semi structured interview	The main problem that arose during the educational process was the language problem, which was that the children did not understand what

		educational process and their proposed solutions to these problems				was being said and had difficulty expressing themselves, and that the teachers were unable to provide the necessary teaching materials.
Türker Üçüncü & Aktan Acar, 2021	Early childhood education, school adaptation, asylum seekers	Examining the challenges of adjustment experienced by asylum seekers and Turkish children who were enrolled in early childhood preschool education, with the goal of identifying common problems and developing appropriate interventions	Qualitative	27 participants: 8 children, 8 parents, and 11 educators. P	Semi structured interview and observation	The language barrier is widely regarded as the primary factor affecting the adaptation of refugee children to school.
Yanık Özger & Kozandağı, 2021	Syrian children, preschool education, play, ethnographic research	Investigation of the games of Turkish and Syrian children, the relationships they establish in the game, and the factors that play a role in it	Qualitative	18 children who are between 5-6 years old and 8 parents	Observation, interview, document analysis, researcher diary	Turkish and Syrian children strengthened their relationships through games they developed using body language and accepted a Syrian girl as the leader in their games. While the relationships between Turkish and Syrian children developed into close friendships over time, some children also experienced social exclusion.
Zembat et al., 2021	Metaphor, migrant child, preschool teacher, refugee.	Identifying preschool teachers' perceptions of the concept of migrant children using metaphors.	Descriptive	170 preschool teachers working in seven regions of Turkey	Demographic information form and an open-ended questionnaire.	The metaphors of being different, belonging, being a stranger, being orphaned, being sensitive, being needy, being valuable, being hidden/confidential, becoming ambiguous, being hopeful, being insecure, being worn out, need for adaptation, need for effort, and need for awareness that emerge from this study are grouped

						into 12 different categories
Özoruç & Sığirtmaç, 2022	Preschool education, refugee children, preschool teacher, Syrian children	To find out the opinions of preschool teachers who have refugee children in their class about the educational process, their problems, suggestions for solutions to problems, and the attitudes of parents and children toward refugee children.	Qualitative	11 pre-school teachers	Semi structured interview	The main problem in training preschool teachers who have refugee children in their class has been the language problem.
Tanış & Özgün, 2022	Refugee children multicultural classroom early childhood education	There is a need for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of preschool teachers who work directly with refugee children.	Qualitative	17 preschool teachers working with refugee children	Semi structured interview	Teachers stated feelings of inadequacy related to the adjustment process and communication difficulties with refugee children and their families. In addition, teachers indicated that adjustment and communication problems adversely affect the education of refugee children.
Üstündağ & Şenol, 2023	Interaction skills, under temporary protection status, preschool, social skills, social acceptance	To compare the interaction skills and positive social behavior of immigrant children with those of Turkish children in preschool classrooms. Additionally, this study could seek to determine the sociometric status of immigrant children.	Mixed	50 children who are between 60-72 months and get a pre-school education	Prosocial Behavior Scale, Interaction Rating Scale of Children and Sociometry	Positive social behaviors, interaction skills, and social acceptance of immigrant children were found to be lower than those of Turkish children.

Keywords

It was observed that 67 different keywords were used in the studies (See Figure 2). Among these words, preschool education was used 9 times; each of refugee, preschool teacher, Syrian children was used 5 times; each of migrant children, asylum-seeking children, social skills used 4 times; each of child, early childhood education, migrant, preschool, school adaptation, asylum-seeker used 3 times; each of

DISCUSSION

Migration, which is a situation in which one has to leave the geography in which he/she was born and raised, accustomed to its traditions and order, and get used to the conditions, people, order and traditions of a geography that he/she is not used to or has never seen before, involves certain difficulties for people of all ages. Thanks to adaptation skills, it is possible to adapt to changing conditions and situations in the process. However, the process of adaptation is not always as easy for children as it is thought or expected. When the developmental characteristics of preschool children are taken into consideration, it brings along many problems such as changing the stimulating environment, interrupting language learning skills, leaving the environment they find safe and trying to create a safe environment again, changing the social environment, and staying away from school, if any. These problems not only affect the current time, but also every stage of learning.

According to the results obtained from the studies examined in this systemic review study; language and communication problems are the main problems experienced by asylum-seeking children (Mercan, Uzun, & Bütün, 2016; Aydın & Kurtulmuş, 2018; Çakan et al., 2018; Ataseven & Çağdaş, 2019; Korkmaz, 2019; Yanık, Özgen & Akansel, 2019; Alkan, 2020; Yalçın & Simsar, 2020; Konan & Gürsul, 2021; Türker Üçüncü & Aktan Acar, 2021; Özoruç & Sığırtmaç, 2022; Tanış & Özgün, 2022), lack of social skills, problems in social adaptation and social emotional development, and lack of vocabulary (Can Yaşar et al. 2018; Güllüce, 2019; Kaya Değer, 2019; Bozkurt Polat et al, 2020; Üstündağ & Şenol, 2023), nutritional deficiencies (Karuç, 2019; Özer AYTEKİN & Sönmez Erdem, 2019; Zindar, 2020; Ayyıldız, 2021), low self-perception and lack of psychological resilience (Kuru, 2020; Bozkurt Polat et al, 2021), developmental retardation (Tuğçe Ayaş, 2019), expressing the fear they experience through pictures (Karabulut et al., 2020), and belonging, being in need, adapting, were metaphorically examined (Zembat et al., 2021).

These situations encountered in the preschool period show their effects in a wide range starting from primary school to higher education. Dinler and Hacifazlıoğlu (2020), as a result of their study with administrators and teachers working in primary schools, stated that refugee children have language and communication problems, exclusion by their peers, and problems in understanding the lessons at the desired and expected level. Tanrikulu (2017) stated that there are problems in language education, enrollment in schools, rehabilitation processes of children in need of special education, Turkish language learning and school attendance.

In the studies conducted, the most important problem in the adaptation process for asylum-seeking children is language. The realization of Turkish language learning is "foreign language learning" for children in this position. During the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language, there are problems arising from the affective state of children such as lack of motivation, resistance, resorting to violence, anxiety about losing their identity and responsibility, as well as problems arising from the target language due to vowel-consonant letters, pronunciation, abstract words and alphabet differences (Morali, 2018).

Problems that start in preschool period, especially language-related problems, also manifest themselves in higher education. Asylum-seekers who study at the higher education level in their country of origin have to learn Turkish as a foreign language at the academic level. At this point, they apply to Turkish Teaching Centers (TÖMER), which teaches Turkish as a foreign language. In addition to language learning, they also face problems such as daily communication, socialization and adaptation problems (Güngör & Soysal, 2021). In addition, when considering providing educational support to asylum-seekers, it positively affects their integration process (Ünsal & Doğan, 2024); not only overcoming language/communication problems but also contributes to social development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation of asylum-seekers is one of the priority issues in Turkey and always remains priority topic. Studies also show that the problem of asylum-seekers is not limited to adults. Children, regardless of their age group, are most affected by this situation. Problems that start in the preschool period extend to higher education. The earlier and faster these problems, which are aimed at adapting to a new

geography, are solved, the more permanent the solution will be. Suggestions that can be made based on this fact are as follows:

- Providing Turkish language support for asylum-seeking children and their parents,
- Engaging in vocabulary-building activities,
- Supporting teachers by suggesting classroom activities to support developmental areas,
- Supporting families by suggesting home-based activities to support developmental areas,
- Organizing in-class and family participation activities for social adaptation skills,
- Providing guidance to families on nutrition and hygiene,
- Including playgroup activities to erase the effects of migration on children.

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