

Contribution of Choir Practices to the Integration Process of Immigrant Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify to what extent the choir practices implemented in schools contributed to the integration process of immigrant students. In this study, action research, one of the qualitative research methods, was used as the research design and homogeneous sampling method. It is one of the purposeful sampling types, as the sample group. A questionnaire form consisting of 12 open-ended questions and a demographic information form with three questions were applied to the study group. Content analysis was used to analyze the interview data. In line with the findings obtained in this study, it was found that the choir practices implemented in schools contributed to the sense of belonging of immigrant students and their recognition in their social environment. The choir practices generated positive emotions that supported students' self-confidence, personal and spiritual development. It was revealed that choir practice had positive contributions to students' Turkish reading, writing, and speaking skills, the development of their vocabulary, acquisition of cooperative working habits and family and peer relations. In line with these results obtained, it was also found that some of the participants included in the choir practice were exposed to peer bullying.

Keywords: Immigrant students, integration, music education, choir practice.

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Koro Çalışmalarının Göçmen Öğrencilerin Entegrasyon Sürecine Katkısı

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Öz

Bu çalışmada okullarda gerçekleştirilen koro çalışmalarının göçmen öğrencilerin entegrasyon sürecine ne düzeyde katkı sağladığını tespit etmek amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden eylem araştırması deseni ve örneklem grubu olarak amaçlı örneklem türlerinden benzeşik (homojen) örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma grubuna açık uçlu 12 sorudan oluşan görüşme formu ve üç soruluk kişisel bilgi formu uygulanmıştır. Görüşmeler sonucunda elde edilen verilerin çözümlenmesinde içerik analizi tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda okullarda gerçekleştirilen koro çalışmalarının göçmen öğrencilerin aidiyet duygularına ve buldukları sosyal çevrede kabul görmelerine katkı sağladığı tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca okullarda gerçekleştirilen koro çalışmalarının öğrencilerde özgüveni, kişisel ve ruhsal gelişimi destekleyen olumlu duygular yarattığı belirlenmiştir. Bununla birlikte koro çalışmalarının öğrencilerin Türkçe okuma, yazma ve konuşma becerilerine, kelime hazinelerinin gelişimine, işbirliğine dayalı çalışma alışkanlıkları kazanmalarına, aile ve akran ilişkilerine de olumlu yönde katkısının olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda koro çalışmalarına dahil olan bazı katılımcıların akran zorbalığına maruz kaldığı da belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Göçmen öğrenciler, entegrasyon, müzik eğitimi, koro çalışmaları.

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Introduction

Immigrants, who will probably have some challenges reaching social resources in a new country, have high feelings of loneliness and isolation (Almutairi, 2015) and may face many problems, such as adaptation to the society they have migrated to, education and language learning (Bloch, 2002; Castles et al., 2013). In this sense, it is possible to say that orientation and integration of individuals who have migrated due to social, psychological and cultural reasons to the region they have migrated is necessary and significant. Integration is a crucial priority, especially regarding the communal feeling of belonging of immigrants in the education age.

The events and activities organized in schools, which are considered to be among the most significant institutions that contribute to the development of integration and a sense of belonging (Dere & Demirci Dölek, 2023; Özgök & Sarı, 2016) and enable immigrant students to recognize themselves as a part of the institution and think that they are approved and supported by the teachers and local pupils. In this way, it is considered that these students' sense of belonging and commitment to the country and society they live in develops (Fuller & Macfadyen, 2012; Goodenow, 1992; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Sağın & Güllü, 2020; Sukma et al., 2020; Şimşek & Kula, 2018).

Conducted studies show that immigrant students are facing peer ostracisations because of the prejudices against immigrants, language barriers and economical problems (Gökmen, 2020; Uçar 2021) and also states that educational activities have significant place in their integration (Cerna, 2019; Luchtenberg, 2004; Schneeweis, 2011). However, we should note that the relevant literature has some studies conducted on the contribution of artistic activities in the integration process of students (Dowell & Goering, 2018; Kahvecioğlu, 2022), on the music activities in the education process of disadvantaged groups (Gül & Eren, 2017; Robinson, 2013) and the integration process of immigrant students (Aksoy, 2022; Gustavsson & Ehrlin, 2016; Uğurlu, 2015). In this context, the bonding power of the musical activities that conducted with the community may contribute to immigrant students integration into the society and also it is thought that the lyrics of the songs used in the musical activities will be an efficient tool in the process of adaptation of the language that they are reside in.

Further study of the relevant literature showed that there were studies on the contribution of choral practices, which were included in the musical activities, to the integration process of disadvantaged groups. In their study, Tos and Gökçe (2021) stated that the activities of establishing choirs and music groups in schools were crucial in the integration of immigrant pupils. Furthermore, the findings showed that different studies on the contribution of choral studies to the integration process of immigrant pupils existed in the literature (Göktaş & Ayhan, 2017; Lenette & Procopis, 2016; Rinde & Kenny, 2021).

It is believed that the classroom and extracurricular activities organized in schools where the individual learns to be a part of their community, adapt and express him/herself will contribute to the strengthening of the students' feeling of belonging to the school (Arslan, 2020). It is equally significant that the choir practices included in these activities exist in the education process since they are community-based and support peer cooperation (Gül & Eren, 2017).

In this context, it is thought that choir activities that the immigrant students take part in their social, cultural and psychological inclusion may be an effective tool. With this point of view, this research aimed to examine how choir activities affect the processes of strengthening their sense of belonging in the integration of immigrant students, their role in cultural interaction, and their contribution to social skill development. It is aimed to determine to what extent it contributes in various aspects. This research differs from previous studies in this aspect. For this goal, answers were sought to the following question: "What is the contribution of the choir practices carried out with immigrant students to their integration process?"

1. What are the individuals' views on the contribution of singing in the choir to social outcomes?
2. What are the participants' opinions about the skills that singing in the choir contributes and the positive emotions it creates?

3. What are the individuals' views on the contribution of singing in the choir to their academic development?

4. What are the individuals' views on the contribution of singing in the choir to their family and peer relationships?

Method

In this study, case study, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In case studies, where one or a few situations are investigated in depth, the factors related to the situation are addressed with a holistic approach (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). When the research points out a descriptive or explanatory question, it is appropriate to use a case study (Yin, 2012/2017).

Participant Group

While generating the study group, the method of homogeneous sampling, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to establish the sample group of this study. In the homogeneous sampling method, the subjects identified and focused on by the researcher are studied in detail by covering a small and homogeneous sample (Neuman, 2014; Patton, 2005; Marshall, 1996).

The study group consisted of eight Syrian students studying in 7th-grade level who agreed to participate in this study voluntarily and participated in choir activities for two lesson hours a week for 18 weeks in the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year within the scope of the PIKTES (Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System) project at Çelik Sanayi Secondary School in the Körfez district of Kocaeli province in Türkiye. The demographic data of this study group participants are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Results related to the demographic information of the participants

Gender	N	%
Male	1	12,5
Female	7	87,5
Age		
12	4	50
13	4	50
Educational Status of Parents		
<u>Educational Status of Mothers</u>		
Primary school	2	25
Middle school	3	37,5
High school	2	25
<u>Educational Status of Fathers</u>		
Primary school	2	25
Middle school	1	12,5
High school	3	37,5
University	1	12,5
<u>Educational Status of Grandmothers</u>		
Non-literate	1	12,5

As is implicit in Table 1, it was revealed that 87.5% of the immigrant students joining in this study were females and 12.5% were males; 50% of them were 12 years old and 50% 13 years old. Regarding their parents' educational background, 25% of the students' mothers had the education of elementary school, 37.5% the education of secondary school and 25% high school education. Regarding fathers, on the other hand, the findings showed that 25% of participants' fathers had the education of elementary school, 12.5% the education of secondary school, 37.5% the educational of high school and 12.5% university level education. Moreover, it was found that one participant lived with his grandmother and that the grandmother was non-literate.

Data Collection

In this study, as one of the interview types, the half-structured interview technique was utilized as the data collection tool. The half-structured interview form should consist of questions that contain logical and narrative integrity, in which the participants can express themselves (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018; Polat, 2022).

In an attempt to collect the data, apart from the first part, an questionnaireform having of 12 open-ended questions developed by the researchers was generated which included the participants' age, class level, and family education status. The questions prepared were presented to the comments of two experts and the interview form was finished in line with the expert opinions obtained.

Data Analysis

The data gained in this study were analyzed using the content analysis method. Using the content analysis, the researcher aims to obtain views and relationships that can explicate the data (Çepni, 2018). The data obtained in this study were analyzed in depth, divided into topics and codes and eventually interpreted. The students' names in the study group were excluded from this study and were coded as S1, S2.

The data obtained in this study were presented to the comment of two field experts in an attempt to ensure reliability, and consistency analysis implemented. To identify the similarities between the opinions of the experts, the formula of percentage of consistency P (Percentage Consistency) = $\frac{Na}{Nt} * 100$ (Number of items which were coded the same in two forms) *100/Nt (The items total number in one form) was utilized (Çepni, 2018). The percentage of consistency of this study was calculated as 87.93. Since it was deemed appropriate that this value was 70 or more (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Baş, 2014), it is possible to say that the reliability of the study was achieved.

Ethical Procedures

Ethics committee approval was obtained from Bursa Uludağ University for this research. Decision number: 2022/10.

Results

In this section, the results obtained from the answers to the research questions of the participant immigrant students included in the search are presented.

In Table 2, the sub-themes and codes together with sample statements related to the "social outcomes" theme gained from the participants' views on the contribution of choir practices to social outcomes are illustrated.

Table 2

Views of the individuals about the positive effects of singing in the choir on the social outcomes

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes	Participants
<i>Social Outcomes</i>	Belongingness	Belonging	S2, S3, S4
		Power	S1
		Courage	S1
		Security	S8
	Social Environment	Sustainability	S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8
		Making friends	S1, S3, S4, S6, S7
		Common language	S3, S4, S6
		Adaptation	S5, S8
		Sincerity	S8

As is explicit in Table 2, some participants stated their views about the contribution of choir practices to the social outcomes. Regarding the sub-theme of "belongingness," it was found that some participants stated their views about belonging (3), power (1), courage (1), and security (1). Furthermore, it was revealed that the participants stated their views about sustainability (7), making

friends (5), common language (3), adaptation (2) and sincerity (1) regarding the "social environment" sub-theme. An explanation for these findings could be that choir practices contributed to students' feeling of belonging, making friends and the continuity of their friendships.

Some participants' views on this theme are presented below:

"It made me feel strong and courageous (S1)."

"When I joined the choir, I was friends with only two people. But now I have made friends with all of them. Every day we exchange greetings and inquire after with each other's health. They also tell me that they got used to the Syrians and like us they think we are talented and smart (S4)."

"We are sincerer because we practice collectively as a group. Our friendship bonds have been gradually getting stronger (S8)."

Table 3 shows the views of the individuals regarding the positive emotions created by singing in the choir.

Table 3

The participants' opinions about the skills that singing in the choir contributes and the positive emotions it creates

Theme	Codes	Participants
Skills and Positive Emotions	Happiness	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8
	Self- Confidence	S3, S4, S6, S7, S8
	Pride	S1, S5, S6, S7
	Desire	S2, S3, S7
	Extraversion	S4, S6, S8
	Enthusiasm	S3, S6, S8
	Sense of Achievement	S4, S7
	Adaptation	S5, S8
	Communication	S4
	Team spirit	S4

As can be seen in Table 3, there were participants who declared their opinions about the skills that singing in the choir contributes to and the positive emotions it creates. "Skills and positive emotions," some participants stated their views about happiness (8), self-confidence (5), pride (4), desire (3), extraversion (3), enthusiasm (3), sense of achievement (2), adaptation (2), communication (1) and team spirit (1). The findings obtained in this study suggest that the choir practices contributed to students' having positive feelings about the community they lived in and strengthening their sense of belonging and social relations.

Some participants' views on this theme are presented below:

"It just gave me a sense of confidence. I began to spend more time with my teachers. I am very happy, especially when I meet with my music teacher. Initially, I didn't like meeting anyone. Even when someone came over to our home, I would directly go to my room and would not come out. But now I can easily talk to everyone, and I feel myself more successful because I put some effort into something at school (S4)."

"I got nervous, at first I was afraid of going on stage, but then I got used to it, so I was no longer afraid. Butterflies were flying in my stomach; I felt happiness. It was very nice actually (S6)."

Table 4 presents the participants' views on the contribution of singing in the choir to academic achievement.

Table 4*Views of the individuals about positive effects of singing on the choir to academic development*

Theme	Codes	Participants
<i>Academic Development</i>	Reading Skill	S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S8
	Speaking Skill	S3, S5, S7, S8
	Writing Skill	S3, S4, S5, S8
	Vocabulary	S4, S6
	Being articulate	S3
	Coding	S3

As shown in Table 4, the participants stated their views about reading skills (6), speaking skill (4), writing skills (4), vocabulary (2), being articulate (1) and coding (1). Given these particular results, it is possible to say that the choir practices positively contributed to the academic achievement and mastery of the language of the country in which the immigrant students resided.

Some participants' views on this theme are presented below:

"The choir practices contributed to my Turkish lessons a lot. I also joined the drama club initiated by our Turkish teacher. I think that singing in the choir improved my acting a lot as well. Now I got more used to being on stage, I cooperate with people more comfortably and my reading and my pronunciation are much better than before (S5)".

"The choir practices contributed to my Turkish lessons and English lessons. I look up the Turkish translations of words to understand the lyrics of English songs. In this way, while learning the songs, I also learn English words (S4)".

Table 5 shows the views of the individuals on the contribution of singing in the choir to the family and peer relations.

Table 5*Views of the individuals about the positive effects of singing in the choir to the family and peer relations*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes	Participants
<i>Family and Peer Relations</i>	Family	Happiness	S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8
		Encouragement	S1, S2, S3, S5, S6
		Pride	S3, S5, S6, S7
	Peers	Support	S1, S3, S6
		Hope	S3
		Satisfaction	S4
		Bullying	S2, S4, S5

As seen in Table 5, some participants stated their views about the contribution of choir practices to the social outcomes. Regarding the sub-theme of "family," it was found that some participants indicated their views about happiness (6), encouragement (5), pride (4), support (3), hope (1) and satisfaction (1).

Furthermore, the findings showed that the participants specified their views about bullying (3) regarding the sub-theme of "peers." As far as these results are concerned, it is possible to say that their families' encouragement and support to the students participating in the choir practices also affected their positive feelings and positively contributed to their family relations. However, it is also possible to claim that the peer bullying they experienced while singing in the choir had negative emotional effects on the immigrant students.

Some participants' views on this theme are presented below:

“My family was very happy when I joined the choir. They are proud of me and say 'our daughter will improve herself. I want to take part in even more events so that my family can be proud of me more (S6)’”.

“My friends say that my music teacher likes me and that's why he let me in the choir. I like this, but sometimes some people say that because I am Syrian and because he sympathizes with me, he has let me in the choir practices; I feel sad when I hear this. However, my teacher trains me because he thinks I am talented (S4).”

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The information reached of this study demonstrated that the choir practices positively supported immigrant pupils' feeling of belonging and their recognition in the social environment. In earlier studies conducted in the similar literature, it was learnt that musical events and activities organized by the individuals from different cultures positively contributed to their social environment and social relations (Rinde & Kenny, 2021; Carlow, 2004). Furthermore, there are also studies in the relevant literature suggesting that choir practices for immigrants contributed positively to the sense of belonging of the choirists (Çerezcioglu, 2010; Şahin, 2018; Wood, 2010; Shaw, 2016). Against this background, it is believed that the community-based activities carried out in schools had a positive contribution to the commitment of students from different countries and cultures, to their adaptation to the social environment they were in, and to their social recognition. With this in mind, it is considered essential for immigrant students to be involved in different community-based activities, including choir practices, which will make them feel like they belong to a communal local group at their schools.

In accordance with another finding, it was found that singing in the choir created positive emotions that supported self-confidence, personal and spiritual development of the immigrant students. As a conclusion of this study, all the participants stated that singing in the choir contributed to their happiness. Furthermore, it was concluded that singing in the choir positively contributed to the self-confidence, pride, desire, enthusiasm, sense of achievement, team spirit, extroversion, communication and confirmity with the participants.

Olivier et al. (2022) concluded that the immigrant students who participated in musical activities had fewer problems in adapting to school, and that these activities also helped strengthen their positive emotions and feel enthusiastic. Against this background, it is thought that the choir practices helped to the adaptation of immigrant pupils to the community they belonged to and development of positive emotions.

In this study, it was revealed that singing in the choir contributed to immigrant students' Turkish reading, writing and speaking skills, the development of their vocabulary, and their acquisition of cooperative study habits. Furthermore, it was also found that the Turkish language mastery of the students through choir practices also contributed positively to their academic achievement.

In similar previous studies, it was concluded that choral training supported the learning process based on teamwork and contributed more effectively and positively to increasing students' academic achievement (Saldun, 2019; Sevinç, 2017; Swaminathan & Schellenberg, 2020). From this perspective, it is possible to claim that the choir practices made crucial contributions to the language skills of the immigrant students in the society they lived in and the academic improvement of these skills. With this in mind, choral practices carried out in schools are vitally important to develop the feeling of belonging, achievement and self-expression skills of students from different cultures.

Similarly, as far as the results of this study are analyzed, the findings showed that participation in the choir practices contributed positively to the family and peer relations of the students and that the parents of the children participating in the choir demonstrated encouraging and supportive attitudes. However, it was also found that some participants were exposed to peer bullying in their circle of friends. In similar studies, it was revealed that the musical events and activities carried out in support of this study supported family and peer relations. In the survey of Boer and Abubakar (2014), it has clearly been recognized that to make and listen to music with family members and peers is not only entertaining but also supportive to the personel improvement of individuals. Moreover, the musical

events and activities carried out in the school positively affected the peer and family relations of students and their adaptation to the school (Hallam, 2010; Schellenberg et al., 2015).

In light of the findings obtained in the present study, the following recommendations can be made:

Choir is a collective music activity that reflects the universal spirit of music, raises awareness of being a community, and supports the integration process with its features that allow individuals with different cultures and different perspectives to express themselves (Balsnes, 2016; Sevinç, 2017; Taş Güzeloğlu, 2019). Choir activities, in which intercultural interaction is emphasized, have a function that brings together individuals with different identities closer, especially as an integrating and unifying element for immigrants (Türkmen, 2012).

From this point of perspective, it is recommended to increase the number of collective musical activities performed in schools to support the feeling of belonging and peer relations of immigrant students through the unifying and integrating function of the choir. Immigrants' feeling of belonging to the society they live in will only be possible by recognizing and integrating the culture of that society and contributing to their adaptation (Ateş, 2021). In this framework, it is considered crucially significant to increase the community-based events and activities in schools and ensure that immigrant students are included in these activities to allow for social integration, especially in the regions that extensively receive immigration.

In schools, which are among the most essential institutions in the immigrant students' orientation and integration process, one of the most significant elements having positive integration process is the teachers. The teachers involved in this process should have a command of studies based on multiculturalism in an attempt to contribute to the integration of immigrant students into the society they belong to. In this context, it is recommended that the teachers be supported for their professional achievements with in-service training, seminars, and domestic and international project studies related to the integration of immigrant students, and increase their awareness and eventually acquire the knowledge and abilities that will contribute to the integration process toward multiculturalism.

The choir activities involving the immigrant students in schools are regarded as an encouraging and reinforcing practice that contributes to making friends, maintaining friendships, and contributing to cooperation and performance behaviors, and strengthening peer relations. In this sense, it is deemed significant to ensure the joining of parents in the process to support the integration of students. In an attempt to identify the psychological, sociological and cultural contributions of musical activities on individuals in the integration process, it is recommended that the studies involving individual, collective, and listening-speaking applications in which the immigrant students studying at different levels can be conducted to contribute to the relevant literature.

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