

Determination of Factors Affecting Family Participation of Syrian Refugee Parents in Education¹

Suriyeli Sığınmacı Ebeveynlerin Eğitime Aile Katılımını Etkileyen Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to examine the factors influencing the engagement of Syrian refugee parents in their children's education. The study involved a sample of twenty-five Syrian parents residing in Gaziantep. To ensure a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the research, a phenomenological approach was adopted, and a purposive study group was selected. The sample included Syrian parents with diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds, all of whom had at least one child enrolled in official primary schools in Turkey. The researcher utilized personal information and semi-structured interview forms to gain insights into the perspectives of Syrian parents. Content analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The research findings revealed that various factors, such as language proficiency, socio-economic status, and psychological, political, ideological, religious, cultural, and educational aspects, influenced the participation of Syrian refugee parents in education. Despite variations in educational, social, and economic backgrounds among Syrian parents, it was evident that they all placed significant emphasis on the active engagement of their primary school-aged children.

Keywords: Syrian parents, Syrian students, parental participation, primary school

Öz

Bu araştırma, Suriyeli sığınmacı ebeveynlerin eğitimde aile katılımını etkileyen faktörleri ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla yapılmış nitel bir çalışmadır. Araştırma, Gaziantep'te ikamet eden yirmi beş Suriyeli ebeveynlerden oluşan bir çalışma grubu ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın derinlemesine ve detaylı bir şekilde anlaşılmasını sağlamak için fenomenolojik (olgu bilim) desen, amaçlı çalışmadan ölçüt odaklı bir çalışma grubu tercih edilmiştir. Çeşitli görüşlere ulaşmak için Türkiye'deki resmi ilkokullarda eğitimi devam eden en az bir çocuğu olan, farklı sosyo-ekonomik ve eğitim düzeylerinde olan Suriyeli ebeveynlere ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmacı, araştırma sürecinde Suriyeli ebeveynlerin görüşlerini derinlemesine ortaya çıkarmak için kişisel bilgi ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formları kullanmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analizinde içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulgulara göre Suriyeli sığınmacı ebeveynlerin eğitime katılımını etkileyen faktörlerin dil yeterliliği, sosyo-ekonomik düzey, psikolojik, siyasi ve ideolojik, dini, kültürel ve ebeveynlerin eğitim düzeyi olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Suriyeli ebeveynlerin eğitim, sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve dil düzeyleri farklı olsa da hepsinin ilkokul çağındaki çocukların katılımına büyük önem verdikleri görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriyeli ebeveynler, Suriyeli öğrenciler, ebeveyn katılımı, ilkokul

Introduction

The significance of nurturing a child is captured by an African proverb which states, "Raising a child requires the involvement of an entire community" (Anderson & Clinton 1996). This proverb highlights the collective and social nature of child-rearing. It is evident that every individual within the family, school, and society has a crucial part to play in the process of raising children (Kovacevic et al. 2018).

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Parents serve as the initial and enduring educators in a child's life (Cordry & Wilson 2004), providing continuous guidance throughout their lifetime (Ladner 2006). Over the past four decades, researchers have conducted numerous studies examining the impact of parental involvement on children's education (Epstein 1995; Zellman & Waterman 1998). The findings of these studies have consistently demonstrated that active parental participation leads to various positive outcomes, such as improved academic performance among students (Fan & Chen 2001), narrowing the achievement gap between high and low performing students (Lee & Bowen 2006), and fostering positive behaviors and emotional development in children (Sheldon & Epstein 2002).

Studies have indicated that parents from diverse cultural backgrounds may perceive and interpret parental involvement in school differently (Juang & Silbereisen, 2002). For instance, in some cultures, getting involved in school matters may be viewed as impolite, leading parents from such backgrounds to prefer engaging in their children's education at home (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998). Conversely, in other cultural contexts, parents might actively spend more time at their children's school, fostering a closer relationship between the parents and the educational institution (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Research on the participation of Latin American immigrants in education has shown that immigrant parents are generally less involved in school activities, and such low participation in school can be confused with a lack of interest in their children's academic work (Commins, 1992). Considering some common difficulties shared by all immigrants, such as language inadequacy and cultural conflicts, it is possible to assume that this conclusion also applies to Syrian refugees. According to Walker, Wikins, Dallaire, Sandle, and Hoover-Dempsey (2005), immigrant parents have a unique social and cultural context.

Previous research shows that parent involvement has a significant impact on children's success in schools. This; may be more prominent in societies characterized by violence, trauma, displacement, language isolation, instability, and cultural dissonance (Rah, Choi, & Nguyễn, 2009). Children from refugee families have special psychological, social and academic needs.

Refugee children; they have traumas related to war, fleeing their homeland, years spent in refugee camps, and other settlement experiences. In addition, they are frequently exposed to violence, malnutrition and torture. Psychological stress and traumatic experiences generally occur when refugee children enter the school system (Rasmussen, Crager, Baser, Chu, & Gany, 2012). In the classroom, refugee children may have difficulties with emotional regulation and interaction with peers. Refugee children, in response to chronic stress and trauma; may show symptoms such as depressed mood, hyperactivity, irritability, flashbacks, aggression, difficulty communicating with peers, not following directions and not wanting to go to school. All these difficulties may cause the child to become isolated and withdrawn (Elklit, 2001).

With the increase in immigration to Turkey, the number of students in schools has also increased. In this context, the number of students to be taught by teachers has also increased. This increase includes students from different cultures. The teacher has a great responsibility to ensure that these children succeed academically. For this reason, it is very important for teachers to reach the families of refugee children and reveal their potential (Hiatt-Michael, 2007). It is extremely important to encourage and maintain participation in education, especially in refugee families (Kanu, 2008).

Over the past decade, there has been a significant rise in Syrian migration to Turkey. Syrian refugees now constitute the primary immigrant group in Turkey and the fastest-growing segment within the foreign population. According to recent data published by the

General Directorate of Migration Management on March 24, 2022, the number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey has reached 3.7 million. Among them, 1.8 million individuals (47.5%) are children aged between 0 and 18, with 1.3 million of them being of school age (GİGM, 2022). As per the Ministry of National Education's General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, the education system has integrated 730,806 Syrian students as of the 2021-2022 academic year. The enrollment rate for Syrian children under temporary protection has been recorded at 65% (MEB, 2022).

Parental involvement has emerged as a crucial concern in the Turkish education system, particularly for refugee parents, given the rapid increase in the Syrian population in Turkey. While there has been some research on parental participation in education, studies specifically focusing on the involvement of refugee parents are limited (Tadesse, 2014). In the Turkish literature, only a handful of studies have been found that examine the participation of refugee parents in their children's education process (Tümekaya & Çopur, 2021; Tümekaya & Çopur, 2020; Zengin & Ataş-Akdemir, 2020). However, international literature highlights the significant impact of parental involvement on students' academic success. Despite the large number of refugee students in Turkey, there is a dearth of research on parental participation. This study aimed to identify the factors that influence the participation of Syrian refugee parents with primary school children in the education process in Turkey. To achieve this objective, the study sought answers to the following questions:

What are perceptions of Syrian refugee parents about family participation in education?

What are perceptions of Syrian refugee parents about factors affecting family participation in education?

What are factors that facilitate participation of Syrian refugee parents in education process?

What are factors that prevent Syrian refugee parents from participating in education process?

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, the researchers used phenomenology as a qualitative research method. Unlike simply describing life experiences and presenting findings, qualitative research, specifically phenomenology, takes a systematic and subjective approach to understanding and assigning meaning to these experiences (Creswell, 2008). Rather than focusing solely on the outcomes, qualitative research places greater emphasis on the process and the interpretation of experiences (Creswell, 2013). This phenomenological study aims to explore how Syrian parents perceive their children's participation in the educational process and how they identify the factors that influence this involvement. Bound (2011) highlighted that phenomenology begins with the participants' lived experiences as shared through their narratives, and it seeks to explore the effects and perceptions arising from these experiences.

Study Group

The study focused on Syrian parents residing in the Şahinbey and Şehitkamil districts of Gaziantep province. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who could provide the most relevant information about the research topic (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, a criterion-oriented study group, a type of purposive sampling, was utilized. This approach

involved selecting participants based on predetermined criteria established by the researchers (Patton, 2002). The criteria for participant selection were as follows:

Being a Syrian citizen parent

Not having settled in Turkey recently

Having at least one child attending a Turkish public primary school in Gaziantep.

The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the Syrian parents who were identified as potential participants. Assurance was given regarding the confidentiality of their personal information, and it was emphasized that participation in the research was voluntary. Additionally, the parents were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without providing a reason. To maintain anonymity, the participants' names were not used in the study. Instead, they were assigned identification codes such as A1...A3 for Syrian mothers and B1...B6 for Syrian fathers. The study group consisted of twenty-five participants (Twenty-five families), comprising thirteen mothers and twelve fathers, selected using purposive sampling. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with twenty-two participants, while three interviews were conducted via the Zoom application. The selection of participants took into account their socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Demographic information of study group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of participants according to personal information

Variables		f
Age	25-35 age	11
	36-45 age	14
Education Level	Illiterate	3
	Primary school	4
	Middle school	6
	High school	5
	Undergraduate	3
	Graduate	4
Income Level	Less than 5000 TL monthly	13
	More than 5000 TL monthly	12
Turkish Level	Beginner	14
	Intermediate	9
	Advanced	2
Duration of Stay in Turkey	4-7 years	9
	8-10 years	16
Employment Status	Working	16
	Not Working	9
Working Hours	5-9 hours	6
	10 hours and more	10
Number of children	2 children	6
	3 children	11
	4 children and more	8

Data Collection Tools

The researchers employed a personal information form and a semi-structured interview form to collect the data for this study. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at Gaziantep University.

To develop the questions for the semi-structured interview form, the researchers conducted a comprehensive review of relevant literature in the field. Based on the findings of

this literature review, a set of questions was prepared and sent to three expert academicians in the respective fields. The researchers sought expert opinions and feedback on the questions received. Necessary adjustments were made to the questions based on the feedback received from the experts. Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted involving three Syrian parents to test the effectiveness of the questions. Based on the outcomes of the pilot study, final adjustments were made to the questions before proceeding with the data collection phase.

Data Collection

The data for this research was gathered by conducting interviews with twenty-five Syrian parents during the second semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The interviews followed a semi-structured interview format, and the participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded using a voice recorder to ensure data preservation. To establish a comfortable and friendly environment, the interview process commenced with general and informal questions, aiming to facilitate communication between the researcher and the interviewees. Personal information was then collected from the participants. Arabic, the native language of all participants and the primary researcher, was utilized to foster a sense of ease and encourage participants to share more openly. The interview locations were determined based on the preferences of the participants, such as their homes or workplaces. On average, the interviews with Syrian parents lasted approximately forty-five minutes. In total, the interviews amounted to 1125 minutes (Eighteen hours and seventy-five minutes), resulting in a 124-page transcript. Upon completion of the interviews, the interview records and relevant documents were shared with the participants, and their consent was obtained. The obtained data was transcribed promptly after each interview to mitigate any potential data loss. In the Findings section, direct quotations from the transcriptions that align with the research objectives are presented.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the semi-structured interview form, one of the data collection tools employed in the research, underwent content analysis. Content analysis involves organizing similar data into coherent categories or themes to facilitate understanding (Doğanay et al., 2012). The gathered data was transferred to a computer environment, and the datasets were prepared for analysis. The transcript was examined line by line, resulting in the creation of categories and codes. To enhance the validity of the research, various measures were implemented, including selecting an appropriate research method, explaining the data collection process, presenting the obtained data through direct quotations without commentary, and evaluating the consistency of the data by relating it to the existing literature. To ensure the reliability of the research, steps such as seeking expert opinions, obtaining participants' permission to record the interviews, and taking precautions to prevent data loss were undertaken.

FINDINGS

Syrian Parents' Perceptions of Family Participation in Education

The categories and subcategories that emerged as a result of analysis of interviews conducted to reveal perceptions of Syrian parents about family participation in education are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Syrian parents' perceptions of family participation in education

Theme	Category	Sub category
س > ق &	Family	Parents motivate their children to succeed

participation concept	Academic and educational supervision and follow-up
	Reinforcing what children learn at school and simplifying school's abstract concepts
	Providing financial, moral and psychological support to child
Importance of family participation	Necessary and mandatory
	Integration of family participation into and precedence over role of school
	Family participation is one of important and fundamental educational roles of parents.
	Being important in ensuring parent-teacher cooperation
Benefits of family participation	Beneficial for child's academic performance
	Strengthening relationship between family members
	Increasing child's productivity and maintaining success
	Build self-confidence in children and parents

Family participation concept

Within scope of research, when Syrian parents were asked to explain concept of family participation, it was noted that first things that came to their minds were motivation and encouragement provided by parents to their children.

Family participation takes place with motivation, when you motivate your child and tell her/him that what she/he is doing is great and successful, child becomes more creative (A2).

I pay attention to children's healthy diets, their personal care, such as ensuring their milk, etc., and ensuring their hygiene (A13).

Importance of family participation

Syrian parents stated that family participation, which is another dimension of their perceptions regarding family participation in education, is necessary, compulsory and one of important and fundamental roles of parents.

Family participation is an integrated process between parents, teacher and school. It is one of educational roles of parents. Parent participation is integral to school's role, but sometimes parent participation takes precedence over school's role (B4).

Parents play an important role in child's education process. Family participation is like a person clapping. The first hand is family, second hand is teacher, because one cannot clap with one hand. When teacher gives information at school and this information is not repeated by parents at home, child will not benefit from it (A7).

Benefits of family participation

Syrian parents argued that family participation is very effective on academic performance of child and stated that it has many benefits such as increasing child's productivity and success, giving children and parents self-confidence, and strengthening relationship between family members.

Family participation is very, very beneficial for a child's academic performance. When a child feels that his parents are interested in her/him and monitors her/his educational status, she/he reacts reflexively to show his parents that she/he is successful and learns faster (B6).

While family participation strengthens relationship between child and parents, it also gives child and parents more self-confidence because parents become more aware of what their children are learning (B10).

Perceptions of Syrian Parents on Factors Affecting Family Participation in Education

Perceptions of Syrian parents regarding factors affecting family participation in education were analyzed by dividing into seven categories and presented in Table 3 together with sub-categories.

Table 3: Perceptions of Syrian parents on factors affecting family participation in education

Theme	Category	Sub category	
Perceptions of Syrian parents on factors affecting family participation in education	Language factor	Turkish language deficiency	
	Education factor	Education level of parents	
	Economic and social factor	Family's economic and social conditions	
	Cultural factors		Family's cultural level
			Cultural differences
	Psychological factors		Psychological instability
			Family problems
			Psychological stress
	Political and ideological factors		Uncertainty and fear of unknown future
			Different political and ideological beliefs
		Fear of those with power and influence	
Religion factor		Religious belief	

Language factor

Syrian parents stated that language is one of most important factors affecting their participation. Syrian families pointed out that insufficient Turkish language skills negatively affect their participation in school and prevent them from helping their children do their homework.

If parents have a good level of Turkish, they can provide more support and help to their children (A11).

Language is a very important factor. If I go to a school meeting and do not speak Turkish, what will I gain from meeting information? Nothing, maybe I'll sit back and count teacher's words! (B12).

Syrian parents reported that their children outperformed themselves in speaking Turkish and using it professionally. They stated that they usually use their children as translators in communication with teachers, schools and Turkish society in general. They

stated that their children's superiority in using Turkish prevents them from helping with homework and repeating what their children have learned at home.

My Turkish level is intermediate. At home I stop when I want to help my son with review lessons and doing homework because I see that my son's level of Turkish is better than me. The tutor should have better language skills than learner (B4).

Not knowing language is a handicap not only at school, but also in any government institution or anywhere. My first-grade son translates our conversation with teacher, principal and neighbors (A2).

Education level

Syrian parents emphasized that education level of family affects educational support provided to child and his academic success, which is one of factors that affect participation of family in education.

How can an uneducated person teach something she/he does not know? (B9).

The education level of parents greatly affects education of child. My husband is an engineer, and since he is an educated and intelligent person, I feel that he wants to give his son same education and attention he received from his family (A2).

Economic and social factor

Syrian parents stated that social and economic conditions of family are among main factors affecting their children's participation in education process. They defined low socio-economic status of family as one of factors affecting family's participation in education.

The economic condition necessarily affects participation of family. Everything has become very expensive lately, so father and mother have to work to earn a living. If both are working, they will not be able to follow their children's lessons and help with their homework because they are busy with work...obviously, economic situation plays an important role (B5).

Cultural factor

Participants stated that Syrian family participation is affected by cultural differences between family and school. They stated that there are some Syrian families with a normal cultural level in school participation and their participation is limited to providing support to their children from home, they do not visit school unless called by teacher, and cultural differences regarding roles of teachers and parents have a significant impact on relationship between home and school. In addition, some Syrian parents stated that they respect role of teacher and believe that it is not good to interfere with his work and duty.

According to Syrian culture, family participation is voluntary and not mandatory (A6).

According to some participants, high cultural level, especially cultural level of mother, affects academic success of student and level of academic support of family for their child.

High cultural level of parents means support for their children in terms of education, even if they do not speak Turkish. (A5).

If mother's cultural level is high, she knows that participation of family in education is important, I do not mean level of education (B5).

Psychological factor

Syrian parents expressed many psychological problems that affect their lives and thus their participation in education. These include psychological instability, family problems, psychological pressures, uncertainty, and fear of unknown future.

Peace, that is, if there is no problem between family members and neighbors at home and at school, this gives us psychological comfort and allows us to participate more in our children's education (B2).

We live under psychological pressure due to sudden and poorly thought-out decisions taken by Turkish government towards Syrians. We experienced stress and anxiety during war for 7 years. When we came to Turkey, we thought that we would start from scratch and try to return to our normal life, but we started to face different difficulties in Turkey, we experienced same anxiety, same stress, but in a new way. We experienced period of Corona epidemic, then news of world war, and all those negatively affected our psychology. Sudden closure of identity of a large number of Syrians and sudden arrangement of Syrians' places of residence and closure of most neighborhoods against them led to our exploitation by homeowners. All these decisions make us tired psychologically... a decision is made every day; a new decision is made every day (A6).

Political and ideological factor

According to the participants, political and ideological factors were identified as influential in the participation of Syrian parents in the education process. They expressed that many Syrians, while in Syria, harbored fear towards individuals with power and influence. Syrian parents mentioned perceiving teachers and school administrators as government officials and expressed fear of them, believing that their opinions would not be valued. As a result, they avoided engaging in communication, attending parent meetings, and visiting schools. Over time, the participants explained that the behavior of Syrian parents, such as not visiting schools, not actively participating in parent meetings, refraining from expressing their opinions during the education process, and maintaining a distance from teacher and school matters, transformed from being primarily influenced by political factors to becoming a cultural aspect. They indicated that this cultural behavior was carried with them to Turkey.

Since some of teachers in Syria belonged to Syrian regime, no one dared to talk to them. If they wanted to teach, they would teach, if they didn't, they would not, these teachers were a red line. For example, we had an Alawi teacher from city of Cable who was a member of Assad regime and taught nationalism. I was in high school and one day this teacher got angry with a student and I was class prefect and he asked me to go to principal and drag him into classroom right away. After experiencing these and similar situations, I do not interfere in work of teacher and school administration no matter what, I do not express my opinion (B6).

According to Syrian parents, difference in political and intellectual belief (political ideology) determines framework of their relations with social groups such as teachers, schools and Turkish society in general, and also affects their children's participation in educational process.

It is like attending social events in Turkey. I have a female colleague at work for political or ideological reasons. When it is Victory Day or Republic Day in Turkey, she prefers not to attend celebration at school because of way it is celebrated and does not send child to school on those days (B6).

Religion factor

One of participants reported that one of factors affecting participation of Syrian parents in education is religion. She/he stated that there are differences in religious perspective, understanding of religion, and religious belief.

Syrian religious believers see certain things as heresy. For example, Turks call every blessed night a candle and celebrate it in a way that some Syrians cannot understand. This difference in understanding and practice of religion, which we think is a small difference, sometimes affects several issues (B6).

Factors Facilitating Syrian Parents' Participation in Education Process

Categories and subcategories that emerged as a result of analysis of interviews conducted to reveal factors that facilitate participation of Syrian parents in education process are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Factors facilitating Syrian parents' participation in education process

Theme	Category	Sub category
Factors facilitating participation of Syrian parents in education process	Language factor	Parents' language proficiency
		Teacher's English proficiency
		Providing language support to parents
	Communication factor	Continuous and effective communication between parents and teachers
		Teacher interaction with parents
	Attitude of teachers and school administration	Positive attitude of teacher
		Positive attitude of school administration
		Positive relationship between teacher and parents
	Reinforcing parents' interaction	Informing parents about school activities and ensuring their participation
		Increasing number and variety of school activities

Language factor

Syrian parents stated that one of most important factors facilitating their participation in education is language factor. Parents stated that language proficiency helps their children to participate in education process at school and at home, such as teacher's English proficiency, providing language support to Syrian parents, having a daily interpreter at school, and having a Syrian mother who is fluent in language in WhatsApp classroom group. Syrian parents stated that having a good command of Turkish not only helped them participate in education process, but also helped them adapt to Turkish society.

One of factors facilitating participation is Turkish language proficiency (B2).

Having an interpreter at school is very helpful for Syrian parents' participation in education (A13).

Communication factor

Participants stated that communication factor is one of important factors that facilitates participation of Syrian parents in education. The participants stated that they benefit from continuous and effective communication between parents and teachers, interaction between parents and teachers, teacher's sharing of child's homework and everything happens in classroom with WhatsApp class group.

The teacher is open to communication. Every time my daughter finishes reading a story, I take her picture and send it to teacher on WhatsApp and she immediately responds with word bravo and sends an emoji, which makes my daughter very happy (A11).

We get correct information from class in WhatsApp group. That way I know everything that happens in classroom, it's a positive thing (B3).

Attitude of teachers and school administration

The participants stated that attitudes of teachers and school administrators have a significant impact on participation of Syrian parents in education. They stated that positive attitudes of teachers and school management towards themselves and their children, and good welcome by school administration, increased their willingness to visit school and participate more in school activities.

I am on good terms with school principal... our principal was very respectful to me (A9).

My son's teacher does not discriminate (B11).

According to parents, a positive relationship based on mutual respect between teachers and parents facilitates their children's participation in educational process and increases their cooperation with teachers and schools.

My son's teacher treats us kindly and respectfully, not racist, we have a good relationship and are in constant communication (B2).

Our relationship with teacher is very good and based on mutual respect (B10).

Reinforcing parents' interaction

Participants stated that increasing parent interaction facilitates participation of Syrian parents in education. Participants stated that being informed about and included in school activities, increasing number of school activities and diversifying them in line with their experience and proficiency in Turkish helped to increase their participation in education process.

If there are activities at my son's school, I would like to participate because this is my field of study and I feel close to children (A2).

I hope to do nice activities at school. My daughter's kindergarten teacher would do a very sweet activity every week, throw a little party for each child and call her mother... my wife likes to attend such events (B2).

Factors Preventing Syrian Parents' Participation in Education Process

According to results obtained from research, factors that prevent Syrian parents from participating in education process were analyzed by dividing them into eight categories. The categories and subcategories that emerged as a result of analysis of interviews conducted to determine factors that prevent Syrian parents from participating in education process are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Factors Preventing Syrian Parents' Participation in Education Process

Theme	Category	Sub category
Factors preventing	Language factor	Turkish language deficiency
		No language support for Syrian parents

Economic factors and working conditions	Poor economic situation of family
	Long working hours
	Difficult working conditions
	Work pressure and time constraint
Education factor	Low education level of parents
Family factor and weakness of family networks	The family has no one to leave their little children
Lack of knowledge about Turkish education system	Lack of information about curriculum
	Lack of knowledge about system in schools
	Lack of knowledge of Turkish education system
Negative attitude of teachers and school administration	The teacher's refusal to accept and cooperate with parents of Syrians
	Syrian parents are not welcome at school
	Families exposed to racism at school
	Not respecting and disregarding opinions of Syrian parents
	Insufficient relationship between parents and school management

Language factor

The participants once again brought up language problem and stated that most important factor preventing their participation in education was language factor, such as parents' lack of knowledge of Turkish, absence of any language support at school for Syrian parents, and absence of an interpreter at school.

Our main problem is language, if we spoke Turkish, all our problems would be solved (B8).

There are about 25-30 students in class and almost half of them are Syrian students. For these families, teacher does not bring an interpreter to parents' meeting. There is no interpreter in school. If I want to visit school or talk to principal, I cannot find an interpreter at school (A6).

Economic factors and working conditions

Syrian parents stated that they are busy with meeting necessities of life and stated that poor financial situation of family, problems related to work pressure and time constraints, and long working hours and conditions are important obstacles to their participation in education process.

I work 12 hours and sometimes more, some days I sleep in workshop (B7).

Syrian parents are consumed at work (A12).

Education factor

The participants stated that low educational level of parents and their illiteracy affect academic support of children and prevent family from participating in education process.

Of course, level of education affects. We Syrians have different education levels, some of them at minimum level of education, some of them dropped out of school during war, got married and had children. Maybe because 11-year war affected us very negatively, number of people with low education level and uneducated increased among Syrians (A6).

Family factor and weakness of family networks

According to participants, for many Syrian parents with young children at home, childcare is a factor that hinders their participation in education. Syrian parents stated that it is very difficult to go to school because they have small children at home, and that they do not have relatives to take care of their children in city where they live, which worries some parents.

We have no brothers, fathers, uncles or grandfathers to leave children here. We have no one here, we cannot entrust our children to anyone and leave (A6).

Most of time, I cannot attend parent meetings and celebrations at school because I have a physically disabled daughter (A12).

Lack of knowledge about Turkish education system

The participants stated that some of Syrian parents' being unfamiliar with curriculum and Turkish education system and their lack of knowledge about rules and system followed in Turkish schools are among obstacles that affect their participation in education process.

Turkish curriculum is new to Syrians and they do not know much about rules and system followed in Turkish schools. For example, there are many Syrian parents who do not even know today that Turkish education system does not apply failing system for primary school students (B6).

Not knowing laws in Turkish education system is also an obstacle (B8).

Negative attitude of teachers and school administration

The participants stated that negative attitude of teacher and school administration towards Syrian parents is one of factors that prevent them from participating in education process. Syrian parents stated that they were exposed to racism by principals and some teachers at school, and that some principals and teachers were rude and disrespectful towards them.

My son's school has a very racist and rude male teacher. He looks at my husband with a strange contempt and racist look even though he doesn't know him (A10).

Participant Syrian parents stated that they often felt unwelcome by some school administrators and teachers.

I have not seen any attempts to involve Syrian parents in school, they do not even invite them to events and meetings, and there is no interest in Syrian parents from school (A5).

During summer, my husband went to school to enroll our son and he felt that he was not welcome at school (A13).

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research focused on identifying factors influencing the participation of Syrian refugee parents in their children's education. Several key findings emerged from the study. Firstly, the lack of proficiency in the Turkish language emerged as one of the most significant factors hindering parental participation. Syrian parents expressed reluctance to visit schools and communicate with teachers due to their limited Turkish language skills. Similar studies have highlighted that immigrant families often hesitate to engage with teachers when they are unfamiliar with the official language of the host country (Peña 2000; Zhong & Zhou 2011). Furthermore, existing literature consistently emphasizes language proficiency as a primary

challenge for refugees (Peña 2000; Zhong & Zhou 2011; Rahman & Azim 2015; Histeria & Angelides 2016; Antony-Newman 2018; Zengin & Ataş-Akdemir 2020). Syrian parents noted that their children had surpassed them in Turkish language acquisition and relied on them as translators for communication with teachers, schools, and the broader Turkish society. However, this language gap presented a hindrance when it came to assisting their children with homework and reinforcing what they learned at school. McBrain (2005) noted that refugee parents who struggle to learn the language of the host country may provide less homework support compared to their children. In addition to impacting academic involvement, parents' limited language skills often resulted in a "role shift," where parental responsibilities were transferred to the child. This shift frequently led to the eldest child assuming the role of family spokesperson, acting as a surrogate parent for younger siblings at school. Importantly, this change in roles often led to a reduction in parental authority and intergenerational conflicts (Zhou 2001).

Syrian parents identified the socio-economic conditions of their families as a significant factor impacting their children's educational participation. Specifically, they highlighted that low socio-economic status was one of the barriers to family involvement in education. Previous studies have also indicated that parents from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are often hesitant to engage in the educational process and collaborate with teachers (Zhong & Zhou 2011; Hajisoteriou & Angelides 2016).

The research findings revealed that the low level of education among Syrian parents contributes to their limited ability to navigate their children's education and provide assistance. These parents often lack awareness about educational matters and are unaware of their roles as parents. In contrast, it was observed that Syrian parents with higher levels of education tend to be more supportive of their children's learning and success. They guide their children, address their academic queries, and reinforce their learning by explaining abstract concepts and relating school information to daily life. Studies on refugee family involvement have consistently reported that parents' educational backgrounds influence their engagement in their children's education (Peña 2000; Tadesse 2014; Rahman & Azim 2015; Hajisoteriou & Angelides 2016).

Syrian parents participating in the study highlighted political and ideological factors as influential in their engagement in the education process. They expressed that, based on their experiences in Syria, they had a fear of individuals in positions of power and influence. Syrian parents perceived teachers and school administrators as government officials, and they were afraid that their opinions would not be valued or taken into consideration. Consequently, they avoided communication with school personnel, attending parent meetings, and visiting the school. Over time, this avoidance behavior transformed from an individual fear into a political and cultural factor. These parents brought this culture with them to Turkey as well. According to the participants, the differences in political and intellectual beliefs (political ideology) determined the framework of their interactions with social groups such as teachers, schools, and Turkish society at large. These differences also had an impact on their children's participation in the educational process. Another study conducted by Potocky & Naseh (2019) similarly concluded that many parents refrain from visiting schools due to fear of authorities.

Participants in the study highlighted that cultural differences between Syrian families and the school environment affect family participation. They noted that some Syrian families do not have a cultural tradition of actively participating in school activities, and their involvement is primarily limited to providing support to their children from home. These cultural differences, particularly in terms of the roles of teachers and parents, influence the relationship between the home and the school. Furthermore, some Syrian parents expressed their respect for the role of the teacher and believed that it is not appropriate to interfere with

their work and responsibilities. Sohn & Wang (2006) emphasized the significant impact of cultural differences in shaping the home-school relationship, particularly regarding the roles of teachers and parents. The participants also observed that the cultural level of Syrian families is a factor affecting their participation in education. They indicated that a higher cultural level, particularly among parents, especially the mother, positively influences the academic success of students and the level of family involvement in their child's education. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Yahlef (2014), which argued that the cultural level of parents affects the educational achievement of students and the extent to which parents are involved in their children's academic and educational progress.

The study found that the religious factor played a role in influencing the participation of Syrian parents in education. Participants noted that differences in religious perspectives, understanding of religion, and religious beliefs were among the reasons affecting parental involvement in the education process. Heckmann & Goeler (2017), in their qualitative research on the empowerment of immigrant parents, also asserted that religious and cultural factors can hinder family participation in education.

Syrian parents with lower education levels tend to view family participation in education as fulfilling their child's basic needs, such as nutrition and hygiene, providing financial and moral support, and meeting school-related requirements. Similarly, a study by Miano (2011) on Mexican immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education revealed that Mexican parents often participate through effective communication with the school and providing material and moral support. In the case of Syrian parents with lower education levels, their involvement is predominantly focused on supporting their children's education at home rather than at school.

The study concluded that Syrian parents perceive family participation as beneficial for enhancing their child's academic performance, productivity, and success, as well as strengthening the family bond and fostering self-confidence in both the child and parents. Despite variations in participants' educational, social, economic, cultural, and language backgrounds, they all place significant importance on their primary school children's participation in education. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies involving refugees in Turkey. Balkar, Şahin & Babahan (2016) found that Syrian parents collaborate with schools and teachers, displaying an interest in their children's education. However, other studies have suggested that Syrian parents may not prioritize education or play an active role in their children's educational process (Zengin & Ataş-Akdemir 2020).

Participants in the study had varying perspectives on visiting their children's school. Some participants visited school regularly to inquire about their children's academic and behavioral performance, while others preferred to go only when invited by teachers. A study by Zhong & Zhou (2011) revealed a similar pattern among Chinese immigrant families, who tended to visit school only when invited by teachers. Syrian parents in the study expressed their willingness to make sacrifices for their children's academic success, and past research has shown that Syrian parents put significant effort into their children's achievements (Evason, 2016). They held high expectations for their children's success not only academically but also in the classroom and at the school level. Previous research has indicated that parental participation and expectations are important factors related to children's academic success (Seginer, 1983). When Syrian parents were asked about their perceptions of family participation in education, they primarily emphasized participation at home. Overall, most Syrian parents were satisfied with their level of involvement in their children's education, describing it as either "adequate" or in need of some improvement.

The study also identified the significant impact of teachers' and school administrators' attitudes on the participation of Syrian parents in education. Positive attitudes displayed by teachers and school management towards the parents and their children, as well as a warm reception from the school administration, increased the parents' willingness to visit the school and participate in school activities. Furthermore, Syrian parents highlighted the importance of a positive relationship built on mutual respect between teachers and parents, which facilitated their children's participation in the education process and enhanced cooperation with teachers and schools. Peña (2000) found that the attitudes of teachers and school administrators towards immigrant parents have an influence on their participation and interaction within the school setting.

The study identified several obstacles that affect the participation of Syrian parents in their children's education, one of which is the low-income level of the family. Financial inadequacies and working under difficult conditions were reported as obstacles to the participation of Syrian families in the education process. Syrian parents mentioned that the pressures and time constraints of work, long working hours, and harsh working conditions create significant barriers to their involvement in their children's education. Lack of time and language inadequacy are cited as reasons hindering interaction between parents and school in previous research (Peña, 2000; Zhong & Zhou, 2011). Financial needs and working conditions also play a significant role in determining the amount of time parents can allocate to attending school and participating in their children's education (Rah et al., 2009).

Childcare responsibilities were identified as another hindrance to the participation of Syrian parents in education, especially for those with young children at home. Syrian parents explained that it is challenging to attend school activities when they have young children and lack relatives or support to take care of them. Caring for other young children at home is also reported as a barrier to immigrant parents' participation in school in previous studies (Peña, 2000; Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016).

Unfamiliarity with the curriculum and the Turkish education system, as well as a lack of knowledge about the rules and procedures followed in Turkish schools, were mentioned as obstacles to the participation of Syrian parents. Lack of knowledge about the education system of the host country is identified as a barrier to immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education in previous research (Rahman & Azim, 2015; Antony-Newman, 2018).

Language barrier was highlighted by Syrian parents as a significant obstacle to their participation in the education process. The participants noted that communication and parent meetings in all Turkish schools are conducted only in Turkish, without any effort made by school principals and teachers to overcome the language barrier and provide accurate information to Syrian parents. The absence of language support, such as interpreters, in schools has been found to impede immigrant parents' participation in the education process and hinder their children's better adaptation to the education system (Ramirez, 2003; Sohn & Wang, 2006).

Negative attitudes and lack of welcoming behavior from school administrators and some teachers were reported by most Syrian parents, which resulted in reduced school visits and weakened communication. Syrian parents expressed feelings of being unwanted and perceived prejudice from school administrators and some teachers. They described instances of rudeness, disrespect, and racism, as well as their views being disregarded in school decisions. Similar experiences were reported by immigrant parents in previous research, where they felt that schools did not listen to or care about their views or needs as parents, thus hindering their children's involvement in education (Ramirez, 2003).

One of the main recommendations of this research is to establish a welcoming and supportive environment at school for Syrian students and their families. School administrators should take the initiative to establish early communication with Syrian parents and ensure that they feel warmly received at the school. It is suggested that supporting and welcoming Syrian students and their families should not solely rely on individual teachers but should be part of a broader "school policy" to promote inclusivity. The skills and experiences of Syrian parents should be identified, and strategies should be developed to leverage these experiences within the school community. Efforts should be made to integrate Syrian families with linguistic, social, and economic advantages, and these families can be utilized to support the school participation of other Syrian families. To encourage greater involvement from other families, it is proposed that an award ceremony could be organized to recognize and celebrate the active participation of Syrian parents in school activities.

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