

The Difficulties Faced by Children Victims of War in the Education Process: A Study from the Perspective of Preschool Teachers

Yakup Yıldırım*, Ece Arzum Güçlü**

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Abstract


This study examines the difficulties faced by preschool teachers in Antalya, Turkey, in educating war-affected Ukrainian and Russian children. Using a case study approach, interviews with nine preschool teachers highlight challenges in language acquisition, social integration, psychological resilience, family engagement, and academic progress. The findings reveal that language barriers hinder communication and learning, while war trauma complicates children's socialization and emotional well-being. Teachers' efforts, including imitation techniques and group activities, were helpful but insufficient. Family involvement was often limited due to cultural and linguistic differences. Academically, children lagged behind their peers due to inadequate support programs. The study concludes with recommendations for bilingual education, trauma-informed teacher training, family-school partnerships, and inclusive pedagogical practices. It emphasizes the need for a multi-stakeholder approach involving schools, families, and policymakers to effectively integrate war-affected children into educational systems and foster their academic, social, and psychological development.


Keywords: Children victims of war, integration, preschool education

Savaş Mağduru Çocukların Eğitim Sürecinde Karşılaştıkları Güçlükler: Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Perspektifinden Bir Araştırma

Öz

Bu çalışma, Antalya'daki okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin savaştan etkilenen Ukraynalı ve Rus çocukların eğitimlerinde karşılaştıkları zorlukları incelemektedir. Nitel araştırma desenlerinden durum çalışması yaklaşımı kullanılarak, dokuz okul öncesi öğretmeniyle yapılan görüşmeler dil edinimi, sosyal entegrasyon, psikolojik dayanıklılık, aile katılımı ve akademik ilerleme konularındaki zorlukları vurgulamaktadır. Bulgular, dil engellerinin iletişimi ve öğrenmeyi engellediğini, savaş travmasının ise çocukların sosyalleşmesini ve duygusal refahını

* Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, Antalya, Türkiye, yakupyildirim1986@gmail.com, ORCID: [0000-0001-5319-5487](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5319-5487) 

** Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bilim Dalı, Antalya, Türkiye, ecearzu22@gmail.com, ORCID: [0009-0005-1023-776X](https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1023-776X) 

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zorlaştırdığını ortaya koymaktadır. Öğretmenlerin taklit teknikleri ve grup etkinlikleri de dahil olmak üzere gösterdikleri çabalar faydalı ancak yetersiz kalabilmektedir. Kültürel ve dilsel farklılıklar nedeniyle aile katılımı genellikle sınırlı kalmıştır. Yetersiz destek programları nedeniyle çocuklar akademik olarak akranlarının gerisinde kalmıştır. Çalışma, iki dilli eğitim, travma konusunda bilgilendirilmiş öğretmen eğitimi, aile-okul ortaklıkları ve kapsayıcı pedagojik uygulamalara yönelik tavsiyelerle sonuçlanmaktadır. Savaşta etkilenen çocukların eğitim sistemlerine etkin bir şekilde entegre edilmesi ve akademik, sosyal ve psikolojik gelişimlerinin desteklenmesi için okulları, aileleri ve politika yapıcılarını içeren çok paydaşlı bir yaklaşıma duyulan ihtiyaç vurgulanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Entegrasyon, okul öncesi eğitim, karşılaşılan güçlükler, savaş mağduru çocuklar

Introduction

Migration is a challenging process for individuals who have to live away from the order they are used to. Individuals who leave their places of residence due to war, disaster or other reasons and seek refuge in a new place and try to find shelter as refugees face many difficulties. Places of migration can offer various opportunities or challenges for refugees. Migrants may consist of various age groups such as adults or minors. Especially the inclusion of young age groups reveals the importance of psychological processes (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010; Yavuz & Mızrak, 2016). In addition, interruption of housing, health and education, and distancing from teachers and friends are seen as a result of migration (Pigozzi, 1999). It is known that millions of people have been migrating to Turkey for many years. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become an important field of activity by stepping in when Turkey receives intensive migration for various reasons, when migration-related problems increase and when public facilities cannot be systematized according to migration problems (Türk, 2016). The fields such as shelter, nutrition, health and social cohesion can be given as examples of the fields of activity of these organizations, while the education of migrant children has come to the fore. Migration causes children to experience various problems, primarily with the problem of education. The importance of education for the integration of the individual into social life is an undeniable fact (Seçgin, 2019). It also has personal and social benefits. Education is the fundamental right of every individual and is guaranteed by international agreements. According to these agreements, every child has the right to access education no matter what. States are responsible for fulfilling their duties to ensure that individuals have access to this right (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2007). In this context, states should do their part for individuals seeking asylum in their countries. The search for identity, adaptation to the culture and society of the host country, difficulties in housing, prejudice or discrimination in society are among the problems experienced by immigrants (Ünlü, Kızılhan & Elçiyar, 2018). The most important issue for migrant children is education and the first problem they face in education is communication-based. This situation was also included in the OECD research, and it was determined that there are many obstacles. In order to solve

language and adaptation problems, language remedial courses were provided and importance was given to interact with local students (OECD Education and Skills Today 2022). According to Field et al. (2007), migrant children are among those most in need of quality education. One of the most common problems in the education of migrant children is communication problems. Along with language problems, there are also teachers' lack of knowledge and inadequacies in teaching materials (Erdoğan, 2014; Seydi, 2014; Kirişçi, 2014; Yılmaz, 2015; Emin, 2016; Komşuoğlu, Özer, & Ateşok, 2016; Levent & Çayak, 2017; Uğurlu, 2018).

The second most prominent problem of migrant children is incompatibility with the environment. Disharmony is solved by going to school (Çakırer-Özservet, 2015). In the study conducted by Çalhan and Kolukırık (2020), although it was seen that children's school attendance, peer groups and teachers have an effect on increasing their psychological resilience, it is not enough. There are various problems due to the difference between children's mother tongue and the language used in education. Therefore, there may be difficulties in communicating with teachers and friends at school. Reluctance to participate in class activities and difficulties in adapting to school and the environment are related to communication. Low academic achievement, prejudice against the individual in the school environment, exclusion and absenteeism can be among the problems experienced by immigrant children. There are many studies on migrant children. There are various studies on examining the educational status of immigrant children, examining their various problems and solution suggestions, children's education and adaptation. In the world of migration and education research, there are studies focusing on the educational problems caused by migration, especially in the United States and Europe. According to Hartman, the problem of adaptation of students coming to Europe with immigration to the education system of the host country includes problems such as belonging and academic success (Hartman, 2009). In America, the educational problems of different nationalities as a result of immigration have been focused on, and necessary research has been found for the disadvantaged group due to the problems of adaptation and exclusion experienced by blacks in a country dominated by the white race (Chikkatur, 2009; Cazares, 2009; Crespo Sancho 2009). In Europe, there are studies on individuals who have migrated from different nationalities. For example, the integration of refugee children aged 1-5 and their families living in Sweden has been examined (Lunneblad, 2017). When the handling of the phenomenon of migration in Turkey is examined, it is seen that the subject has been neglected. Migration studies in Turkey are low in both number and diversity (Ekici, 2015). It can be said that studies on migrant children in Turkey mostly focus on the adaptation of children under temporary protection status to the education system (Bozkurt Polat et al., 2021) and language skills (İşigüzel & Baldık, 2019; Temiz, 2020; Turan & Fansa, 2021). With the unexpected and sudden influx of migrants, Turkey has been negatively affected by the migration situation in many areas of social life. Although measures have been taken in a short time regarding the education of migrant children and certain practices have been realized

successfully, deficiencies and inadequacies continue. The most prominent problem is that the schooling rate of migrant children has not reached the desired level. According to a 2017 study by Taştan and Çelik, the reason for the lack of schooling is explained by general problems. These problems are listed as language problem, economic problem, cultural reason, adaptation problem, uncertainty, transportation, reluctance of teachers and Turkish parents, inadequacy of physical facilities (Aksoy, 2020).

Education of Migrant Children in Turkey and Suggestions for Solutions

Migrant children should not be expected to achieve the same academic success as their peers. Second language learning should be supported according to the profile of the migrant population, and the attitude of teachers responsible for the education of migrant children should be one of finding solutions rather than exclusion. Especially in the preschool period, mother tongue education should be supported. Opportunities should be provided for migrant children to learn their mother tongue and Turkish. In this direction, starting from kindergartens, bilingual educators can be provided. The adaptation of migrant children to society by providing them with various supports is an issue that should be given importance. With these conditions, various adaptations can be made in teaching programs and methods for migrant students, and a supportive learning environment should be created to continue these components. In addition to formal education practices, the successful integration of refugee students requires an ecosystem that is sensitive to cultural differences, where the educational situation of students is taken into consideration, where administrators and teachers are in cooperation, and where teachers' knowledge is developed. Seminars should be organized to train educators with immigration knowledge. It is important to take steps and provide various activities to address the ill-equipped teacher profile. Numerous activities have been carried out in this regard, reflecting public and private educational activities by providing adaptation seminars for staff who will teach a disadvantaged group such as migrant children. Although inclusive education conducted by MoNE does not include all components, it can be said that it aims to change the attitudes of teachers and administrators and to create a positive school climate where multiculturalism is ensured. The realization of these goals is related to the teacher's attitudes.

Dimensions of the Education Program

Peer communication is effective for the adaptation of migrant children. Their acceptance and social support by their peers facilitate their adaptation to the host culture (Paat, 2013). Actively communicating with native children during activities can improve the quality of early childhood education by enhancing their adaptation. Research on the willingness of migrant children to communicate with native children indicates that this willingness is necessary. (Neitzel, Drennan, & Fouts, 2019). The family is an important part of early childhood education. It is of great importance for ensuring the permanence of what is learned and reinforcing it at home (Reynolds & Shlafer, 2007). Collaboration is critical for migrant children and migrant families to achieve many gains (For example; adaptation, peer communication, social adaptation,

school adaptation) (Jung & Zhang, 2016; Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013). In this way, collaboration can have an impact on children's adaptation and their development in the educational process. The learning environment is related to the activities during the day and the way they are implemented. Activity plans and practices can facilitate the adaptation of migrant children. It is important to provide activities that reflect cultural characteristics and their message of acceptance. Activities prepared in this way can create a positive classroom atmosphere (Li, 2023).

Research Problem

This study aims to examine the challenges faced by preschool teachers working in preschool education institutions in Antalya with Ukrainian and Russian children who are war victims, as well as their suggested solutions to these challenges.

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What challenges are encountered in overcoming the language barrier of these students and in classroom activities?
2. What challenges are encountered in the socialization and integration processes of these students with other children?
3. How are they helped to cope with war trauma or psychological difficulties and what challenges are faced in this regard?
4. What challenges are faced when cooperating with their families? How are families involved in the education process?
5. What differences are observed in the academic achievement of these students compared to other students?
6. Are there any special classrooms or school-wide support or programs for these students? If so, what kind of deficiencies or difficulties are experienced in these programs?

Methods

In this part of the study, information about the research model, study group, data collection tools, data collection process and ethical principles, the role of the researchers, and validity and reliability are given.

Research Model

The study focuses on the difficulties experienced in the educational process of Russian and Ukrainian students in early childhood who are victims of war. It was designed as a case study in order to reveal the views of teachers who support children in the educational process in educational, social and various fields. Case study is based on how and why questions. It is a research method that allows the researcher to examine

an event in depth by staying out of the researcher's control (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). It was preferred because case study is an effective guide (Merriam, 1998) in understanding and exploring the phenomena or events that are intended to be examined holistically and in depth.

Study Group

The study group of this research consists of nine preschool teachers aged between 22-46 working in preschool education institutions in Antalya province. Teachers working in Konyaaltı, Döşemealtı and Muratpaşa districts of Antalya province were reached through schools. After explaining the purpose and scope of the study to the teachers, teachers who could participate in the study were selected as participants. Written consent was obtained from the participants and they were informed about the research processes. Demographic characteristics about the study group is given in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Teacher	Gender	Age	Professional Seniority	Number of Children
T1	female	27	6 year	19
T2	female	38	17 year	14
T3	female	24	3 year	13
T4	female	46	16 year	12
T5	female	29	10 year	17
T6	female	24	4 year	12
T7	female	34	14 year	14
T8	female	22	2 year	13
T9	female	32	12 year	15

Data Collection Tools

The research data were collected with a "demographic information form" and a "semi-structured interview form" developed by the researchers. Demographic information of the teachers was collected with the information form. The questions in the semi-structured interview form were sent to experienced researchers independent from the research team and expert opinions were obtained. In line with these suggestions, the interview form was finalized, and the participants were interviewed. The interview phase started with the final form consisting of 6 questions in total. The questions in the final form are as follows:

1. What difficulties are encountered by these students in overcoming language barriers and in classroom activities?

2. What difficulties are encountered in the socialization and integration processes of these students with other children?
3. How are they helped to cope with war trauma or psychological difficulties and what challenges are faced in this regard?
4. What challenges are faced when cooperating with their families? How are families involved in the education process?
5. What differences are observed in the academic achievement of these students compared to other students?
6. Are there any special classrooms or school-wide support or programs for these students? If so, what kind of deficiencies or difficulties are experienced in these programs?

Data Collection Process and Ethical Principles

Permission and appointment were obtained from the participants before the interviews. The participants were informed about the scope and purpose of the study, the receipt of the ethics committee document, the content of the interview and confidentiality. After the necessary information was given, information about demographic characteristics was obtained. Before starting the interview, the participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time. The participants' real names were not used. Participants were coded with code names such as T1, T2, T3. The participants were informed that the data obtained, such as demographic information and voice recordings, would only be used by the researchers. Five participants in the interview reported that they were available for face-to-face interviews. However, due to the intensity of 4 participants, the interview was conducted over the phone. The 5 participants were interviewed in the schools where they worked. The interview with each participant lasted 45 minutes on average.

Data Analysis

The data obtained through semi-structured interview forms were recorded for analysis with the permission of the study group. After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed. Descriptive analysis technique was used based on the stages of "creating a thematic framework for analysis, processing data according to the thematic framework, defining the findings, analyzing and interpreting the findings" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The themes that emerged after the descriptive analysis were identified as language barrier, socialization and integration process, psychological difficulties, family involvement, special support and program. In the presentation of the findings, the teachers who participated in the research are given with code names (T1, T2, T3...).

Role of the Researchers

Both researchers are actively working in the field with disadvantaged students and early childhood learners. They reached the participants through other teachers and friends working in the field. It was decided that the author would conduct the interviews without getting to know the participants. At the same time, the researcher stated that the real information of the participants would not be used, code names would be given and a sample of the research would be given upon request.

Validity and Reliability

In order to increase the validity of the research, the research questions were first sent for expert opinion. The research questions were sent to three experts who were independent from the research and experienced in qualitative research, preschool education and migration, and the questions were revised in line with the opinions of the experts. In addition, in order to increase the validity of the research, the peer-reading method was used and an expert in the field of qualitative research and preschool education, who was not involved in the process carried out in the research in any way, was consulted. The aim here is to get a different perspective by seeing what kind of impact the research will have on people outside the research (Cresswell, 2014). The research questions were prepared by reviewing the relevant literature on the subject. In order to ensure the reliability of the research, (a) transcription reliability and (b) coding reliability were taken. A 25% portion of the transcribed data of the study was transcribed and compared by an expert experienced in qualitative research. In addition, the author team of the study all data of the study were re-coded by another expert who did not take the data and coding reliability was obtained. As a result of the reliability analysis, coding reliability was found to be 92%. Codes that were not agreed upon were not included in the study.

Findings

In this section, research findings are presented with themes. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the research, the following themes were formed: "Language barrier, Socialization and integration process, Psychological challenges, Family engagement, Academic assessment, Special support and program

Theme 1: Language Barrier

Within the framework of the questions asked to the teachers, it was observed that the language barrier was a problem for the majority of the children, mostly Russian and Ukrainian immigrants. The students' lack of Turkish language skills resulted in teachers and students not being able to communicate effectively. Some teachers used an intermediary such as a bilingual student or a translator to communicate.

T1: "Students communicated more with their friends with whom they were close and could speak the same language. When I couldn't explain, when I couldn't

communicate with the child, I usually called his/her other friend. For example, when I wanted to call Ari, I would ask his/her friend "can you help him/her, can you tell him/her?" and get support from another student."

T9: "We have such difficulties in in-class activities; since they do not speak the language, we somehow have problems in understanding. At such times, we use translation or demonstration approaches."

Many teachers reported that children were unable to communicate with their peers in the classroom. It was stated that children had great anxiety about separating from their mothers. It is among the findings that the mother is mostly foreign and the father is Turkish, and that children have difficulties because they grow up with their mother.

T2: "The child had great separation anxiety when separating from the mother. At the same time, he could not overcome the orientation period. Because he absolutely did not understand Turkish at all. The father was Turkish, the grandmother was Turkish, but the mother was stubbornly not in favor of the child speaking Turkish. The child could not adapt either." T3: "Our students who come to us generally have some difficulties in Turkish because their mothers are foreign nationals and they grew up with their mothers when they first arrived."

In some cases, it was observed that the language barrier caused reluctance to participate in the activities. However, it was noted during the interviews that techniques such as imitation and modeling were seen during activities and communication even if the language was not known.

T4: "Of course they don't understand what we are talking about, so sometimes they may not understand what they can do or what we want to say. So we try to explain this by showing them with gestures. I notice that they concentrate on your lips or they concentrate on our little ones. They start imitating what their other friends are doing." T5: "Since they came here knowing very little Turkish, they sometimes had difficulty in understanding their friends and us. Therefore, they were not very eager to participate in games or activities. Honestly, we sometimes had difficulties in this situation." T7: "We usually try to communicate with gestures and facial expressions. When we do the activities, we first show them ourselves and then ask them to do it."

Theme 2: Socialization and Integration Process

The socialization process negatively affected students' communication due to the language barrier. It was stated that foreign students had difficulties in communicating at the beginning but became more comfortable as they learned Turkish.

T1: "These students had the following problem, as I said before, they were trying to make friends who knew their language, which is related to their language, and after coming from the war, they did not easily make a friend in the class, they always stayed attached to one person. That student chose his friend who spoke the same language

as his closest friend and wanted to communicate with him all the time. He could not communicate with his other friends because of the language barrier. After he started to learn Turkish with others, he started to communicate more easily and became more relaxed, but Ari was always with the same friend."

T6: "I have a lot of difficulty in socialization and integration processes when they are afraid of louder voices and fear of losing what they have."

T9: "To be honest, the integration process is challenging at first, but as their friends get used to it and foreign children gradually adapt to Turkish words, this problem is overcome. So there is no problem."

However, it was found that if the socialization process is challenging for children, the process of acclimatization and adaptation to school takes longer.

T2: "For example, my biggest problem with my student was that she was constantly crying and shutting herself down, and we could never break her shutting down. I mean, she was very overly reactive. No matter what I presented in front of him, he absolutely did not want to communicate with me. I asked him if he was like this at home, if there was something like autism. His grandmother said there was nothing like that, he was very communicative at home, and he reacted to school. The orientation period lasted a long time."

T5: "Children sometimes had difficulty including foreign children in their games or activities because they did not understand them very well. Because they didn't understand their language very much and the foreign children didn't want to include them in their games because they didn't understand them and couldn't get along with them. In this case, sometimes there were difficulties. This prolonged the process of the child getting used to school, the adaptation process for us".

Theme 3: Psychological Challenges

Within the framework of the questions asked to the teachers, it was observed that some Russian and Ukrainian migrant children had experienced war trauma, but some of them did not want to be told by the teachers due to their private life.

T3: "I do not have any information about the special circumstances of the family regarding war trauma. That is why I cannot answer."

According to the information received, most of the foreign children became withdrawn due to their inability to understand and adapt to the people around them. In order to overcome this difficulty, some teachers tried to divert their attention with activities and involve them in group activities. Teachers and psychological counselors were reported to be helpful in dealing with psychological difficulties.

T1: "Generally, I was not with Ari when the war trauma was first experienced. When I arrived in the first year, other teachers and psychological counselors always

helped him after a certain process. Our teachers tried to create a place for that student where he would be happier, have fun, and feel belonging through friendship games and group work. In his second year, he was more relaxed. He adapted to everything more easily. He didn't want to talk much about those days, of course, but he could communicate easily with everyone."

T9: "This is a concept that varies from child to child. Some children overcome this trauma very difficult. They have approaches such as not talking, staying away from their friends, not trusting anyone. However, in some children, since they are in an effort to take refuge and trust someone, we usually have an approach such as talking or integrating him with a friend, distributing his interest in different directions, progressing by attracting his interest in different directions or different branches, and dealing with him one-on-one."

Theme 4: Family Engagement

It was noted that there were again problems with the language barrier when collaborating with the family. It was also mentioned that the mothers of some foreign children were not involved in the cooperation. However, on the contrary, it was also mentioned that the family was willing and open to cooperation and even more interested than Turkish families.

T2: "I called the father and the grandmother. We were mostly in contact with the grandmother. We were not in contact with the mother. Probably the mother wanted the child to go to a Russian school. He could not adapt here either. That's why his mother didn't come to school and communicate with us."

T3: "In terms of communication with families, what we experience is usually related to our foreign parents. We sometimes have problems with teacher and parent communication, but our fathers are usually Turkish. Since they are usually Turkish, we have to communicate with them more and then we have to communicate with the mother through her. We have a lot of difficulties with things like that."

According to the views analyzed from the teacher's perspective below, cooperation with the family was tried to be provided in a positive way.

T1: "Families are more open to education. They can accept whatever you say more quickly. They try to help you by saying, "OK, let's do what you want, let's behave the way you want, is there a problem in this regard, OK, we will support you in that regard."

T4: "The families I have met so far have always tried to do their best. Since they don't understand our language, I observed that they always received support from parents with whom we speak a common language and who also speak Turkish. They participated in every activity, I can even say that they participated more willingly than our Turkish parents."

T6: *"When we cooperate with the family, our difficulties are of course communication. When we have difficulties, my work becomes easier when you use more translation methods. As for their participation in the process, the parents of the children also want to participate in the activities very enthusiastically. We try to involve them as much as we can."*

Theme 5: Academic Assessment

Academically, the language barrier is a major problem. It was found that the language barrier caused the child to fall behind his/her classmates. It was stated that self-care and other skills were in place, but there were problems in activities related to language skills.

T2: *"Academically, he was eating his own food and going to the toilet. His self-care skills were good. However, he did not want to participate in classroom activities, communication and games".*

T3: *"They may be a little behind compared to other students. Later on, we realize that they close this gap by making more effort. This situation actually encourages them to work a little harder."*

T5: *"Because they do not speak Turkish, they sometimes lag behind in learning compared to other children. This situation forced them to make more effort. We observe such differences, and we were already helping them to get closer to other children by supporting them."*

T7: *"As for their academic achievement, students who are victims of war are generally passive and frightened by these events. After receiving psychological support, I think these students are more successful than other students because I have encountered families who are more disciplined and try to help them more psychologically. That's why I think they are more successful."*

Theme 6: Special Support and Program

It was mentioned that adaptation activities were carried out for children within the framework of special support or programs. Some children were assigned a psychological counselor and Guidance and Research Center (RAM) and the program was organized. However, there were also cases where the program could not be prepared due to lack of cooperation with the family.

T2: *"There is something like this in its implementation. A Ram program should be prepared together with the guidance service, the teacher and a person from Ram. He also goes to a special education department. There is something like this, his mother should have come to school for the preparation of the Ram program. Because we had to make progress together. We did not have clear information about the child. When we did not have clear information, we could not give the Ram report unilaterally"*

because we could not observe the child clearly. Maybe the child's only problem was orientation. That's why we were limited in the family."

T3: "We do not apply a special, privileged program here, but we can organize our activities in the classroom accordingly. Children do not have much difficulty in adapting to this process. We organize the activities in the classroom ourselves."

T7: "In the early days, our biggest challenge was language because we were unable to support because we could not communicate. Even if we tried to communicate through translation or eye contact and gestures, we were insufficient. With our teachers and psychologists, the process became faster and more effective."

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study reveal that problems related to language, social cohesion, psychological resilience and family involvement in the educational integration process of migrant children are widespread and varied in educational settings. The study emphasized that language barrier is one of the main barriers to both social and academic success of migrant children. The literature points out that language barriers not only negatively affect children's learning opportunities but also their social communication in the classroom (OECD Education and Skills Today, 2022; Erdoğan, 2014). Although pedagogical approaches such as imitation, gesture and mimicry techniques or other student support were used to overcome children's language barriers, it was concluded that these strategies alone were not sufficient (Samuelsson, 2020). This is in line with the research conducted by Nar (2008); immigrant students may be exposed to discrimination and exclusion due to their existing language problems.

In the context of socialization and integration processes, especially the lack of Turkish language proficiency and the traumas experienced due to the war make it difficult for children to interact with their peer groups, which prolongs their adaptation process. Although one-to-one support and group activities have been focused on overcoming children's psychological difficulties, it has been observed that teachers need more guidance and specialized training support in this regard (Perryman et al, 2025). Similar to Çalhan and Kolukırık's (2020) study, this shows that school attendance and strengthening social ties are effective methods to increase children's psychological resilience, but not sufficient.

According to the research findings, family involvement, despite its potential to support migrant children's education, remains limited due to language barriers and cultural differences. Emphasizing the positive effects of family support on the permanence of the child's education, Jung and Zhang (2016) reveal the critical importance of this support. However, it was also emphasized in this study that communication problems arising from the families' lack of Turkish proficiency disrupted the educational processes (Samuelsson, 2020).

In evaluations of children's academic achievement, it was determined that language barriers as well as adaptation processes directly affect academic performance. It has been observed that immigrant children who cannot participate in activities sufficiently due to language barriers may fall behind especially academically (Li, 2023). This situation was similarly addressed by Hartman (2009) and Emin (2016), and it was stated that these children were included in disadvantaged groups as a result of the inadequacy of educational processes with migration.

Research findings indicate that within the scope of special support programs, different psychological and pedagogical support for children is either not provided or that existing practices may be insufficient. Similar studies in the literature emphasize the importance of equipping teachers and guidance units involved in this process with bilingual competence and intercultural pedagogical skills (Paat, 2013; Levent & Çayak, 2017; Samuelsson, 2020). In this context, the lack of programs based on an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach and focusing on children's individual abilities and needs is noteworthy.

As a result, this study provide a unique perspective on the challenges faced by Ukrainian and Russian migrant children who are victims of war in their educational processes and highlights the need for effective educational approaches that address both language barriers and support mechanisms for children's psychological issues stemming from their traumatic past. It is important that relevant stakeholders (schools, families, public institutions and NGOs) work in collaboration. The development of a multifaceted educational ecosystem for the integration of children, initiated at an early stage, will guide future studies and policy reforms.

Recommendations

The recommendations developed based on the research findings are presented below.

Comprehensive Language Support Programs

To overcome the significant language barrier observed in the integration of war-affected children, bilingual education programs should be developed and implemented. These programs should include intensive language courses in both the host country's language and the children's native languages. Additionally, the employment of bilingual educators would facilitate effective communication and enhance both academic and social integration.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers should receive specialized training to equip them with the skills necessary to address the psychological, social, and educational needs of war-affected children. This training should include trauma-informed teaching methods, strategies for overcoming language barriers, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Continuous

professional development programs will ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to create inclusive classroom environments.

Development of Trauma-Sensitive Support Mechanisms

Considering the negative effects of war trauma on children's psychological well-being, schools should make greater use of professional psychological counseling services. Establishing partnerships with psychological counselors and therapists will enable schools to provide necessary interventions for students dealing with trauma, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

Family Engagement Strategies

Family involvement should be prioritized by reducing language and cultural barriers between families and educational institutions. This can be achieved through the translation of school communications into families' native languages, organizing cultural exchange programs, and offering Turkish language learning opportunities for parents. Building stronger family-school partnerships will contribute positively to the educational outcomes and well-being of war-affected children.

Inclusive Peer Interaction Activities

Programs and activities designed to foster peer interactions between migrant children and their native peers should be introduced. These programs should focus on collaborative activities that encourage teamwork, mutual understanding, and the building of social connections. Such inclusive practices will help in reducing isolation and ensuring that all students feel equally valued in the classroom environment.

Individualized Learning Programs

To meet the varying needs of war-affected children, individualized learning plans (ILPs) should be prepared in consultation with teachers, guidance counselors, and families. These plans should address academic gaps, cultural differences, and students' emotional and psychological needs, thus creating a more personalized and effective learning environment.

Policy and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Governments should adopt inclusive policies that prioritize the education and integration of war-affected children. Collaboration among schools, NGOs, governmental agencies, and community organizations is essential to provide holistic support for children and their families. These partnerships can lead to the creation of specialized programs, resource sharing, and innovative solutions to educational challenges.

Research and Monitoring

Regular assessments and longitudinal studies should be conducted to monitor the progress of war-affected children in terms of academic performance, social adaptation, and psychological resilience. Findings from such research can inform future policy-making and improve the implementation of tailored interventions.

Enhanced Classroom Resources and Infrastructure

Additional classroom materials, such as visual aids, digital learning tools, and culturally inclusive teaching resources, should be provided to help children with limited language skills better understand lessons and activities. Creating physical spaces within schools for one-on-one support or small group activities can also aid these students in their learning journey.

Inclusion of Cultural Sensitivity in Curriculum Design

Curricula should integrate components that celebrate cultural diversity and foster empathy among students. Activities promoting awareness and understanding of different cultures can create a more inclusive school environment and help native students better relate to their migrant peers.

Implementing these recommendations will contribute to the educational, social, and psychological well-being of war-affected children and enable their successful integration into the host society.

Statements of Publication Ethics

The studies involving humans were approved by Akdeniz University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board's decision dated 19.12.2024 and numbered 542. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could not be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Göç, savaş veya zorunlu nedenlerle yer değiştiren bireyler için oldukça karmaşık bir süreç olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Özellikle erken çocukluk dönemindeki bireyler, bu süreçten farklı düzeylerde etkilenmektedir. Göç, yalnızca fiziksel olarak yeni bir çevreye uyum sağlama çabası değil, aynı zamanda dil, kültürel uyum, psikolojik direnç ve eğitim gibi kritik alanlarda zorlukları beraberinde getirmektedir (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010; Yavuz & Mızrak, 2016). Türkiye, uzun yıllardır farklı uluslardan göç alan bir ülke olarak savaş mağduru çocukların eğitiminde çeşitli sorunlarla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Özellikle Ukraynalı ve Rus savaş mağduru çocukların Türkiye'deki eğitim süreçlerine katkı sağlanması, mevcut eğitim politikalarının etkinliği üzerinde yeni sorular ortaya koymaktadır. Eğitim, çocukların sosyal hayata entegre edilmesinde temel bir araç olarak öne çıkmaktadır (Seçgin, 2019). Ancak bu sürecin, savaş mağduru çocuklar özelinde ele alınması gerekmektedir. Çocukların eğitim hakkı uluslararası belgelerle güvence altına alınmış olmasına rağmen, göçmen çocukların entegrasyonu hâlâ çözülmesi gereken bir sorun olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir (UNICEF, 2007). Göçmen çocukların uyum sürecindeki başlıca sorunlar arasında dil engeli, sosyal kaynaşma güçlükleri ve savaş travmasının etkileri sayılabilir (Ünlü vd., 2018).

Bu çalışma, savaş mağduru Ukraynalı ve Rus çocukların Türkiye'deki okul öncesi eğitim süreçlerinde karşılaştıkları zorlukları, bu çocuklarla çalışan öğretmenlerin perspektifinden incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada, eğitim hayatları savaş, göç ve travma gibi zorlu süreçlerle kesintiye uğrayan çocukların yaşadığı sosyal, dilsel ve psikolojik uyum problemleri ile akademik uyum sorunları ele alınmıştır. Araştırmada, bu sorunların çocukların eğitimine etkisini derinlemesine anlamak ve çözüm önerileri geliştirmek amaçlanmıştır.

Durum çalışması deseni kullanılan bu araştırma, ev sahibi ülke olan Türkiye'de, Rus ve Ukraynalı göçmen çocukların eğitim süreçlerini analiz etmek amacıyla tasarlanmıştır. Çalışma grubunu, Antalya'da farklı okul öncesi kurumlarda görev yapan dokuz öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile toplanmış ve betimsel analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Araştırmada etik gereklilikler doğrultusunda katılımcılardan yazılı izin alınmış, veri toplama sürecinde mahremiyet ilkesine dikkat edilmiştir. İlgili literatür incelenerek ve uzman görüşü doğrultusunda yenilenen veri toplama araçları ile

öğretmenlerin hem pedagojik deneyimleri hem de çocukların eğitim süreçlerinde karşılaştıkları dil, sosyal uyum ve psikolojik zorluklara yönelik görüşleri analiz edilmiştir. Görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler tematik olarak kategorize edilmiştir. Araştırma bulgularının sunumunda doğrudan alıntılara yer verilirken öğretmenler kod ismi ile verilmiştir. Görüşme bulguları, dil engeli, sosyalleşme ve kaynaşma süreçleri, savaş travmasından kaynaklı psikolojik zorluklar, ailelerin eğitim süreçlerine katılımı ve akademik başarı gibi farklı kategorilerde analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırmada en dikkat çekici bulgu, dil engelinin çocukların eğitim sistemine entegrasyonunda temel bir engel oluşturduğu yönündedir. Dil eksikliğinin, çocukların sınıf arkadaşlarıyla iletişim kurmasını zorlaştırdığı ve bu durumun çocuklarda dışlanma hissine ve uyum sürecinin uzamasına neden olduğu belirlenmiştir. Dil bariyerine ilişkin problemler, OECD'nin dil ve uyum sorunlarını ele alan çalışmalarıyla da paralellik göstermektedir (OECD Education and Skills Today, 2022). Araştırmada bir diğer önemli bulgu, çocukların sosyalleşme süreçlerindeki sınırlılıkların dil eksikliği ve savaş travmasının yarattığı psikolojik yansımalarla doğrudan bağlantılı olmasıdır. Öğretmenler, bu zorlukları aşmada oyun temelli grup etkinlikleri ve bireysel destek yaklaşımlarını kullanmışlardır. Ancak araştırma bulguları, bu yöntemlerin çoğu durumda çocukların psikolojik direncini artırmada yetersiz kaldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu durum, Çalhan ve Kolukırık'ın (2015) çocukların psikolojik dayanıklılığını artırmaya yönelik okul temelli önerileriyle benzerlik taşımaktadır.

Ayrıca aile katılımının, çocukların eğitim sürecine entegrasyonunda kritik bir faktör olduğu görülmüştür. Ancak göçmen ebeveynlerin Türkçe dil yeterliğinin eksikliği, öğretmenlerin ailelerle etkili iletişim kurmasını zorlaştırmıştır. Buna rağmen, bazı durumlarda yabancı ebeveynlerin eğitim sürecine Türk velilerden daha istekli katılım gösterdikleri öğretmenlerden alınan yanıtlar doğrultusunda belirlenmiştir. Literatür, aile katılımını artırmaya yönelik okul politikalarının ve kültürel duyarlılık mekanizmalarının önemini vurgulamaktadır (Jung & Zhang, 2016). Akademik başarı açısından, göçmen çocukların dil eksikliği nedeniyle sınıf arkadaşlarının gerisinde kaldığı; ancak dil problemlerini aştıklarında diğer öğrencilere kıyasla daha disiplinli bir şekilde öğrenmeye motive oldukları belirlenmiştir (Hartman, 2009).

Sosyal uyum ve kaynaşma süreci, araştırmanın bir diğer önemli bulgusudur. Öğretmenler, savaş mağduru çocukların sınıf arkadaşlarıyla iletişim kurmakta başlangıçta zorluk çektiğini ve bunun sosyal yalıtılmışlığa yol açtığını belirtmiştir. Çocuklar, dil becerilerini geliştirdikçe daha fazla sosyalleşme eğilimi göstermiş ve sınıf arkadaşlarıyla ilişkilerini güçlendirmiştir. Ancak bu süreçte özellikle dil bilmeyen ya da travmanın etkisinde olan çocukların okul ortamına alışma sürecinin uzadığı belirtilmiştir. Sosyalleşme süreçlerindeki bu gecikme, çocuğun eğitim sürecine tam katılımını da olumsuz etkilemiştir. Çeşitli sınıf etkinlikleri ve grup

çalışmaları, çocukların sosyalleşme süreçlerinin desteklenmesinde etkili araçlar olarak görülmüştür (Li, 2023).

Psikolojik zorluklar, savaş mağduru çocukların eğitim süreçlerinde karşılaştığı bir diğer temel sorundur. Öğretmenler, birçok çocuğun savaş sonrası travma belirtileri taşıdığını ifade etmiş, bu durumun çocukların içine kapanmasına, etkinliklere katılmakta isteksizlik göstermesine ve güven eksikliği yaşamasına neden olduğunu belirtmiştir. Öğretmenler bu zorlukları aşmak için bireysel yaklaşımlar benimsemiş, grup etkinliklerini daha sık uygulayarak çocukları sosyal etkileşimlere teşvik etmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra psikolojik danışmanlık gibi destek mekanizmalarından yararlanıldığı ve çocukların olumlu motivasyonlarla yeniden uyum süreçlerine entegre edilmeye çalışıldığı tespit edilmiştir (Paat, 2013; Levent & Çayak, 2017).

Bu çalışma, Rus ve Ukraynalı göçmen çocukların eğitim sistemine entegrasyonunda karşılaşılan çok katmanlı sorunlara dikkat çekmekte ve savaş mağduru çocukların eğitimi konusunda çok paydaşlı bir yaklaşım ihtiyacını ortaya koymaktadır. Araştırma bulgularına dayanarak şu önerilerde bulunulmuştur: Okul ortamındaki öğretmen, idareci ve ebeveyn iş birliğinin yanı sıra kamu ve özel kuruluşların eş güdümlü çalışması gerekmektedir. Bu bağlamda kapsayıcı eğitim politikalarının artırılması, öğretmenlerin göçmen çocuklarla çalışmaya yönelik yeterliliklerinin geliştirilmesi ve dil bariyerini aşmaya yönelik stratejik müdahalelerin uygulanması bir gereklilik olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Araştırma, göçmen çocukların eğitimine yönelik gelecekte yapılacak çalışmalara önemli bir referans sağlamaktadır.