

## A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children \*

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### ABSTRACT

Emotion regulation is a fundamental skill that appropriately recognizes, controls, and expresses emotions. This study aims to examine the emotion regulation processes of Syrian children and provide a roadmap based on the impact of family, trauma, and other socioeconomic factors. A scoping review was conducted, analyzing 18 selected studies that met the inclusion criteria. The review identified four main themes as “Effects of Trauma,” “Social Resources in Emotion Regulation,” “Parental Role as an Emotion Regulation Resource,” and “Requirements for Emotion Regulation.” The “Effects of Trauma” theme highlights the significance of trauma severity, children’s emotion regulation skills, social support, and recovery processes. The “Social Resources in Emotion Regulation” theme reflects the role of social environments and the influence of cultural and social factors on children’s and adolescents’ emotional regulation. The “Parental Role as an Emotion Regulation Resource” theme focuses on how parenting attitudes shape children’s emotional and social development. Finally, the “Requirements for Emotion Regulation” theme emphasizes family, community, and institutional collaboration to strengthen children’s emotion regulation skills. Our study reveals that war and migration experiences negatively affect children’s psychological and social functioning. However, family support and cultural sensitivity contribute to recovery. It also underscores the importance of multidisciplinary interventions involving families, schools, and communities to support children’s emotional development. Future research

\*Ethical approval is not required since the articles reviewed in the scoping review were obtained through electronic databases.

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should compare Syrian children with different social dynamics and examine the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions.

**Keywords:** Syrian Children, Emotion Regulation, Migration, War.

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### **Suriyeli Çocuklarda Savaş ve Göçün Duygu Düzenlemeye Etkileri Üzerine Bir Kapsam Derlemesi**

#### **ÖZ**

Duygu düzenleme, bireylerin duygularını tanıma, kontrol etme ve ifade etme süreçlerini içeren temel bir beceridir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Suriyeli çocukların duygu düzenleme süreçlerini incelemek ve bu süreçleri etkileyen aile, travmalar ve diğer sosyoekonomik faktörler üzerinden bir yol haritası sunmaktır. Bu doğrultuda, kapsam derlemesi prosedürüyle dahil edilme kriterlerini taşıyan 18 makale incelenmiştir. İnceleme sonucunda “travmanın etkileri”, “duygu düzenlemede sosyal kaynaklar”, “duygu düzenlemede ebevenlik kaynağı” ve “duygu düzenleme için gereklilikler” olmak üzere dört ana temaya ulaşılmıştır. “Travmanın Etkileri” teması, travmanın şiddetinin, çocukların duygusal düzenleme becerilerinin, sosyal desteğin ve iyileşme süreçlerinin önemli olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. “Duygusal Düzenlemede Sosyal Kaynaklar” teması, çocukların ve ergenlerin duygusal düzenleme süreçlerinde sosyal çevrenin rolünü, kültürel ve sosyal faktörlerin etkisini yansıtmaktadır. “Ebeveynliğin Duygusal Düzenleme Kaynağı Olarak Rolü” teması, ebeveyn tutumlarının çocukların duygusal ve sosyal gelişimini nasıl etkilediğine odaklanmaktadır. “Duygusal Düzenleme İçin Gereksinimler” teması, çocukların duygusal düzenleme becerilerini güçlendirmek için aile, toplum ve kurum düzeyinde iş birliğinin önemini savunmaktadır. Çalışmamız, savaş ve göç deneyimlerinin çocukların psikolojik ve sosyal işlevselliğini olumsuz etkilediğini, ancak aile desteği ve kültürel duyarlılığın iyileşmeye katkı sağladığını göstermektedir. Çocukların duygusal gelişimini desteklemek için aile, okul ve toplum temelli multidisipliner müdahalelerin önemine vurgu yapmaktadır. Gelecek çalışmalar için, farklı sosyal dinamiklere sahip Suriyeli çocukların karşılaştırılması ve terapötik müdahalelerin etkinliğinin araştırılması önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Suriyeli Çocuklar, Duygu Düzenleme, Göç, Savaş.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Social, cultural, and economic factors significantly influence children’s ability to regulate their emotions. Migration, shaped by these and other dynamics, plays a crucial role in determining the life trajectories of individuals and their families. It is well-documented that migrant children face heightened risks for psychological issues, including exposure to violence and trauma that can arise before, during, and after the migration process. Emotion regulation is a vital psychological skill that enables individuals to understand, control, and express their emotional experiences effectively. This process involves strategies to adjust emotional intensity and articulate feelings appropriately (Bintaş-Zörer & Yorulmaz 2022). Whether migration occurs for voluntary or involuntary reasons, it has profound implications for the sustainability of family structures and the ability to fulfill basic needs, ultimately affecting how children navigate their emotional development. By acknowledging these

## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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challenges, we can better support migrant families and foster healthier emotional outcomes for their children.

Migration can be a stressful and destabilizing experience for children, especially for those who are compelled to live in another country due to issues such as war or natural disasters (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco 2007). Consequently, many children face significant challenges, including rebuilding their social networks, adapting to their new environments, and dealing with exclusion, discrimination, and alienation (Kim et al. 2011; Yılmaz & Günay 2022). One crucial way to promote social integration, defined as the development of common social values and a sense of belonging (Green et al. 2006), is through the education of children (Akarçay-Ulutaş & Kırlioğlu 2020). Syrian children, in particular, encounter several obstacles in school settings, including language barriers, bullying from peers, and exclusion. These challenges can create an environment that drives Syrian children away from what should be a safe space: their schools. Additionally, factors such as parenting styles, family dynamics, and cultural backgrounds (Bengi-Arslan et al. 1997), along with the stress and depression that families experience due to migration (Heptinstall et al. 2004), are connected to the emergence of problematic behaviors, academic difficulties, and low self-esteem in children (Diler et al. 2003). Specifically, children from families that lack support may experience a decrease in coping skills and an increase in tendencies toward violence (Smokowski et al. 2011; Karataş & Baloğlu 2018). Children often exhibit aggressive behaviors when they encounter traumatic events or stressors that they find difficult to manage (Lavasani et al. 2012).

Emotion regulation is essential for children to navigate their emotional experiences, manage their feelings, and engage socially in positive ways (Bozkurt-Yükçü & Demircioğlu 2017). This crucial skill set includes techniques such as suppression and cognitive restructuring (Şepitçi-Sarıbaş & Tezel-Şahin 2021). Suppression involves the ability to conceal or control the expression of both negative and positive emotions, while cognitive restructuring enables individuals to reinterpret and adapt their emotional responses (Seçim 2020). To assist children in mastering emotional regulation, it is beneficial to create supportive environments where they can freely express their feelings while benefiting their language skills. Additionally, fostering connections between emotions and real-life situations, helping them articulate their thoughts about others' feelings, and encouraging acts of empathy

can be invaluable strategies (Tompson & Lagatutta 2006; Bozkurt Yükçü & Demircioğlu 2017).

The Ecological Systems Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the development and behavior of individuals, particularly immigrant children, through the interactions of various systems they are involved in: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Maralani & Pfeiffer 2024). This theory examines how the different systems a person is part of influence their development and behavior (Eisenberg et al. 1996). By employing this multi-layered framework, we can gain insights into the emotion regulation processes of immigrant children as shaped by their emotional and social experiences (Kwong et al. 2018). The beliefs and practices of parents and teachers within the microsystem, which includes a child's immediate surroundings, such as home and school, reflect broader cultural models of child development. These, in turn, impact the child's experiences and adjustment processes (Perron 2017; Kwong et al. 2018; Paat 2013).

Additionally, the transmission of emotions within the family and parents' responses to their child's emotions play a crucial role in the child's emotional socialization (Fosco & Grych 2013). Furthermore, immigrant children's attachment to family routines enhances their ability to regulate anger, emphasizing the significance of stable family environments in managing emotions throughout the resettlement process (Elsayed et al. 2019). In addition, within the mesosystem, language and cultural barriers in family-child collaboration can significantly influence communication surrounding emotion regulation, children's peer relationships, and family involvement in child interaction patterns (Maralani & Pfeiffer 2024). Moreover, peer support in school settings is essential for helping immigrant children navigate emotional challenges stemming from migration, thereby reducing the risk of internalization issues (Kouider et al. 2014). Exosystem factors, such as economic hardships, unemployment, and the challenges faced by immigrant families, can indirectly impact children's emotional regulation by affecting family dynamics and the emotional atmosphere at home (Lindblom et al. 2017; Chen et al. 2022; Fosco & Grych 2013). Positive family environments characterized by sensitivity and supportive parent-child interactions (Kerr et al. 2021; Noah 2017) play a crucial role in fostering healthy emotion regulation in children. The transition of Syrian children from their cultural context to a new environment presents significant emotional challenges, impacted by macrosystem elements such as the host country's cultural values, social norms, and policies. Syrian families impacted by traumatic experiences often struggle

## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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to feel secure in their new surroundings, adjust to changing family dynamics, and find meaning in their lives. These challenges are compounded by difficulties in accessing health, social services, and education, prompting families to rely heavily on cultural intermediaries for support (Yohani et al. 2019; Alsayed & Wildes 2018; Hassan et al. 2016).

Furthermore, the chronosystem framework explores how changes and transitions over time, particularly migration, influence children's emotion regulation strategies. Migration affects these strategies through various mechanisms at different stages, pre-migration anxiety, trauma experienced during migration, and difficulties in post-migration adjustment play significant roles in this process (Cohodes et al. 2021; Kouider et al. 2014). Furthermore, social support, parental influence, and socio-economic factors are critical in shaping these outcomes (Del Carmen Espinoza et al. 2021; Lu et al. 2019). Therefore, understanding how the emotion regulation processes of Syrian children are shaped by the interaction of individual and environmental factors can provide a robust framework for social integration efforts. This review, alongside the theoretical perspective underpinning the study, aims to contextualize the emotion regulation processes of immigrant children systematically. By grounding the study in this theory, the findings offer a more comprehensive explanation of immigrant children's multidimensional experiences and emotion regulation strategies.

This study aims to understand the emotion regulation processes of Syrian children who have experienced forced migration and to analyze the factors that influence these processes. It focuses on the psychosocial challenges and traumas faced by Syrian children and examines how these impact their emotional regulation. Additionally, the study discusses potential intervention strategies to enhance their social integration and emotional resilience. The findings are intended to provide a new perspective on the existing literature regarding the emotion regulation processes of Syrian children, contributing to a deeper understanding of this area. Furthermore, the results are expected to be a practical guide for educators, psychologists, social workers, and other practitioners working with migrant children. Concrete recommendations for effective strategies to enhance children's emotional resilience and social integration will be presented. Furthermore, the study aims to inform the development of more inclusive and effective policies for the education, psychosocial support, and integration of migrant children by policymakers.

## **Methodology**

This study followed the scoping review procedure (Grant & Booth 2009) to review the literature in a broad area, identify current knowledge, and pinpoint gaps. It was supported by the TÜBİTAK Science Human Support Programs Presidency (BİDEB) under the 2209-A University Students Research Projects Support Program with project number 1919B012320739. Ethical approval is not required since the articles reviewed in the scoping review were obtained through electronic databases.

## **Search Strategy**

This scoping review explores various articles examining the emotion regulation processes of Syrian children displaced by war. It comprehensively assesses the individual, environmental, and social factors influencing these processes. This study seeks to understand better the impact of difficulties in emotion regulation on the psychosocial adjustment of these children, as well as on their post-traumatic stress symptoms and overall mental health. The research was conducted between June and July 2024, utilizing specific keywords and criteria in the Web of Science Core Collection database. The search strategy is based on the PICOS framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, and Study Design), a widely used tool for structuring research questions and defining inclusion criteria in systematic reviews (Amir-Behghadami et al. 2020). According to this framework, the sample group for the reviewed articles consists of children from Syrian families who have been displaced due to war. The articles focus on interventions or the impact of current psychosocial conditions on emotion regulation. Key findings include the children's ability to manage their emotions, their functionality in social relationships, their academic success, and indicators of mental health such as overall adjustment, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. The study designs reviewed include quantitative, experimental, and quasi-experimental approaches. Since studies focusing on existing conditions were also considered, there was no requirement for a direct comparison group or between-group comparison. The search strategy employed the following keywords, "Emotion regulation in/among Syrian children OR Emotion regulation skills in/among Syrian children OR Coping with emotions in/among Syrian children OR Recognizing emotions in/among Syrian children OR Expressing emotions in/among Syrian children OR Emotion in/among Syrian children." All identified articles were compiled in an EndNote 7 library, and the screening steps were conducted through this library.

## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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### **Study Selection, Eligibility Criteria and Methodological Quality Assessment**

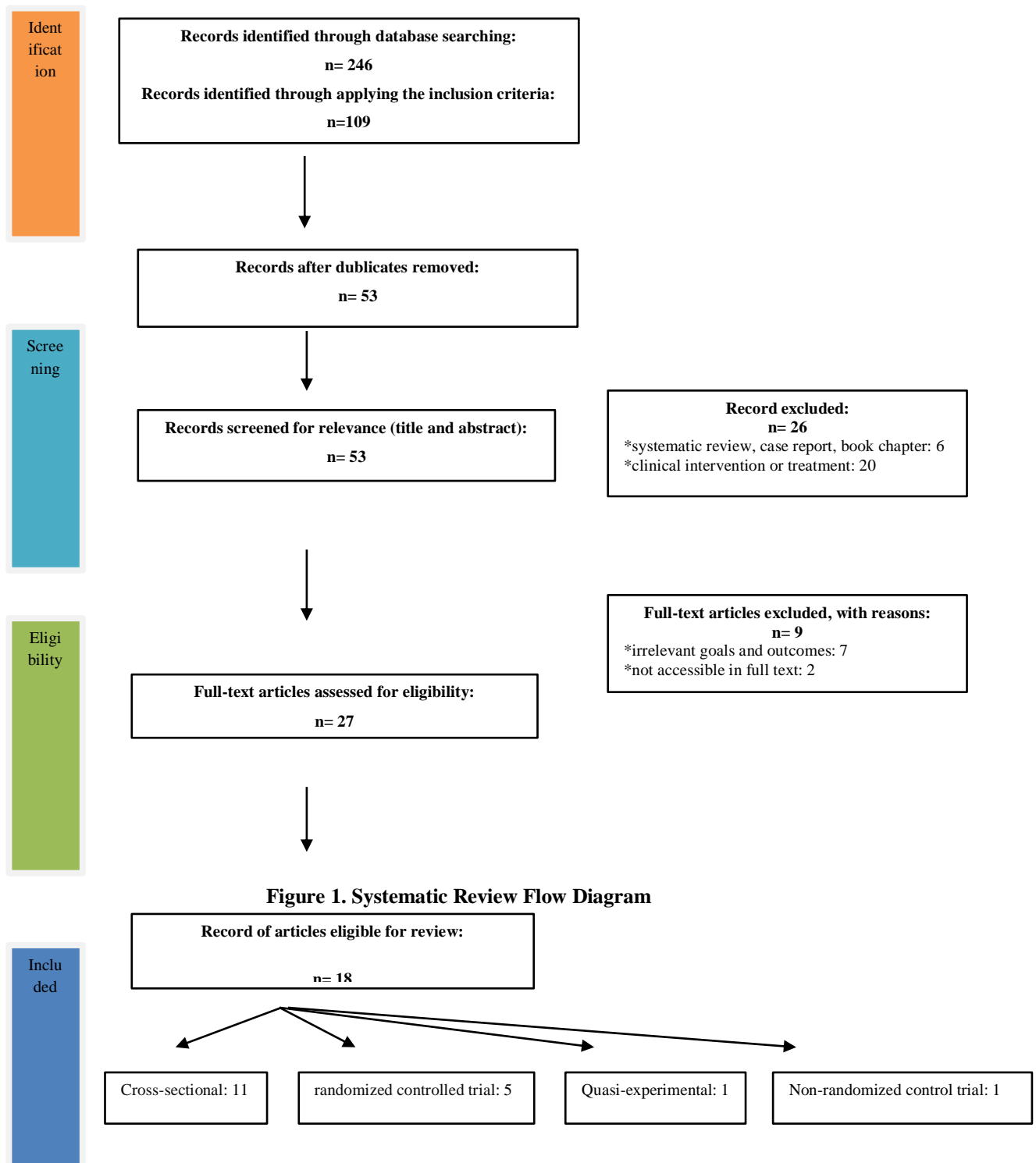
In selecting articles, the PRISMA-S flow, an extension of the PRISMA statement that guides the detailed reporting of literature reviews in systematic reviews, was used (Retlhefsen et al., 2021). Accordingly, in the identification phase, 246 articles were found directly through keywords, and 109 were filtered according to inclusion criteria in the database; during the screening phase, 53 articles remained after removing duplicates, and 22 articles were excluded based on title and abstract, as they were irrelevant to the topic (related to diseases such as cancer, brain tumors) or were systematic reviews or case studies (Figure 1). Of the remaining 27 articles, except for two, 25 full texts were accessed, and the methods and results sections were examined according to the inclusion criteria. Articles related to other immigrant groups, childcare providers, journalism, and education fields were excluded, and 18 articles were included. Finally, the quality of the articles was assessed using the Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT), a critical appraisal tool designed to evaluate studies combining qualitative and quantitative evidence. MMAT is widely used in systematic reviews to assess studies with different designs and helps identify methodological weaknesses in research. According to the tool, a study that meets one criterion receives a score of 25, and a study that meets all criteria scores 100 (Hong et al. 2018). Among the included articles, 11 were cross-sectional, 5 were randomized controlled trials, one was quasi-experimental, and 1 was a non-randomized controlled trial. The inclusion criteria for this study were, (1) focusing on the emotion regulation skills of Syrian children as specified in the PICOS components, with the study group consisting of Syrian children, (2) conducted using quantitative or mixed research procedures, (3) published as of January 2018, and (4) accessible in full text either freely or through the subscribed databases. Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, case studies, theses, conference proceedings, book chapters, and book reviews were excluded from this study.

### **Data Extraction**

The articles included in the study are detailed in Table 1, including information on author(s), publication year, country, methodology (design, data collection tools, analyses), and details about the study groups (e.g., age, sample size, gender). Each article was examined to address the research questions created for this study based on Pollock and Berge (2018), (1) How are the reflections of war and migration on emotion regulation processes observed? (2) How are the reflections of the dynamics in the new country on emotion regulation processes observed?

(3) How do social and cultural dynamics influence emotion regulation? (4) How are recommendations for improving emotion regulation in children shaped?

To answer these research questions, all researchers independently reviewed all articles, and two impartial social work academics validated the findings. Due to the diversity in study groups and research designs, the results were reported using thematic analysis. This approach was adopted to minimize errors and potential biases.





# A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children

## Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data analysis was conducted using MAXQDA 2022 (version 22.4.1), resulting in the creation of a total of 173 codes. The concepts most frequently coded with a frequency of 5 or more were “intervention studies,” “children’s specific experiences,” “children’s trauma levels,” “supporting social integration,” and “parental relationships.” The MAXMaps visuals used in the study were created based on the code co-occurrence model. In applying the model, the minimum co-occurrence frequency was set to 3, ensuring the inclusion of all codes in the model as much as possible.

## FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the basic information about the articles and the key focus areas of each article’s findings. Additionally, this review’s findings are categorized under four main themes as “The Effects of Trauma,” “Social Resources in Emotion Regulation,” “Parenting as a Resource in Emotion Regulation,” and “Requirements for Emotion Regulation.”

**Table: 1. Descriptive Characteristics and Focus Areas of the Articles**

Authors, Year of Publication, Country	Type of Study	Number of Participants (Children)	Age	MMAT Scores	Key Findings and Focus of the Study				
					Cultural Dynamics	Family Involvement	Parental Attitudes	Trauma-Oriented Interventions	Social Integration
Khamis (2022), Lebanon	Cross-sectional	1000	7-18 years	50				+	
Michalek et al. (2022), United Kingdom, Italy and Ireland	Cross-sectional	86	7-11 years	50	+			+	
Michalek et al. (2024), United Kingdom, Jordan, Ireland	Randomized control trial	562	5-7 years	50			+	+	
Mueller et al. (2021), Belgium, Spain, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates	Cross-sectional	62	10-15 years	50	+			+	+
Peltonen et al. (2023), Finland, Sweden and United States of America	Cross-sectional	312	6-18 years	50			+	+	+
Speidel et al. (2021), Canada	Cross-sectional	123	5-12 years	50				+	+
Erdemir (2022), Türkiye	Quasi-experimental	711	5-6 years	100	+		+	+	+
Erucar et al. (2020), Türkiye, United Kingdom	Cross-sectional	322	8-17 years	75	+	+	+	+	+
Gredeback et al. (2021), Sweden, United States of America and Germany	Cross-sectional	394	6-18 years	50	+		+	+	
Brown et al. (2023), United States of America	Cluster-randomized control trial	4017	5-15 years	100				+	+
Bryant et al. (2022), Australia, Switzerland, Jordan, the Netherlands	Randomized control trial	520	10-14 years	50			+	+	
Khamis (2019)	Cross-sectional	1000	7-18 years	50			+	+	
Kim et al. (2020), United States of America	Large-scale randomized control trial	448	5-12 years	50	+			+	
Mikhalek et al. (2021), United Kingdom, Ireland, Jordan, United States of America	Non-randomized control trial	94	7-12 years	75				+	
Mohamad et al. (2024), Norway	Cross-sectional	5 children and family members	10-18 years	75	+	+	+		+
Ali et al. (2023), The Netherlands	Cross-sectional	14	10-14 years	75		+		+	+
Brown et al. (2020), Netherlands, Lebanon, Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, United Kingdom	Cross-sectional	24 children and caregivers	10-14 years	50	+			+	+
Akhtar et al. (2021), The Netherlands, Australia, Switzerland, Jordan	Randomized control trial	179	10-14 years	75		+		+	

The theme “Effects of Trauma” comprehensively addresses the physical, emotional, and social impacts of traumatic experiences on children. It highlights that the severity of the event does not solely determine the effects of trauma but is also related to children’s emotional regulation capacity, social support, and recovery processes. It underscores the need to evaluate the complex dimensions and long-term consequences of post-war trauma. The

theme “Social Resources in Emotional Regulation” focuses on the critical importance of social environments and resources in developing emotional regulation skills in children and adolescents. It emphasizes how cultural, linguistic, economic, and social factors influence emotional regulation processes and highlights the negative impact of limited access to social resources on these processes. The theme “Parenting as a Resource in Emotional Regulation” examines how parents’ attitudes, communication styles, and approaches to understanding their children shape children’s emotional and social development. The final theme, “Requirements for Emotional Regulation,” presents a multidimensional and holistic approach to enhancing children’s emotional regulation skills. It stresses the importance of collaboration and multifaceted approaches at individual, familial, social, and institutional levels to support the development of children’s emotional regulation capacities.

## **The Effects of Trauma**

### ***Children’s Problems***

Among children, issues such as physical violence, abuse, and neglect, in addition to substance use and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), were found to be prevalent (Erucar et al. 2020; Khamis 2019; Kim et al. 2020; Mikhalek et al. 2021; Brown et al. 2020). Experiences that particularly exacerbate PTSD include traversing dangerous migration routes, experiencing a lack of food and water, witnessing dead bodies, severe injuries to loved ones, living in war zones, and the intensity of traumatic events (Bryant et al. 2022; Mikhalek et al. 2021; Akhtar et al. 2021). The most profound impact was observed to stem from the reflections of experiencing food and water shortages, indicating children’s intense anxiety about being unable to meet their basic needs and concerns about survival. While children predominantly experience family separation and witness violence, families, in turn, reinforce these problems due to their struggles, such as the loss of loved ones, severe injury or illness, or multiple simultaneous issues (Speidel et al. 2021).

### ***Emotional and Social Status***

As a result of war trauma, children frequently experience emotions such as sadness, fear, self-blame or blaming others, insecurity, hopelessness, and frustration. They also exhibit avoidant behaviors like social withdrawal and rebellion, as well as externalizing problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, and impulsivity (Khamis 2022; Michalek et al. 2022; Bryant et al. 2022; Khamis 2019; Kim et al. 2020; Mikhalek et al. 2021; Brown et al. 2020; Akhtar et al. 2021). Furthermore, children generally respond slower to emotional stimuli (e.g., angry or

## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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happy faces) (Michalek et al. 2022), which may be related to a general slowing of attention or difficulties in emotional processing. Their heightened reactions to sad or negative expressions suggest they form more intense empathic connections with these emotions (Michalek et al. 2022; Mueller et al. 2021).

Children's social-emotional capacities, particularly emotional regulation and optimism, are crucial in mitigating pre-migration adversities' negative mental health impacts (Speidel et al. 2021). Therefore, the point raised by Michalek et al. (2024) that attempting to continue living in a different country is insufficient to fully explain post-war trauma—highlights the need to evaluate its more complex dimensions. The duration spent in the host country is associated with a reduction in PTSD effects (Kim et al. 2020), providing insights (Mueller et al. 2021) into assessing children's emotional states with a focus on post-trauma recovery.

### **Social Resources in Emotion Regulation**

#### ***Cultural Dynamics***

For adolescents, the cultural disapproval of sharing family-related matters with others makes it particularly challenging to express their emotions and life experiences (Brown et al. 2020). In this context, cultural traits are understood to negatively influence open communication and trust in others during the communication process. Families' perception of seeking professional support to improve their children's emotion regulation as a stigma issue reflects the intensity of cultural characteristics and beliefs (Ali et al. 2023).

#### ***Language Use***

Language, as the primary communication tool, also affects children's ability to express themselves and their emotions, especially when words with different meanings are used (Erdemir 2022; Brown et al. 2020). Language differences also pose challenges in accessing fundamental resources, such as healthcare services, and children struggle to convey their emotions in the host country's language (Mohamad et al. 2024; Brown et al. 2020).

#### ***Economic Well-being***

Poverty, inability to meet basic needs, school absenteeism, child labor, substance use, and criminal activities are identified as stressors directly impacting the lives of children and adolescents (Brown et al. 2020). Due to economic inadequacies, families prioritize meeting

basic needs, making it difficult to consider alternatives such as professional support, treatment, or participation in activities to enhance children's emotion regulation processes (Ali et al. 2023).

### ***Social Participation***

The inability to meet various needs makes children feel isolated and unable to participate fully in social activities (Mohamad et al. 2024). Participation in activities outside the home strengthens children's ability to share their emotions with others, fosters a sense of comfort in problem-solving, and improves their communication and social competence skills (Erdemir 2022; Brown et al. 2023; Ali et al. 2023). However, language differences, as a critical aspect of social participation, make it harder for children to form friendships, resulting in loneliness, limited social participation, and a concentration of friendships with peers from the same background (Mohamad et al. 2024).

### **Parenting as a Resource in Emotion Regulation**

#### ***Parental Attitudes***

Syrian parents often experience anxiety about their children acting independently and may exert authority and control over them. Rejecting, overprotective, or inconsistent parenting styles have been identified as factors contributing to increased mental health issues, behavioral problems, and emotional difficulties in children (Eruiyar et al. 2020; Bryant et al. 2022). These parenting approaches hinder children's adaptation to intervention processes during professional support (Mohamad et al. 2024). Furthermore, this divergence in parenting styles often clashes with the social norms and dynamics of the host country, creating additional challenges in social integration processes. A strong bond and communication between parent and child can support the development of healthier emotional regulation skills when children need emotional support (Eruiyar et al. 2020; Ali et al. 2023; Akhtar et al. 2021). Studies (Kim et al. 2020; Khamis 2019) have emphasized the importance of social support and cognitive restructuring, highlighting that children who can freely express their emotions within the family are less likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

#### ***Perception of the Child***

Syrian parents tend to conceal their children's problems or special needs from others and often prioritize academic success over social development (Mohamad et al. 2024). The family's migration experiences, PTSD symptoms, and exposure to trauma significantly influence the child's social and emotional responses (e.g., introversion or extroversion), with

## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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adverse impacts on their emotion regulation skills (Michalek et al. 2024; Peltonen et al. 2023; Speidel et al. 2021; Gredeback et al. 2021).

### **Requirements for Emotion Regulation**

#### ***Family Involvement***

The education and involvement of family members are considered essential for developing children's emotion regulation skills (Ali et al. 2023). Family involvement helps parents recognize their self-worth and enhances their awareness of well-being, positively influencing children's emotional states. This also helps parents and children better understand and manage their emotions (Ali et al. 2023; Akhtar et al. 2021). Exploring the developmental pathways between parental well-being, parenting practices, and children's cognitive capacities can be considered a part of family involvement in emotion regulation (Michalek et al. 2024; Peltonen et al. 2023).

#### ***Social Support***

Social support obtained through enjoyable activities and peer relationships is important in contributing to children's emotion regulation (Mohamad et al. 2024). To strengthen this process, children need to identify feelings and behaviors such as loneliness, exclusion, and alienation that could distance them from social support systems and peer groups. This identification can help them manage emotions healthily and organize daily activities more effectively (Brown et al. 2020).

#### ***Education and School Environment***

It is emphasized that children often face emotional difficulties in school settings due to limited access to support services until they learn the language of the host country. Enhancing language support and communication opportunities is recommended to assist children in regulating their emotions and adapting better to social environments, thereby reducing feelings of exclusion (Mueller et al. 2021; Brown et al. 2023; Mohamad et al. 2024). Furthermore, establishing meaningful and sincere relationships within the school environment is highlighted as a significant factor in supporting children's emotional regulation (Khamis 2019). The curriculum should also promote learning through play and cultural sensitivity to bolster children's emotion regulation skills (Erdemir 2022).

### ***Strengthening Coping and Emotion Management***

To enhance children's emotion regulation, various coping strategies should be explored, early interventions should be developed, and the relationship between personality traits, emotion management, and coping mechanisms should be evaluated. Parents and children develop various coping strategies within political, cultural, and religious contexts, emphasizing their impact on emotion regulation and the importance of understanding children's emotional needs post-trauma (Khamis 2022; Eruyar et al. 2020; Gredeback et al. 2021; Kim et al. 2020; Akhtar et al. 2021). It is particularly suggested that children move away from emotion-focused coping strategies (e.g., avoidance, self-control) and adopt problem-focused strategies (e.g., problem-solving, seeking social support, confrontation) when dealing with war-related traumas (Khamis 2019; Brown et al. 2020). Programs should consider how they can help children develop better emotion regulation skills in response to war-related fears and post-settlement emotional challenges (Khamis 2022; Michalek et al. 2022; Mikhalek et al. 2021). Special support, short-term therapeutic interventions, and group-based programs can help children understand the effects of trauma, cope with dysfunctional cognitive processes, and strengthen adaptive behaviors and social interactions (Khamis 2022; Michalek et al. 2022; Brown et al. 2023; Bryant et al. 2022; Khamis 2019; Kim et al. 2020; Mikhalek et al. 2021; Ali et al. 2023). Notably, group-based interventions are facilitative in helping children share emotions and thoughts with others, improving emotion regulation skills through social interactions (Ali et al. 2023). Child-focused intervention programs should address identifying and understanding emotions such as anger and fear, distinguishing between positive and negative emotions, managing stress, developing self-soothing strategies, and fostering optimism, trust, human values, and equality. Such programs can support children's social and emotional capacities and academic achievements (Michalek et al. 2022; Michalek et al. 2024; Mueller et al. 2021; Speidel et al. 2021; Erdemir 2022; Kim et al. 2020; Mohamad et al. 2024; Ali et al. 2023; Akhtar et al. 2021).

### ***Family-Oriented Interventions***

Observations or self-assessments of parenting practices are recommended to understand better the intergenerational transmission mechanisms in children's emotion regulation. This can clarify the relationship between children's emotional processes, parental mental health, and parenting styles, helping reduce challenges stemming from dysfunctional family dynamics (Michalek et al. 2024; Eruyar et al. 2020; Gredeback et al. 2021; Khamis 2019). Improvements in maternal mental health through targeted interventions, as noted in Eruyar et

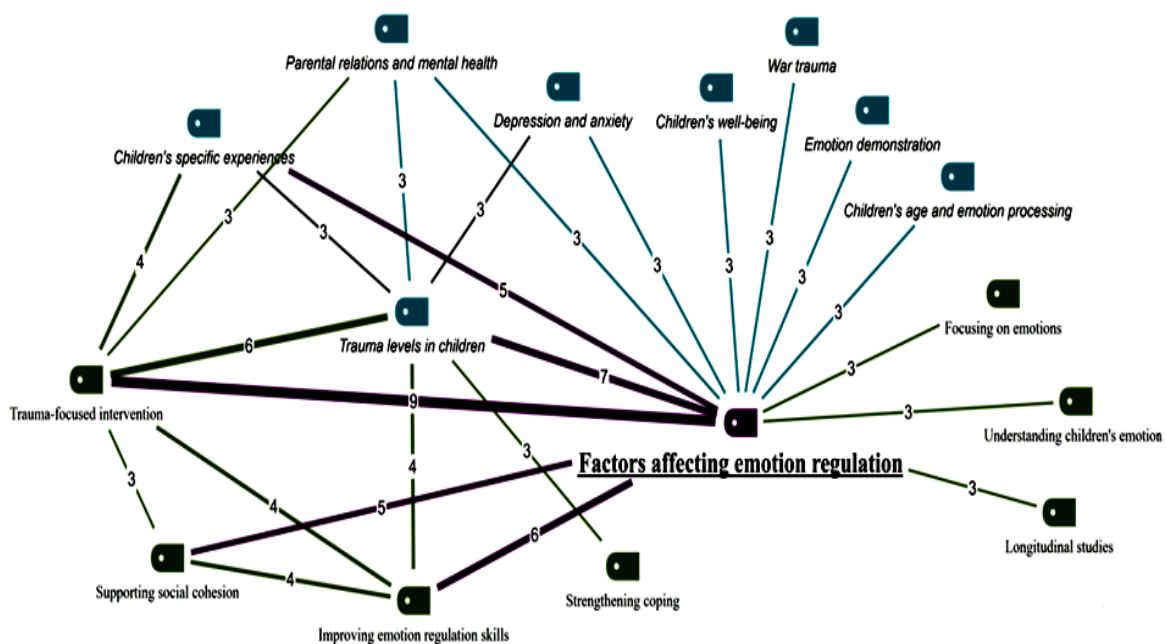
## A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children

al. (2020) and Gredeback et al. (2021), can significantly contribute to children’s emotional development. Identifying parents’ disciplinary methods and developing parenting approaches that strengthen children's emotional processing skills are also important (Peltonen et al. 2023; Erdemir 2022; Bryant et al. 2022). Evaluations conducted over multiple periods are critical for understanding the lasting effects of intervention programs and how emotion regulation skills evolve (Michalek et al. 2024; Erdemir 2022; Mikhalek et al. 2021).

### *Social Integration*

In the integration processes within host countries, addressing not only traumatic experiences but also cognitive-emotional disruptions (e.g., family separation and exposure to violence) can aid children in identifying and regulating their emotions effectively (Mueller et al. 2021; Speidel et al. 2021). Activities involving both children and local citizens provide an important opportunity to enhance emotion regulation skills and strengthen societal bonds (Speidel et al. 2021; Erdemir 2022). The importance of collaboration between educational and intervention programs, civil society, and public institutions is emphasized. Cultural differences should be considered, and integration processes should be approached holistically, with family involvement as a key component (Michalek et al. 2022; Mueller et al. 2021; Peltonen et al. 2023; Erdemir 2022; Eruyar et al. 2020; Brown et al. 2023; Mohamad et al. 2024).

**Figure: 2. Summary Model for Emotion Regulation**



During the thematic analysis process, Figure 2 was developed to visualize the relationship between codes that could not be categorized under sub-themes, offering supporting findings for the identified themes. According to Figure 2, factors influencing emotion regulation include the child's age, experiences of war-related effects, and mental health dynamics. Additionally, the analysis indicates the need for interventions that focus directly on children's emotions, creating environments where they can express themselves, and tracking long-term outcomes. Furthermore, findings highlight that older children are more successful in identifying their emotions than younger ones (Peltonen et al. 2023; Gredeback et al. 2021), adding another dimension to the relationship between traumatic experiences and the passage of time emphasized in this study. At the center of the figure, trauma levels in children stand out due to their code frequency. This code, closely related to emotion regulation, is supported by strengthening coping mechanisms, understanding children's experiences, reflecting on their relationships with parents, and conducting intervention programs to comprehend their situations. Moreover, another code linked to intervention programs and emotion regulation suggests that promoting social integration processes can reduce the impact of trauma in children. Similarly, findings emphasize the necessity of studying the effects of depression and anxiety in these children, as well as the influence of their relationships with parents and the mental health status of parents on these relationships. These insights underscore the importance of examining trauma's effects and emotion regulation skills.

## **DISCUSSION**

The traumatic experiences that Syrian children are exposed to, such as physical violence, abuse, neglect, war, and migration, play a significant role in the development of post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, these experiences lead to intense fear and anxiety about survival due to their long-term effects (Yayan et al. 2020; Hinchey et al. 2023). Displacement and the inability to meet basic needs due to resource shortages increase psychological stress and anxiety among Syrian children (Giordano et al. 2019; Çekiç 2022). Factors such as the loss of family members, witnessing violence, and social withdrawal increase the risk, while social security and support serve as protective factors (Kanan & Leão 2022; Perkins et al. 2018; Karam et al. 2019). In our study, it was found that children commonly experience emotional issues such as sadness, fear, and insecurity due to war trauma, externalizing behaviors such as social withdrawal, aggression, and impulsivity, as well as emotional processing and attention problems. The findings regarding children's social



## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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and emotional development are supported by Betancourt et al. (2020), Qouta et al. (2021), and Overchuk (2022).

Furthermore, stress factors within the family further deepen the psychological problems of children. Parental trauma and stress significantly impact children's mental health. Traumatic effects in parents are associated with higher levels of externalizing behaviors in children and decreased family functioning (Anakwenze & Rasmussen 2021; Sangalang et al. 2017). Infants exposed to war trauma through their mothers show delays in motor, cognitive, and socio-emotional development due to the impact of their mother's mental health and the quality of mother-infant interaction (Qouta et al. 2021), which highlights the depth of the trauma's serious repercussions. Social-emotional skills, such as emotional regulation and optimism, help children undergo a healthier psychological recovery process in the post-trauma period. Emotional regulation difficulties, which are strong predictors of traumatic reflections (Villalta et al. 2018), can be overcome through programs focused on developing problem-solving skills for children and psychotherapeutic treatments focused on understanding and reflecting emotions, which can improve attachment quality in children (Forbes et al. 2020; Tyler et al. 2020).

Additionally, emotional regulation skills are critical for post-trauma social adaptation. Children with better emotional regulation skills post-trauma demonstrate better social skills and overall social adjustment (Ryan et al. 2019). High-quality social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in schools can support the development of these skills, which can positively affect mental health and academic outcomes (Bailey et al. 2019). While the time spent in the host country plays an important role in the recovery processes of children from trauma, understanding the complex nature of post-war trauma remains difficult. To explain this process, a holistic evaluation of factors such as children's environmental sensitivity, childhood experiences, levels of psychological resilience, and the intergenerational transmission of trauma (Karam et al. 2019; Flanagan et al. 2020; Zerach et al. 2023; Guido et al. 2021) is necessary.

In our study, the influence of cultural dynamics, which emerge as an important social resource, makes it difficult for Syrian children to share their emotional experiences within the family with others, negatively affecting open communication and trust and potentially hindering emotional recovery processes. Since Syrian families struggle to feel safe in their new environment, family communication can also be negatively impacted (Yohani et al.

2019). Language barriers and translation issues also make it harder for families to express their emotional needs and access necessary support services, increasing communication difficulties (Oner et al. 2020). Experiences of social exclusion and boundary-setting in host countries can create emotional responses in children, making it even more difficult for them to trust others and engage in open communication (Van Der Ent et al. 2020). Similarly, children face language difficulties that negatively affect key skills for academic success and social adaptation, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As a result, children feel more isolated, and their emotional issues deepen (Taş & Minaz 2022; Kılıç & Gökçe 2018; Özmen 2020). Encouraging and facilitating parental involvement in the educational process can help create a supportive learning environment at home. Parental literacy and knowledge can encourage language learning at home and ease the transition to learning a new language (Wofford & Tibi 2018; Macleod et al. 2020). Poverty and economic hardship lead to difficulties in meeting children's basic needs, creating stressors such as school absenteeism and engagement in criminal activities while also making it difficult for families to seek professional support, negatively impacting children's emotional recovery processes. Many Syrian children are forced to work to support their families due to financial difficulties. They face additional challenges, such as low wages and unsafe working conditions, and economic deprivation increases food insecurity, child vulnerability, school absenteeism, limited participation in social interactions, and isolation (Obaje et al. 2020; Habib et al. 2019; Akesson & Badawi 2020). The inability to meet children's needs restricts participation in social activities, increasing feelings of loneliness. Language barriers and limited social connections reinforce children's social isolation, negatively affecting their emotional expression and communication skills.

The concerns of Syrian parents regarding their children's development of independence often lead to rejecting, overprotective, and inconsistent parenting styles, which in turn result in various mental health and behavioral issues in children. Addressing these problems requires a comprehensive approach that includes economic support, mental health interventions for parents, and a family-based approach to improve parenting practices and child outcomes. These parenting styles complicate professional support processes and cause social adjustment conflicts between parents and children. Economic difficulties and parental psychological distress due to displacement hinder positive parent-child interactions, reduce autonomy-supportive parenting, and lead to harsh parenting styles (Sim et al. 2018; Rizkalla et al. 2020; Eltanamly et al. 2023). Parental trauma, particularly maternal post-traumatic stress

## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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disorder, significantly affects children's emotional processing abilities and proactive control strategies (Gredebäck et al. 2021; Gredebäck et al. 2023; Eruyar et al. 2018; Eruyar et al. 2020; Popham et al. 2023). The complex interaction of trauma, economic difficulties, and parental mental health issues makes it difficult for families to effectively engage with professional support services (Rizkalla et al. 2020). Therefore, increased economic resources and social support can help maintain positive parenting despite challenges and improve children's psychosocial outcomes (Sim et al. 2018). Open communication within the family and the ability to express emotional needs are vital for the emotional well-being of Syrian refugee children. Family support, the school environment, and family relationships, especially in cases of high trauma exposure, are protective factors in reducing PTSD symptoms and developing emotion regulation skills (Kliewer et al. 2020; Khamis 2019; Kanan & Leão 2022). Programs targeting factors such as violence exposure and parental depressive symptoms may be effective in preventing complex PTSD (Biazoli & Pluess 2022). While reading-based interventions and storytelling programs have shown the potential to improve emotional recognition and socio-emotional development, further research is needed to assess their long-term effects (Michalek et al. 2021; Barbaroş & Anghel 2023).

According to our study, family involvement is one factor that significantly contributes to developing children's emotion regulation skills. Studies by Ansar et al. (2023) and Miller et al. (2020) have shown that emotion-focused programs to reduce parental stress and improve psychosocial well-being can significantly improve emotion regulation skills and self-efficacy. Additionally, parental participation in school activities and discussions between parents and children about school have enhanced emotional regulation and reduced behavioral problems (Barger et al. 2019). Another factor identified in our study is social support, friendships, and enjoyable activities, which play a crucial role in helping Syrian children manage negative emotions and develop emotion regulation skills. Positive peer relationships are associated with better emotion regulation. Children who regulate their emotions tend to have more harmonious, calm, and pro-social peer interactions (Qashmer 2023). Secure attachments provide fewer negative effects and better emotion regulation (Cooke et al. 2019).

Participation in education and a suitable school environment are also essential factors that help children overcome social relationship issues and facilitate the development of peer relationships that support emotional regulation. This support is critical for children's well-being and integration (Aydın & Kaya 2019; Özmen 2020). Providing language courses

appropriate to children's age and knowledge level significantly enhances their ability to benefit from educational activities and reduce behavioral problems in the classroom (Özmen 2020). Early intervention programs, which are necessary for emotion regulation, have shown positive effects on emotional regulation and general mental health by developing coping strategies for Syrian refugee children. These programs often include psychological and behavioral interventions tailored to the specific needs of refugee children and their caregivers. In particular, the Early Adolescent Skills (EASE) program, developed by the World Health Organization, has been effective in reducing internal symptoms such as anxiety and depression in children and psychological stress in caregivers/parents (Akhtar et al. 2021; Bryant et al. 2022).

Additionally, the Group Problem Management Plus (gPM+) program, a short-term group intervention, has provided indirect benefits to children's mental health of inconsistent discipline practices (Feen-Calligan et al. 2020; Bryant et al. 2022; Akhtar et al. 2021). Another example is the Trauma Recovery Techniques and Parenting Skills (TRT+P) program, which combines trauma healing techniques for children with parenting skill sessions and has resulted in significant improvements for both children and parents. Reductions in behavioral and emotional difficulties in children and decreases in depression, anxiety, and stress in parents were observed (El-Khani et al. 2021).

Another suggestion in the articles we reviewed is family-centered interventions. Improving maternal mental health and providing supportive interventions for parents have been shown to contribute to children's emotional regulation significantly. Mothers who effectively regulate and express more positive emotions create a better environment supporting their children's emotion regulation skills. In contrast, high levels of negative emotional expression can adversely affect this process (Tan & Smith 2019). Providing mental health support to mothers who have experienced trauma can make them emotionally more accessible, reducing the risk of transferring emotional regulation difficulties to their children (Scharpf et al. 2023; Zhang et al. 2022). Programs that promote positive parenting practices and reduce authoritarian and hostile parenting may support children's emotion regulation skills. These interventions should focus on developing both parent's and children's harmonious emotion regulation abilities (Shaw & Starr 2019; Hentges et al. 2021). At the same time, these interventions should address the characteristics of both the parent and the child to be effective (Pérez-Edgar et al. 2021). Education and intervention programs considering cultural differences and promoting family involvement can significantly enhance

## **A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children**

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these children's social connections and overall well-being. Intervention programs that promote family involvement and address the cultural differences of Syrian children can strengthen social bonds and improve emotion regulation in children (Khamis 2019; Gredebäck et al. 2021; Kurt et al. 2021). To develop children's emotion regulation skills and reduce the negative effects of trauma, individual factors such as age and trauma level, as well as strengthening parental mental health and parent-child relationships, are critical. In this regard, holistic and supportive interventions for children and parents play a vital role.,

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Further Researches**

This study makes significant contributions by bringing together recommendations for understanding and improving the emotion regulation processes of Syrian children. By examining the emotion regulation processes of children through the lenses of their families, the traumas they have experienced, and other socioeconomic or emotional issues, it has become possible to present a roadmap for social integration. Specifically, addressing resources and recommendations that empower children to recognize and express their emotions, relationships, and effects is expected to contribute significantly to fields that closely work with individual and social welfare components, such as social services, psychology, and sociology.

However, this study has some methodological limitations. First, although comprehensive databases like the Web of Science were used in the search strategy, studies that might be available in other databases may have been excluded from the review. Second, the preference for quantitative, experimental, and quasi-experimental studies may have hindered access to the in-depth information provided by qualitative studies. Third, the articles were not screened in a way that would highlight the differences in the experiences and cultural dynamics of children from different regions of Syria. Finally, the articles evaluated in this study did not consider differences such as Syrian children's direct exposure to war trauma or being born and raised in the new host country.

Based on the strengths and limitations of this study, some recommendations for future research can be made. Future studies should screen articles in a way that allows for comparisons of the emotion regulation processes of Syrian children with different social, economic, and cultural dynamics. Additionally, findings from studies conducted using qualitative research methods should be examined in-depth to focus on the subjective

experiences and cultural dynamics of emotion regulation, which may provide a better understanding of the topic. Finally, the findings of studies measuring the effectiveness of different intervention methods (e.g., cognitive-behavioral therapy, play therapy, art therapy) could be compiled and compared, which may contribute more effectively to developing children's emotion regulation skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examines the effects of war and migration experiences on the emotion regulation skills of Syrian children, evaluating the challenges they face, coping strategies, resources that influence the development of emotion regulation skills, and recommendations. The findings indicate that the traumatic events experienced during war and migration negatively affect both the psychological and social functioning of children. In particular, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and externalizing problems were found to be widespread. Key factors influencing children's emotion regulation capacities include social support, parental attitudes, economic conditions, and language barriers. The findings suggest that strong family bonds and open communication positively affect children's emotional responses and post-trauma recovery processes. However, cultural dynamics and societal stigma were found to hinder the pursuit of professional support and hurt children's well-being.

To enhance children's emotional well-being and improve their emotion regulation skills, the study proposes methods such as increasing emotional awareness among family members, strengthening parent-child relationships, encouraging children's participation in social activities to reduce feelings of loneliness, providing language support in schools, promoting trauma- and culture-sensitive approaches, and implementing family- and group-focused therapeutic interventions. These approaches are suggested to strengthen children's emotion regulation skills and social integration. In conclusion, it is crucial to develop multidisciplinary interventions targeting families, schools, and communities to support children's emotional development.

# A Scoping Review on the Effects of War and Migration on Emotion Regulation In Syrian Children

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<b><i>Çıkar Çatışması:</i></b>	Çalışmada kişiler veya kurumlar arası çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.	<b><i>Conflict of Interest:</i></b>	The authors declare that declare no conflict of interest.
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