

Minority Stress and Socio-Cultural Segregation among Syrian University Students in Türkiye

Mustafa ÖZMEN¹ 

Abstract: Since 2011, Türkiye has been the country most affected by the Syrian civil war. It is important to address some specific psychosocial dynamics such as minority stress in the acculturation processes between Syrians and the host society. The aim of this study is to understand the socio-cultural segregation due to minority stress experienced by Syrian university students who migrated to Türkiye for forced reasons. Thematic analysis was used to analyze an open-ended semi-structured interview with 13 Syrian students staying in Türkiye under "temporary protection" status due to the civil war. The participants were of Turkmen, Arab and Kurdish ethnicities. Participants reported being more prone to in-group activities due to minority stress. The analyses revealed a number of factors contributing to segregation in the students' resocialization processes with the local population: *mistrust towards marriage; social cliques; content differentiation in conversations and repulsive/exclusionary gazes*. The findings indicated that these factors contributed to a socio-cultural segregation in participants whose emotional state stemmed from minority stress as they tried to adapt to the host society. Dynamic implications for mental health professionals regarding this population are discussed.

Keywords: Minority stress, integration, segregation, forced migration, Syrian students.

Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Üniversite Öğrencileri Arasında Azınlık Stresi ve Sosyo-Kültürel Ayrışma

Öz: 2011 yılından bu yana Türkiye, Suriye iç savaşından en çok etkilenen ülke olmuştur. Suriyeliler ile ev sahibi toplum arasındaki kültürleşme süreçlerinde azınlık stresi gibi bazı özel psikososyal dinamiklerin ele alınması önemlidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, zorunlu nedenlerle Türkiye'ye göç eden Suriyeli üniversite öğrencilerinin maruz kaldığı azınlık stresi nedeniyle ortaya çıkan sosyo-kültürel ayrışmayı incelemektir. İç savaş nedeniyle "geçici koruma" statüsü altında Türkiye'de kalan 13 Suriyeli öğrenciyle yapılan açık uçlu yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler tematik analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Katılımcılar Türkmen, Arap ve Kürt etnik kökenlidir. Katılımcılar, azınlık stresi nedeniyle grup içi faaliyetlere daha yatkın olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Analizler, öğrencilerin yerel halkla yeniden sosyalleşme süreçlerinde ayrışmaya katkıda bulunan bir dizi faktörü ortaya çıkarmıştır: *evliliğe karşı güvensizlik; sosyal klikleşmeler; konuşmalarda içerik farklılaşması ve itici/dışlayıcı bakışlar*. Bulgular, bu faktörlerin, azınlık stresinden kaynaklanan duygusal durumları nedeniyle ev sahibi topluma uyum sağlamaya çalışan katılımcıların sosyo-kültürel ayrışmasına katkıda bulunduğunu göstermiştir. Bu sonuçlar dikkate alınarak ruh sağlığı uzmanları için dinamik çıkarımlar tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Azınlık stresi, entegrasyon, ayrışma, zorunlu göç, Suriyeli öğrenciler.

Geliş tarihi/Received: 09.10.2025

Kabul Tarihi/Accepted: 09.03.2026

Makale Türü: **Araştırma Makalesi**

¹ Asst. Prof., Bingöl University, Child Protection and Care Services, mozmen@bingol.edu.tr, 0000-0001-9621-7498

Atf için/ To cite: Özmen, M. (2026). Minority stress and socio-cultural segregation among Syrian university students in Türkiye. *Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Journal of Education*, 23(1), 211-229. <https://doi.org/10.33711/yyuefd.1800284>

Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the total number of migrants resulting from internal and external migration has reached more than 103 million. Mass migration movements, which are largely caused by regional wars, take place to neighboring countries, which are considered to be relatively safer places to live (UNHCR, 2022). Türkiye has the largest share of irregular and mass migration flows from the Syrian Arab Republic (6.8 million migrants), the world's largest source/source country of migration, to neighboring countries. Currently hosting 3.7 million Syrian nationals, Türkiye has the largest refugee population in the world (UNHCR, 2022). Approximately 98.7% of Syrians living outside temporary accommodation centers in Türkiye reside in various provinces of Türkiye, mainly in Istanbul, Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa (Presidency of Migration Management [PMM], 2024). In this framework, the projection regarding the acculturation processes of Syrian migrants with the local population in the medium and long periods should be revealed through in-depth studies. For example, although Syrian students in universities experience integration problems with Turkish students (Levent et al., 2021), there is no study that addresses this problem in the context of minority stress.

Universities are deeply associated with subtle and ingenious marginalization, despite being considered a utopian space where human values are exalted (Stockdill & Danico, 2012). School campuses in the United States are socially and culturally recognized as sites of racial tensions (Williams, 2019). Yet for many, universities are perceived as environments where social awareness, intellectual and psychological development, and analytical thinking skills are acquired and tested. Similarly, universities are spaces where millions of people experience the social and psychological determinants of health (Arday & Mirza, 2018). Therefore, it has become an important need to address the minority stress experienced by Syrians in their environments at the university scale. Because it is seen that 48,192 Syrian students are studying at public universities in Türkiye in the 2021-2022 academic year. This number tends to increase every year (Refugees Association, 2021). Determining what kind of changes in the psychological processes experienced by Syrian students due to the prolongation of their stay in Türkiye will provide important data to university psychological counseling units.

Minority Stress in the Syrian Population

Minority group members disproportionately experience mental health problems compared to the general population (Mays & Cochran, 2001; Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Minority stress can be a significant factor in these problems. Minority stress is a specific stressful life event experienced by members of an ethnic/cultural minority group who are stigmatized, discriminated and prejudiced (Meyer, 2003). These group members are at higher risk for mood disorders, substance abuse and suicidality compared to individuals from mainstream cultures (Cochran, 2001; Gilman et al., 2001; Misra et al., 2021; Sandfort et al., 2004). Thus, being a member of an ethnic minority group is associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing anxiety and depression (English et al., 2020; Clark et al., 1999). Similarly, a higher level of dangerous addiction was found in the Black adolescent group compared to the White adolescent group (Banks et al., 2019). However, regardless of minority stress, commitment to one's own ethnic identity and positive attitude towards it are associated with lower levels of alcohol use (Pugh & Bry, 2007). In other studies, lower levels of depression and anxiety were observed in individuals who did not experience minority stress and had positive racial belonging (Mandara et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2012). However, some psychological problems may arise in the social cliques formed by individuals as a

result of minority stress. Because in individuals who are exposed to explicit or implicit discrimination, the process of self-control is interrupted and psychological stress sources that strengthen the cognitive threat perception are activated (Dion, 2002).

Students representing minority groups at the university level may combine general life stress with racial stress or acculturation stress. Specifically, these students experience a cumulative stress due to the effort (obligation) to distance themselves from the social structure to which they feel they belong and to achieve a certain level of academic success (Pittman et al., 2019). In a study conducted with Latino students, a negative relationship was found between minority stress and belonging to the school culture (Roche & Kuperminc, 2012). Minority stress also has a significant predictive effect on academic achievement (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013). In the United States, it has been observed that African and Latino students have a negative academic expectation framework compared to the European students (Pringle et al., 2010; Van den Bergh et al., 2010; Glock, 2016). Similarly, in the United States, it has been observed that students of African descent are less frequently referred to gifted classes compared to the European descent students (Weir, 2016). All these experiences in the school environment are directly related to minority stress experienced by minority group members (Fisher et al., 2000). This racially based stress is associated with anxiety, depression and some somatic symptoms (Pieterse & Carter, 2007). Moreover, sources of racial stress are multidimensional. They range from lifelong and day-to-day subtle patterns of racism (e.g., microaggressions) to vicarious experiences of racism, from collective patterns of racism to forms of racism that persist across generations (Harrell, 2000). The minority stress responses of individuals exposed to ethnic discrimination also differ significantly from responses to other forms of stress (McDermott et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2010). Racial stress also significantly affects individuals' socialization processes and acculturation journeys (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). The current study examined the life experiences of migrants who migrated to Türkiye for compulsory reasons and their psycho-social consequences related to minority stress factor due to the increasing duration.

Segregation of the Syrian Population

The main agenda of refugee integration into the host country is acculturation. Acculturation is defined as the process of cultural and psychosocial change resulting from cultural contact between two different cultural structures (Berry, 2019). Although acculturation is considered as a secondary learning process acquired by two different groups due to social contact (Rudmin et al., 2017), there are also different approaches. It is possible to consider the acculturation process under four headings: Integration, assimilation, segregation and marginalization. In integration, the individual has the desire/will to preserve and mutually associate both the hereditary codes of his/her own culture and the components of the host culture. In assimilation, the individual has the desire to adopt the core values of the host culture rather than the desire to preserve their own cultural values. In segregation, the individual has a strong drive to preserve his or her own culture while significantly refusing to adopt the host culture. Finally, in marginalization, there is a significant avoidance of social contact with the host society and a lack of desire to preserve one's own cultural codes (Berry, 2019). The vast majority of migrants prefer some form of integration (Sam & Berry, 2016). The way the host country legally defines migrants can significantly affect the acculturation process. Syrians in Türkiye are not defined as refugees but as persons under "temporary protection" status (Şimşek, 2020). This has led the local population to perceive Syrians as guests. However, as the duration of their stay increased, some racially-based problems began to emerge between the

local population and Syrians (Toğral-Koca, 2016). According to the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2018), there were approximately 181 violent judicial cases against Syrians in Türkiye in 2017.

It is revealed that the most approved structure in the acculturation processes of minority group members and immigrants is integration, while the least preferred structure, which is considered as a problematic area, is marginalization (Carlson & Güler, 2018; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011). Previous studies show that integration has a linear relationship with time spent (Berry et al., 2006; Grigoryev & Berry, 2017). It is clear that migrants arriving in the country are likely to opt for disengagement from acculturation strategies at the beginning of migration in order to preserve their own cultural values/code (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011). However, despite the more than 10 years that have passed, the contact Syrians have established with the local population and the social networks they have realized strongly hint that they may turn into a closed society (Uslu, 2022). This situation significantly increases the risk of segregation of Syrians in Türkiye. Şar and Kuru's (2020) study showed that both the frequency and quality of contact between locals and Syrian migrants is very limited. Interestingly, in studies conducted in Western Europe with individuals of Turkish origin with migrant status, it has been observed that many of them are considering returning and are not willing to learn the language of the host society. The same study found that even Turkish migrants who stayed longer than planned in Western Europe had very limited contact with the local community (Kunuroglu et al., 2015). It is also known that younger individuals are more likely to adopt the values of the host society and less motivated to preserve their own cultural values (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2010). In this study, the acculturation journey of relatively young Syrian university students in Türkiye due to minority stress will be discussed. In recent years, large-scale studies have been conducted in Türkiye on the basic vital experiences and acculturation processes of individuals of Syrian origin (Akar & Erdoğan, 2019; Erdoğan, 2014; Uslu, 2022). However, no study has been found that addresses the factors affecting the acculturation processes of Syrians in depth on the scale of minority stress.

Method

Sampling and Recruitment

Purposive sampling was used to conduct the study with a specific group. The target group of participants was reached through (a) TÖMER and the international relations office for Syrian migrant students studying at various universities in Türkiye; (b) WhatsApp groups where Syrian university students are concentrated; (c) provincial migration administrations that try to carry out migration management on a provincial basis in Türkiye. In order to participate in the study, participants were required to meet the minimum requirements of (a) being a de facto resident in Türkiye for at least 5 years; (b) being an active student of any university, including the participants who participated in the pilot study process. The author and a trained guidance and psychological counseling doctoral student conducted face-to-face and telephone interviews with potential participants during the recruitment process.

Participants

The final group of participants consisted of 13 people (see table 1). The participants settled in Türkiye between 2013 and 2017. The participant group includes both those who have Turkish citizenship (2) and those who reside in Türkiye with temporary protection status (11). In terms of education level, the participants were in the university preparatory stage ($n = 2$), 1st grade ($n = 3$), 2nd grade ($n = 4$), 3rd grade ($n = 2$) and 4th grade ($n = 2$). The age groups of the participants ranged

between 22 and 26 and the mean age was ($M = 23.54$). The genders of the participants were female ($n = 7$) and male ($n = 6$). The students who participated in the study studied at Bingöl University ($n = 7$), Siirt University ($n = 2$), Muş Alparslan University ($n = 4$). The students reside in the eastern and southeastern regions of Türkiye.

Data Collection

The data revealed Syrian university students' experiences of minority stress during the socialization process with the local community in Türkiye and its relationship with the acculturation process. In this study, data were collected through semi-structured interview forms based on studies on minority stress (Smedley et al., 1993) and acculturation strategies (Barry, 2001; Balcı & Ögüt, 2019). While creating the interview questionnaires, the spectrum suggested by Patton (2014) from demographic structure to thought and value practice, from behavior to knowledge and sensory structure was taken into consideration. The interviewer asked the following questions to explore the cultural and social segregation experienced by Syrian students due to minority stress: What is it like to live on a campus where the majority are Turkish? How does living in Türkiye make you feel? Who do you spend more time with in your daily life (Turks or Syrians)? How do you feel when spending time with Turks?

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants.

Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Arrival date in Türkiye
P-1	Female	23	Arabian	2016
P-2	Female	25	Arabian	2015
P-3	Male	22	Kurdish	2015
P-4	Male	22	Arabian	2017
P-5	Female	26	Arabian	2013
P-6	Female	25	Arabian	2014
P-7	Male	23	Turkmen	2015
P-8	Female	23	Turkmen	2015
P-9	Female	24	Arabian	2017
P-10	Male	22	Turkmen	2015
P-11	Male	24	Kurdish	2014
P-12	Female	25	Arabian	2016
P-13	Male	22	Turkmen	2014

The author interviewed 13 participants. A pilot interview was conducted to test the questions in the interview form. After the pilot interview, some corrections were made to the questionnaires and the data obtained from this interview were not included in the analysis. The interview took place in November 2023 and December 2023. Interview durations varied between 30 minutes and 45 minutes. A short phone call was made before the interview, during which information was given about the confidentiality of private life in the study, that the data obtained would not be used outside of a scientific study, and that real names would not be included. It was also emphasized that the sincere and sincere answers of the participants were important for the study to achieve its purpose. Since the participants were university students studying in different provinces of Türkiye, a face-to-face interview was not possible. Interviews were conducted and recorded through online platforms. Participants did not receive any remuneration or reward for

participating in the study. After the pilot interview, when the questionnaires were finalized, the approval of the university's social and humanities ethics committee was applied for and obtained.

Data Analysis

The coding process was carried out using the NVivo 12 software package. In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting structures in data in a holistic and systematic way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis provided a more advantageous methodology for this study in terms of its flexible and epistemologically strong structure, enabling deepening without digitizing the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis, which allows the data to be analyzed from both psychological and social perspectives, can also reveal some unforeseen insights. This methodology is relatively less complex and easier to learn and has many potential advantages for the data sets obtained (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Reliability of the study

Member checking and investigator triangulation techniques (Creswell, 2014), which are frequently used in qualitative studies, were used to ensure the reliability of the study. In the qualitative paradigm, member checking is vitally important in terms of the reliability of the study and the researcher's negative and unrealistic assumptions (Anney, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Researcher triangulation is the process in which more than one researcher independently tests the reliability of the study through the same data set in a comparative manner (Patton, 2014). In order to test the researcher's bias and prejudices in the process of coding the data and creating categories, the analytical process of two researchers who had previously conducted studies on Syrians was compared. After the themes that were decided to be compatible were determined, the process of placing the quotations and the researcher's interpretation began.

Results

Participants described the effects of the difficulties they encountered in university and social life in Türkiye, where they migrated for compulsory reasons, on their acculturation journey. Most of the participants revealed a process of racial solidarity that encompassed minority stress in terms of categorical and content, as most of the participants had lived experiences that could trigger cultural segregation. Similarly, most of the participants reported limited social contact and cultural exchange due to their religious/cultural affiliation in the country of origin and the influence of explicit or implicit discriminatory behavioral patterns in Türkiye. Based on the assumption that egalitarian values are glorified and the tolerance threshold for differences is higher, it was observed that the approaches to encourage minority stress in the university environment were relatively limited. In this framework, the following themes were identified: *Mistrust towards marriage, Social Cliques, Content Differentiation in Conversations and Repulsive/Exclusionary Views*. In order to explain the themes, participants' statements were included directly. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' confidentiality against invasion of privacy.

Mistrust towards marriage

Religious and cultural similarities between the host country and the country of origin constitute an important source of structure for the integration and cohesion of both structures. However, the future concerns of Syrians and the meaning that Turks attribute to marriage point to

an important problem area in the process of realizing this marriage. In this theme, p-13 explained the following:

In other words, in terms of religion, if someone goes to ask for a girl, there should be kindness, courtesy, love so that the marriage will last. Otherwise, it will end. Now if someone goes to ask for a girl, whether Turkish or Syrian, he is afraid of the other side's gaze. Now we have a Turkish friend. They went to ask for a Syrian, no problem. Now there is a Syrian, if he goes to ask for a girl, he has no home, nothing to take shelter in. He has no ties. From this point of view, if the girl's family takes care of her, it would be a problem and she would be afraid. That's why there is a problem for Turks to ask for a girl.

University students also have some constructive and positive views on marriage with a Turkish national. The fact that universities are sterile spaces where humanitarian feelings are glorified above the average of the society may be an important factor here. However, there is an opinion in Türkiye that the marriage of Syrian girls to Turks may cause some significant victimization in the short term. For example, P-10 emphasizes that although she has a positive approach to marriage with a Turk, the widespread opinion points to the opposite situation:

Normally, I can marry a Turk, but there is a problem for other Syrians. Letting them down halfway. I mean, because the traditions and customs are different, they may leave you halfway. In this way, the marriage may not last...

It is clear that while participants have made some attempts to marry Turks, they have significant concerns about whether the marriage is sustainable. For example, although P-4 considers marriage with Turks as an option, she considers that the expectations of girls in the host social structure are too complex and exaggerated to be met. On the contrary, she argues that the demands of a Syrian girl are realistic and acceptable:

Yes, I proposed marriage to a Turk, even the lecturers knew it, I mean their lifestyle and culture are very different from ours. I mean, I even got married now. I mean, I didn't go far, I took someone from our culture (Syrian) and got married. The important thing is to be able to live with me, to get along with me. Especially, for example, Turkish girls or Kurdish girls tell me "I need a house, I need a car, I need something, I need everything". But for example, I just got married, (my wife) says "I don't want much, I just want to be happy, I just want to live." That's it, I mean... for example, Turkish girls or Kurdish girls want to talk to everyone, I mean they can talk, but we, for example, we don't have such a thing.

Currently, Syrians reside in Türkiye under "temporary protection" status. This is a confusing problem for any Syrian youth planning for the future, including marriage. Moreover, the number of Syrians who have acquired Turkish citizenship represents a minority of the total Syrian population. For most of the participants, the process of deciding to get married should be understood as a social organization that includes family dynamics rather than a contract between two people. However, Turkish girls' active social lives and flexible perspectives on male-female relationships are the basis for one Syrian's concerns. P-5 explains this as follows:

The biggest obstacle in marriage is language. So parents say "what if I don't get along. How will this happen." Especially those who are not Turkish citizens (Syrians), people say that today and tomorrow your time here is over. If they tell you to leave, what will we do if the girl says "no, I will not go to Syria". There is this, people inevitably go and find someone of their own race. Also, I personally don't accept it, girls shouldn't be too social, their clothes

shouldn't be too sociable, I mean, if they don't follow religion, I mean, after all, someone who will suit my family, she will be my wife, she will be the mother of my children. I would not accept that either. Also, for example, some girls in Türkiye say "I am a woman, I can do whatever I want, you cannot interfere with me, I can wear whatever I want, I can see whomever I want." This is a bit troubling; Syrians also think about this. What will we do if they say "I am a woman too, I have such rights".

Most of the participants, especially women, emphasized that social contact with Turks does not turn into dialogue. In other words, the habit of evaluating Turks through some stereotypes is dominant. Especially among the female participants, it was observed that there is a hegemonic cultural structure in which the families' approach to marriage is taken as a criterion. For example, P-2 explained the following:

The most common reason for marriage is that we don't know this family, and we don't know anything about them, why should we marry our daughters to them. If you ask, anyone can say, "I am fine". I mean, maybe the person is bad, maybe he drinks. I don't know, that's what our families tell us. So I don't know, I have no idea. But when our families say that, we don't think about it. Some families say "we are all Muslims", it doesn't matter if they are Turkish or Syrian. But our family and many families do not think like that.

Social cliques

It was observed that most of the participants had factionalization in their social relationships. This can turn into a closed group form, which is significantly higher among female students. In a classroom and campus climate where the number of Syrian students is very low, social integration and cultural exchange are at a good level. P-11 stated that in a process where ethnic-based grouping has begun, the groups will gradually increase the consolidation among themselves:

Of course, this can be different from person to person. Because each person has different abilities to enter the society. I spend time with both Turks and Syrians, so there was no problem for me. But I normally say that there can be more than 10 Syrian or Arab students in a class. Now, when this happens, these Syrian or Arab students get closer to each other. It is as if they form two separate groups in the classroom. Some Turks may have prejudice against us.

As stated above, the number of Syrian students in universities, faculties and classrooms is directly related to acculturation processes. One of the participants, P-4, explains as follows: "Normally, I always spend my time with Turks because I am the only Syrian in the class. They are all Turkish in general. So I always spend my time with them."

It was observed that ethnic-based social collaboration among the participants was based on fear and anxiety. Female students tried to address their security concerns by interacting with others from their own ethnicity. In situations where there is almost no social contact, unrealistic views and opinions are rationalized. P-3 took advantage of the fact that he was the only male student at his university. However, two female students at the same university were influenced by paranoid thoughts due to the lack of interaction with local students:

In our university there was a Syrian me and two women. I didn't do anything. I was spending time with the Turks, but there were the two girls I mentioned. They were doing something, they were afraid. They were always telling me when they went somewhere. They kept

telling me "how come you have so many friends, aren't you scared, don't they say anything bad to you, don't they cause trouble". For example, when they had a picnic, they included me in the group without my knowledge. Last year there was a fair, he called me and said, "There is such and such a fair, I've put your name down, just so you know. They never said "do you want to come?", I mean by force, if we are going, so are you.

Content differentiation in conversations

The specific topics discussed by the participants differ significantly from the local population in terms of content. For example, for Syrian students, discussing interest in the opposite sex in public is not something that can be considered within the boundaries of acceptance in daily life. This approach, in which religious sensitivities are taken as the main reference, reduces the frequency and quality of contact between Syrian students and host students. P-8 explained this as follows:

I was spending my time with Syrian students, because I mean, the topics we talk about are always the same, I mean, the same environment, the same method. The topics are almost close. But the Turks, I didn't spend much time with them, they are also a bit shy. Because the topics are different, I mean completely different topics... For example, the Turks talk about love among themselves, I mean this girl so and so, I liked her, I left her, we hung out. They only talk about that topic. So there is no other topic.

The fact that host students sometimes "in good faith" joke with Syrian students can be perceived as an implicit exclusionary attitude. Because microaggressive behavior models, which are a subtle, nuanced and strategic type of exclusion, can lead to a sociocultural segregation. The host student's rejection of this exclusionary attitude does not eliminate the victimization of the Syrian student. In this context, P-10 stated that he found some demographic questions as boring as possible and considered them as a prerequisite for being perceived as "other":

When we sit with them, they say to me "p-10, how do you make a living, how do you live?" These are questions we don't like. So they are all the same. I mean, excuse me, we sat once during the break. Turkish friends drank tea. I drank Sahlep. So they said to me "oooo Hasan you are so rich, how come you drink this. I mean we don't drink it". These things are boring to me.

Repulsive and Exclusionary gaze

Social media and mainstream media circulate news about Syrians that do not reflect the reality. Turkish students may ask questions to Syrian students with reference to these news reports. These questions imply that Syrians have a more privileged position in Türkiye than locals. P-1 explains these questions from host students as follows:

The first problem that comes to my mind in Türkiye is this, we had a friend. He said "the state takes care of you. It gives you scholarships, electricity money, this and that. And you enter universities without exams, you can enter the department you want, the university you want." He even asked me "why did you choose this department, you could have chosen a better department and university." So I explained, I took the exam, I took the foreign student exam, my score was 65. I could only get into this department. That's it.

The work environment differs from the university environment to a certain extent. The Syrian student is unable to establish contact and dialog with the local community outside the

university. For example, discourses and approaches that open the door to segregation stand as an important handicap for P-6's integration with the people of the host country:

I have been in Türkiye for 10 years, I didn't see it much at the university but I saw it a lot outside, those repulsive looks. Especially when I work somewhere, someone comes and they talk about me among themselves. For example, when they see me in stores, there are second glances. "Oh, Syrians are having fun here, they do whatever they want, they buy whatever they want" and so on. That's what they say. But for example, there are 32 of us at the university. 2 people are only Syrian. Fortunately, we had very nice conversations with Turks outside.

Finally, P-9 stated that being Syrian in Türkiye leads to a disadvantageous situation in terms of employment and working conditions (personal rights). He reported that Syrians' skills and job performance are not taken into account when they are employed and that they are exposed to some exclusionary elements:

I mean, there is something we don't like in Turks, I mean, not in everyone, but there is racism. After graduation, if the Syrian student lives in Türkiye, if he/she is not a Turkish citizen, it is very difficult for him/her to find a job in his/her field, this is one, and if he/she wants to work, the companies pay very low salaries, even though they are talented, they pay very low salaries. I mean compared to Turks, most of them don't have insurance. In fact, as far as I know, they register my friend as an internship. This may be the biggest problem after graduation, before graduation, language.

Discussion

The current study explored the impact/contribution of minority stress on sociocultural segregation experienced by Syrian university students who migrated to Türkiye for forced reasons. The themes indicate that the segregation experienced by the participants from the mainstream cultural structure is supported by mistrust towards marriage, social cliques, content differentiation in conversations, and repulsive/exclusionary gaze. The findings are similar to previous studies on Syrians (Akar & Erdoğan, 2019; Erdoğan, 2014; Uslu, 2022; Şar & Kuru, 2020) and Turks abroad (Kunuroglu et al., 2015). The most unique contribution of this study to the literature is to deepen the understanding of a possible sociocultural segregation that Syrians may experience by addressing them in the context of minority stress. The findings indicated that the social segregation experienced by Syrian students cannot be considered independently of minority stress. Participants revealed that the minority stress they experienced was also associated with ethnic microaggression. This finding is in line with previous studies (Swann et al., 2022). Turks' well-intentioned speech towards Syrians, perhaps with good intentions, may have implicit exclusionary messages. This situation strengthens the in-group dynamics of Syrian students and results in segregation.

All of the themes identified in this study have a structure that can contribute to a sociocultural segregation. However, especially their distance towards marriage revealed the segregation in a dominant way. Because marriage is an important social and psychological threshold for integration. While other themes were shaped by current experiences in the university environment, the theme of distrust towards marriage provided us with an important projection of the future. For female participants, it was revealed that their families took a stricter position on their marriage to a Turk, while male participants were unable to evaluate Turkish girls as suitable candidates for marriage in terms of belief/cultural practice. Male participants stated that Turkish girls were not conservative in their communication with the opposite sex and that this could create

a number of barriers to marriage. However, male participants were relatively more accepting of marriage planning with Turks than female participants. Here, in addition to the concern that Syrian women would not be able to resist the hegemonic influence of Turkish men, they also expressed that their own families might resist this marriage.

Syrian students were observed to experience stress and anxiety when sharing the same environment with Turkish students. The questions asked and attitudes implied contained implicit messages of exclusion. As in previous studies, minority stress is directly related to negative mental state (Mandara et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2012). The first defense mechanism they resort to against this emotional state they experience is the search for a safe space. The grouping process they experienced with friends of their own ethnicity responded to the search for a safe space, but it also brought about a significant dissociation with the mainstream cultural structure. Meanwhile, since Syrian students are at the beginning of the forced migration process to Türkiye, the segregation they experience is in line with previous studies (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011). However, it is unclear whether this process has turned into a chronic structure.

The fact that the subject Syrian students speak about is different from Turkish students is also an important indicator of segregation. Because in the process of segregation, while trying to protect one's own cultural codes with a strong action, one creates a protected area against other cultural structures (Berry, 2019). This structure is a natural reflex against assimilation. However, integration is a cultural exchange. It has been observed that Syrian students are distant from integration, which is the healthiest form of acculturation, and that this is due to minority stress. This risk is especially high in universities where there are enough Syrian students to create a group dynamic. Even in universities that are relatively sterile and adopt a strict attitude against exclusionary attitudes, it is clear that minority stress experienced by minority group members is directly related to academic failure (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013). Segregation in university students due to minority stress is also associated with general life stress (Pittman et al., 2019). Mental illnesses directly related to minority stress need to be addressed in the Syrian population.

It is stated that the tolerance threshold of early ages is much higher in acculturation processes (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2010). However, the existence of a potential segregation tendency in Syrian students' current attitudes and future planning is an important problem area. Syrian university students who spent time with friends of their own ethnicity were found to be motivated to identify with (friends of their own race) due to the causal effect of minority stress. Members of ethnic minority groups are known to have much riskier drinking habits (Banks et al., 2019). This contributes to our understanding of how social and cultural segregation can lead to risky situations in Syrian students over time.

The findings from this study have some technical implications for clinical practice with Syrian students. Mental health professionals in Türkiye need to develop their understanding of the specific mainstream cultural constructs of Syrians before beginning counseling sessions. This will help them make sense of a social or psychological problem experienced by Syrian students. In this context, minority group members are at much higher risk for social, mental and substance abuse (Cochran, 2001; Gilman et al., 2001; Misra et al., 2021; Sandfort et al., 2004). A correlation was found between the number of Syrian students in the university and dissociation processes caused by minority stress. In this framework, mental health professionals can conduct insight and awareness studies through focus group studies or psychoeducation groups with all minority groups at the university at regular intervals. For example, the practice of human libraries (Human Library,

2022), where a member of a minority group is hosted by members of the host community for a certain period of time, can have a significant social psychological impact.

Finally, mental health professionals can teach methods to strengthen students' coping skills against microaggressive behavior models that implicitly contain repulsive and exclusionary attitudes in the university environment. Because individuals who are exposed to this situation not only face the risk of cultural segregation, but also are included in a higher risk group for depression and suicide (O'Keefe et al., 2015). Coping skills related to the difficulties experienced in the acculturation process may vary on a cultural scale (Berry, 1997). However, the natural reflexes of a minority group member against implicit or explicitly repulsive and exclusionary attitudes (Hernández et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2013) can be evaluated in the case of Syrians in Türkiye. Functional and constructive coping skills can be discussed and their applicability can be put on the agenda.

Limitations

This study has several important limitations. First, although the issue of minority stress and segregation in Syrian university students has not been studied, our findings in the qualitative paradigm do not provide us with data on whether there is a widespread effect beyond the participants included in the study. Quantitative research can be conducted in this area that can test strong causal relationships and reveal the widespread effect. In addition, in this study, gender was found to be an important factor in terms of segregation due to minority stress. However, it is unclear whether there is a differentiation in terms of demographic constructs such as age, length of stay, education level, socioeconomic status. A study that includes these factors may provide more in-depth and inclusive results. Secondly, the purposive sampling method was used to select the participants and the prerequisite of voluntariness was sought; there is no evidence as to whether those who chose not to participate in the study experienced minority stress and segregation to a lesser extent. Another limitation of the study is that a significant portion of the participants reside in a single geographical region of Türkiye. Third, although the findings from the thematic analysis point to a relationship between minority stress and cultural segregation, an experimental or longitudinal design is needed for a good test of causality. Lastly, the mental health problems related to minority stress experienced by individuals may not be directly related to their social life in the host country. It is also possible that the dissociation process due to minority stress can be explained by a personality disorder or a specific affective disorder.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights how Syrian university students' acculturation processes are shaped by minority stress. The direct and indirect effects of minority stress on acculturation are varied, and acculturation is associated with sharing the same environment, being able to talk about similar topics, and eventually dreaming of marriage with members of the host community. The combination of these factors strengthens the social and cultural adaptation of ethnic minority members in the host country. If Syrians stay longer in Türkiye, they may integrate with members of the host community, but they may also experience processes of marginalization or segregation. In order for them to integrate with the host society, re-socialization processes should be addressed instead of creating a closed group norm as a result of minority stress. These findings contribute to the theoretical knowledge on the adaptation of foreign university students to the mainstream culture and strengthen practices.

Ethics Committee Approval Information: This research was conducted with the approval of the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Bingöl University, dated 15/11/23, numbered 33117789/044/132136.

Author Conflict of Interest Information: There is no conflict of interest in this study, and no financial support has been received.

Author Contribution: The study is single-authored.

Declaration: Depl was also utilised during the translation process for this study.

References

- Akar, S., & Erdoğan, M. M. (2019). Syrian refugees in Turkey and integration problem ahead. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 20*(3), 925–940. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0639-0>
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 5*(2), 272-281.
- Arday, J., & Mirza, H. S. (Eds.). (2018). *Dismantling race in higher education: Racism, whiteness and decolonising the academy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Balcı, Ş., & Öğüt, N. (2019). Yabancı uyruklu üniversite öğrencileri arasında kültürleşme ve kültürleşme stratejileri. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 42*(Özel sayı), 49-62.
- Banks, D. E., Winningham, R. D., Wu, W., & Zapolski, T. C. B. (2019). Examination of the indirect effect of alcohol expectancies on ethnic identity and adolescent drinking outcomes. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 89*(5), 600-608. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000390>
- Barry, D. T. (2001). Development of a new scale for measuring acculturation: The East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM). *Journal of Immigrant Health, 3*(4), 193–197. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1012227611547>
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46*(1), 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026999497378467>
- Berry, J. W. (2019). Acculturation: A personal journey across cultures. In C. M. Allwood (Ed.), *Elements in psychology and culture series*. Cambridge University Press
- Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology and International Review, 55*(3), 303–332.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77–101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Carlson, E., & Güler, A. (2018). Cultural involvement and preference in immigrant acculturation. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 19*(3), 625–647. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0554-4>
- Clark, R., Anderson, N. B., Clark, V. R., & Williams, D. R. (1999). Racism as a stressor for African Americans: A biopsychosocial model. *American Psychologist, 54*, 805–816.

- Cochran, S. D. (2001). Emerging issues in research on lesbians' and gay men's mental health: Does sexual orientation really matter? *American Psychologist, 56*, 931–947.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (Fourth Edition). USA: SAGE Publication, Inc.
- Dion, K. L. (2002). The social psychology of perceived prejudice and discrimination. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie canadienne, 43*(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0086899>
- English, D., Lambert, S. F., Tynes, B. M., Bowleg, L., Zea, M. C., & Howard, L. C. (2020). Daily multidimensional racial discrimination among Black U.S. American adolescents. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 66*, 101068. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2019.101068>
- Erdoğan, M. M. (2014). Perceptions of Syrians in Turkey. *Insight Turkey, 16*(4), 65–75.
- Fisher, C. B., Wallace, S. A., & Fenton, R. E. (2000). Discrimination distress during adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 29*(6), 679–695. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026455906512>.
- Garcia Coll, C., Crnic, K., Lamberty, G., Wasik, B. H., Jenkins, R., Garcia, H. V., & McAadoo, H. P. (1996). An integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children. *Child Development, 67*(5), 1891–1914. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01834.x>.
- Gillen-O'Neel, C., & Fuligni, A. (2013). A longitudinal study of school belonging and academic motivation across high school. *Child Development, 84*(2), 678–692. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01862.x>.
- Gilman, S. E., Cochran, S. D., Mays, V. M., Hughes, M., Ostrow, D., & Kessler, R. C. (2001). Risk of psychiatric disorders among individuals reporting same-sex sexual partners in the National Comorbidity Survey. *American Journal of Public Health, 91*, 933–939.
- Glock, S. (2016). Does ethnicity matter? The impact of stereotypical expectations on in-service teachers' judgments of students. *Social Psychology of Education, 19*(3), 493–509. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-016-9349-7>.
- Grigoryev, D., & Berry, J. W. (2017). Acculturation preferences, ethnic and religious identification and the socio-economic adaptation of Russian-speaking immigrants in Belgium. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 46*(6), 537–557.
- Harrell, S. P. (2000). A multidimensional conceptualization of racism-related stress: Implications for the well-being of people of color. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 70*, 42–57. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0087722>
- Hernández, P., Carranza, M., & Almeida, R. (2010). Mental health professionals' adaptive responses to racial microaggressions: An exploratory study. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 41*(3), 202–209. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0018445>
- Human Library (2022). *About the human library*. Retrieved from <https://humanlibrary.org/about/>
- International Crisis Group (ICG) (2018). *Turkey's Syrian refugees: Defusing metropolitan tensions*, Europe Report No. 248 (Brussels: International Crisis Group 2018)

- Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., Horenczyk, G., & Kinunen, T. (2011). Time and context in the relationship between acculturation attitudes and adaptation among Russian-speaking immigrants in Finland and Israel. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(9), 1423–1440.
- Kunuroglu, F., Yagmur, K., van de Vijver, F. J. R., & Kroon, S. (2015). Consequences of Turkish return migration from Western Europe. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 49, 198–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.10.004>.
- Levent, F., F. Ö. Gül, and T. Aydemir. 2021. “Suriyeli Üniversite Öğrenci lerinin Türkiye’de Üniversite Deneyimleri [The university experiences of Syrian students in Türkiye].” *Milli Eğitim Dergisi [Journal of Milli Eğitim]* 50, (1), 807–835. <https://doi.org/10.37669/milliegitim.873198>.
- Lewis, J. A., Mendenhall, R., Harwood, S. A., & Hunt, M. B. (2013). Coping with gendered racial microaggressions among Black women college students. *Journal of African American Studies*, 17(1), 51–73. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12111-012-9219-0>
- Mandara, J., Gaylord-Harden, N. K., Richards, M. H., & Ragsdale, B. L. (2009). The effects of changes in racial identity and self-esteem on changes in African American adolescents mental health. *Child Development*, 80(6), 1660–1675. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01360.x>
- Mays, V. M., & Cochran, S. D. (2001). Mental health correlates of perceived discrimination among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91, 1869–1876.
- McDermott, E. R., Umana-Taylor, A. J., & Martinez- Fuentes, S. (2019). Measuring Latino adolescents’ coping with ethnic-racial discrimination. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 37(6), 730–742. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282918792384>
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 674–697.
- Misra, S., Jackson, V. W., Chong, J., Choe, K., Tay, C., Wong, J., & Yang, L. H. (2021). Systematic review of cultural aspects of stigma and mental illness among racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States: Implications for interventions. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 68(3-4), 486–512. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12516>
- O’Keefe, V. M., Wingate, L. R., Cole, A. B., Hollingsworth, D. W., & Tucker, R. P. (2015). Seemingly harmless racial communications are not so harmless: Racial microaggressions lead to suicidal ideation by way of depression symptoms. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 45(5), 567–576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12150>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron? Quality & Quantity: *International Journal of Methodology*, 41(2), 233–249. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-006-9000-3>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Nitel araştırma ve değerlendirme yöntemleri*. (M. Bütün ve S. B. Demir, Çev.). Pegem.

- Pieterse, A. L., & Carter, R. T. (2007). An examination of the relationship between general life stress, racism-related stress, and psychological health among black men. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(1), 101–109. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.54.1.101>
- Pittman, D. M., Brooks, J. J., Kaur, P., & Obasi, E. M. (2019). The cost of minority stress: Risky alcohol use and coping-motivated drinking behavior in African American college students. *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse, 18*(2), 257-278.
- Presidency of Migration Management, (PMM). (2024). *Temporary Protection*. Retrieved from <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>
- Pringle, B. E., Lyons, J. E., & Booker, K. C. (2010). Perceptions of teacher expectations by African American high school students. *The Journal of Negro Education, 79*(1), 33–40. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25676107>.
- Pugh, L. A., & Bry, B. H. (2007). The protective effects of ethnic identity for alcohol and marijuana use among Black young adults. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 13*(2), 187–193.
- Refugees Association (2021). *Number of Syrians in Turkey December 2021*. Retrieve from <https://multeciler.org.tr/eng/number-of-syrians-in-turkey-december-2021/>
- Roche, C., & Kuperminc, G. P. (2012). Acculturative stress and school belonging among Latino youth. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 34*(1), 61–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986311430084>.
- Rudmin, F., Wang, B., & de Castro, J. (2017). Acculturation research critiques and alternative research designs. In S. J. Schwartz & J. B. Unger (Eds.), *Oxford library of psychology. The Oxford handbook of acculturation and health* (pp.75–95). Oxford University Press.
- Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (Eds.). (2016). *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Sandfort, T. G. M., de Graaf, R., Bijl, R. V., & Schnabel, P. (2004). Same-sex sexual behavior and psychiatric disorders: Findings from the Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study (NEMESIS). *Archives of General Psychiatry, 58*, 85–91.
- Şar, E., & Kuru, N. O. (2020). *İstanbul'da Suriyeli Sığınmacılara Yönelik Tutumlar* (Rapor no. 2020 – 011). İnsan ve Toplumsal Kalkınma Programı.
- Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist, 65*(4), 237–251. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019330>
- Şimşek, D. (2020). Integration processes of Syrian refugees in Turkey: ‘Class-based integration’. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 33*(3), 537–554. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey057>
- Smedley, B. D., Myers, H. F., & Harell, S. P. (1993). Minority-status stresses and the college adjustment of ethnic minority freshmen. *Journal of Higher Education, 64*(4), 434-452.
- Stockdill, B. C., & Danico, M. Y. (2012). Te Ivory Tower Paradox: Higher Education as a Site of Oppression and Resistance. In B. C. Stockdill & M. Y. Danico (Eds.), *Transforming the Ivory Tower: Challenging Racism, Sexism, and Homophobia in the Academy* (pp. 1–30). Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press

- Swann, G., Dyar, C., Baidoo, L., Crosby, S., Newcomb, M. E., & Whitton, S. W. (2022). Intersectional minority stress and intimate partner violence: the effects of enacted stigma on racial minority youth assigned female at birth. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 51(2), 1031-1043. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-01958-1>.
- Szymanski, D. M., & Stewart, D. N. (2010). Racism and sexism as correlates of African American women's psychological distress. *Sex Roles*, 63, 226–238.
- Toğral-Koca, B. (2016). Syrian refugees in Turkey: from “guests” to “enemies”? *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 54(1), 55–75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2016.4>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (UNHCR). (2022). *UNHCR mid-year trends 2022*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/unhcr-mid-year-trends-2022>
- Uslu, L. (2022). Kültürleşme bağlamında geçici koruma statüsüne sahip Suriyelilerin sosyal uyumları üzerine bir değerlendirme [Evaluation of Social Integration of Syrians Under the Temporary Protection Status in the Context of Acculturation]. *İçtimaiyat*, 6(Göç ve Mültecilik Özel Sayısı), 229-251. <https://doi.org/10.33709/ictimaiyat.1082360>
- Van den Bergh, L., Denessen, E., Hornstra, L., Voeten, M., & Holland, R. W. (2010). The implicit prejudiced attitudes of teachers relations to teacher expectations and the ethnic achievement gap. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(2), 497–527. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831209353594>.
- Wei, M., Alvarez, A. N., Ku, T., Russell, D. W., & Bonett, D. G. (2010). Development and validation of a Coping with Discrimination Scale: Factor structure, reliability, and validity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(3), 328–344. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019969>
- Weir, K. (2016). Inequality at school. *Monitor on Psychology*, 47(10), 42–47.
- Williams, M. T. (2019). Adverse racial climates in academia: Conceptualization, interventions, and call to action. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 55(2019), 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2019.05.002>
- Williams, M. T., Chapman, L. K., Wong, J., & Turkheimer, E. (2012). The role of ethnic identity in symptoms of anxiety and depression in African Americans. *Psychiatry Research*, 199(1), 31–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2012.03.049>

Geniş Özet

Giriş

Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Yüksek Komiserliği (UNHCR) (2022) verileri, iç ve dış göçlerin kaynaklık ettiği toplam göçmen sayısının 103 milyonu aşkın bir sayıya ulaştığını belirtti. Büyük ölçüde bölgesel savaşlardan kaynaklanan kitlesel göç hareketleri nispeten daha güvenli bir yaşam alanı olarak değerlendirilen komşu ülkelere gerçekleşmektedir (UNHCR, 2022). Dünyada en fazla göç veren kaynak/menşe ülke konumundaki Suriye Arap Cumhuriyeti'nden (6,8 milyon göçmen) komşu ülkelere yönelik düzensiz ve kitlesel göç hareketlerinden en büyük payı Türkiye almaktadır. Hâlihazırda 3,7 milyon Suriye uyruklu kişiye ev sahipliği yapan Türkiye dünyanın en büyük mülteci popülasyonuna sahiptir (UNHCR, 2022). Türkiye'de geçici barınma merkezleri dışında yaşayan Suriyelilerin yaklaşık % 98.7'si İstanbul, Gaziantep, Hatay ve Şanlıurfa başta olmak üzere ülkemizin muhtelif illerinde ikamet etmektedir (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı (GİB), 2022).

Bu çerçevede Suriyeli sığınmacıların orta ve uzun vadede yerel halk ile kültürleşme süreçlerine ilişkin projeksiyonun hâlihazırda derinlemesine yürütülecek çalışmalar ile ortaya konması gerekir. Azınlık grup üyeleri ve göçmenlerin kültürleşme süreçlerinde en çok onaylanan yapının entegrasyon olduğu, en az tercih edilen ve sorunlu bir alan olarak değerlendirilen yapının ise marjinalleşme olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır (Carlson & Güler, 2018; Jasinskaja-Lahti vd., 2011). Önceki çalışmalar, entegrasyonun geçirilen süreyle doğrusal bir ilişkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir (Berry vd., 2006; Grigoryev & Berry, 2017). Ülkeye varan göçmenlerin göçün başında, kendi kültürel değerlerini/kodlarını korumak için kültürleşme stratejilerinden ayrılmayı tercih etme olasılıklarının yüksek olduğu açıktır (Jasinskaja-Lahti vd., 2011). Ancak Suriyelilerin geçen 10 yılı aşkın zamana rağmen yerel halkla kurdukları temas ve gerçekleştirdikleri sosyal ağların kapalı bir topluma dönüşebileceklerine ilişkin güçlü bir şekilde ipuçlarını vermektedir (Uslu, 2022). Şar ve Kuru'nun (2020) çalışması, yerel halk ile Suriyeli sığınmacılar arasında hem temas sıklığı hem de temas niteliğinin çok sınırlı düzeyde olduğunu göstermiştir. İlginç bir şekilde Batı Avrupa'da göçmen statüsündeki Türk kökenli bireylerle yürütülen çalışmalarda, birçoğunun dönmeyi düşündüğü ve ev sahibi toplumun dilini öğrenme iradesinde olmadıkları görülmüştür. Aynı çalışmada, Batı Avrupa'da planlanandan fazla kalan Türk göçmenlerin bile yerel halk ile çok sınırlı düzeyde temas kurduklarını ortaya koydu (Kunuroglu vd., 2015). Ayrıca genç yaş grubundaki bireylerin ev sahibi toplumun değerlerini benimseme olasılıklarının daha yüksek olduğu ve kendi kültürel değerlerini koruma motivasyonunun daha düşük düzeyde olduğu bilinmektedir (Jasinskaja-Lahti vd., 2011; Schwartz vd., 2010). Bu çalışmada nispeten daha genç yaşta olan Suriyeli üniversite öğrencilerinin Türkiye'de azınlık stresine bağlı kültürleşme serüvenleri ele alınacaktır. Türkiye'de Suriye kökenli bireylerin temel yaşamsal deneyimlerine ve kültürleşme süreçlerine ilişkin son yıllarda geniş ölçekte çalışmalar yürütülmektedir (Akar & Erdoğan, 2019; Erdoğan, 2014; Uslu, 2022). Ancak Suriyelilerin kültürleşme süreçlerini etkileyen faktörleri azınlık stresi ölçeğinde derinlemesine ele alan herhangi bir çalışmaya ulaşılmamıştır.

Yöntem

Çalışmayı derinlemesine yürütmek üzere amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Final örneklem grubu 13 kişiden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılar 2013 ile 2017 yılları arasında Türkiye'ye yerleşmiştir. Katılımcı grubunda hem Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşlığı alanlar (2) ile hem de geçici koruma statüsü (11) ile Türkiye'de ikamet edenler mevcuttur. Katılımcıların yaş grupları 22 ile 26 arasında değişmekte ve yaş ortalaması ($M = 23.54$) dir. Katılımcıların cinsiyetleri kız ($n = 7$) ve erkek ($n = 6$) şeklindedir. Çalışmaya katılan öğrenciler, Bingöl Üniversitesi ($n = 7$), Siirt Üniversitesi ($n = 2$), Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi ($n = 4$) okumaktadır. Öğrencileri Türkiye'nin doğu ve güneydoğu bölgelerinde ikamet etmektedir. Bu çalışmada verilerin analizinde tematik analiz kullanıldı. Tematik analiz, verilerdeki yapıları bütüncül ve sistematik bir şekilde tanımlama, analiz etme ve raporlama yöntemidir (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Araştırmanın güvenilirliğini sağlamak üzere nitel çalışmalarda sıklıkla kullanılan üye kontrolü (Member checking), araştırmacı üçgenlemesi (investigator triangulation) (Creswell, 2014) tekniği kullanılmıştır. Nitel paradigmanda üye kontrolü, çalışmanın güvenilirliği ve araştırmacının olumsuz ve gerçekçi olmayan kabulleri açısından hayati düzeyde önemlidir (Anney, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Bulgular

Katılımcılar zorunlu nedenlerle göç ettikleri Türkiye'de üniversite özelinde ve sosyal yaşamında karşılaştıkları güçlüklerin kültürleşme serüvenlerine olan etkilerini anlattılar. Katılımcıların çoğu kültürel bağlamda ayrılmayı tetikleyebilecek yaşamsal deneyimleri sahip

olduğu, kategorik ve içerik açısından azınlık stresini kapsam alanına alan ırksal bir dayanışma sürecini ortaya koydular. Benzer şekilde katılımcıların çoğunun menşe ülkedeki dini/kültürel aidiyetlerinin ve Türkiye’de belirli ölçülerde maruz kalınan açık veya örtülü ayrıştırıcı davranış modellerinin etkisiyle sosyal temasın ve kültürel alışverişin sınırlı olduğunu bildirdiler. Eşitlikçi değerlerin yüceltildiği ve farklılıklara ilişkin tolerans eşiğinin daha yüksek olduğu kabulünden hareketle katılımcıların üniversite ortamında azınlık stresinin teşvik edecek yaklaşımların nispeten daha sınırlı olduğu görülmüştür. Bu çerçevede aşağıdaki temalar tanımlandı: *Evliliğe Karşı Güvensizlik, Sosyal Klikleşmeler, Konuşmalardaki İçerik Farklılaşması ve İtici/Dışlayıcı Bakışlar*. Temaları açıklamak üzere katılımcıların ifadelerine doğrudan yer verildi.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Mevcut çalışma, zorunlu nedenlerle Türkiye’ye göç eden Suriyeli üniversite öğrencilerinin yaşadıkları azınlık stresinin, sosyokültürel bir ayrışmaya olan etkisini/katkısını keşfetmiştir. Temalar, katılımcıların ana akım kültürel yapıdan yaşadıkları ayrışmanın evliliğe karşı güvensizlik, sosyal klikleşmeler, konuşmalardaki içerik farklılaşması ve itici/dışlayıcı bakışlar tarafından desteklediğine işaret etmektedir. Bulgular, Suriyeliler (Akar & Erdoğan, 2019; Erdoğan, 2014; Uslu, 2022; Şar & Kuru, 2020) ve yurtdışındaki Türkler (Kunuroglu vd., 2015) özelinde yürütülen önceki çalışmalarla benzerdir. Bu çalışmanın literatüre en eşsiz katkısı, Suriyelileri azınlık stresi bağlamında ele alarak yaşayabilecekleri olası bir sosyokültürel ayrışmaya ilişkin anlayışı/kavrayışı derinleştirmektir. Bulgular, Suriyeli öğrencilerin deneyimledikleri sosyal ayrışmanın azınlık stresinden bağımsız olarak ele alınamayacağına işaret etti. Katılımcılar deneyimledikleri azınlık stresinin etnik mikroagresyonla da ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bu bulgu önceki çalışmalarla uyumludur (Swann vd., 2022). Türklerin Suriyelilere yönelik –belki de- iyi niyetle yaptıkları konuşmanın içeriğinde örtülü düzeyde dışlayıcı mesajlar olabilir. Bu durum Suriyeli öğrencilerin grup içi dinamiğini güçlendirmekte ve ayrışma ile sonuçlanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada tanımlanan temaların tamamı sosyokültürel bir ayrışmaya katkı sunabilecek bir yapıdadır. Ancak özellikle evliğe karşı mesafeli oluşları ayrışmayı baskın bir şekilde ortaya koydu. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular Suriyeli öğrencilerle ilgili klinik uygulamalar açısından bazı pratik çıkarımlara sahiptir. Türkiye’deki ruh sağlığı profesyonelleri, danışma oturumlarına başlamadan önce Suriyelilerin spesifik ana akım kültürel yapıdan ayrışan kavrayışlara ilişkin kendilerini geliştirmeleri gerekir. Bu Suriyeli öğrencilerin deneyimlediği sosyal veya psikolojik bir sorunu anlamlandırmasına yardım eder. Bu çerçevede, azınlık grup üyeleri sosyal, zihinsel ve madde kullanımı açısından çok daha yüksek riskleri barındıran yapılardır (Cochran, 2001; Gilman vd., 2001; Sandfort vd., 2004). Son olarak ruh sağlığı profesyonelleri, üniversite ortamında örtülü düzeyde itici ve dışlayıcı tutumları barındıran mikroagresif davranış modellerine karşı öğrencilerin baş etme becerilerini güçlendirecek yöntemler öğretilmelidir. Çünkü bu duruma maruz kalan bireyler sadece kültürel olarak ayrışma riskiyle karşı karşıya kalmaz, aynı zamanda depresyon ve intihar açısından daha yüksek bir risk grubuna dahil olur (O’Keefe vd., 2015).