

The background of the page is a complex, abstract pattern of white and light blue lines and shapes on a dark blue background. The lines are thin and crisscrossing, creating a dense, web-like structure. Some of the lines form circular or oval shapes, while others are straight and intersecting. There are also some faint, illegible text fragments scattered throughout the background, which appear to be parts of words or phrases. The overall effect is one of a busy, interconnected network or a complex system.

**Syrian immigrants
in Turkey: services,
satisfaction and
suggestions for
policy-making**



SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS IN TURKEY: SERVICES, SATISFACTION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICY-MAKING

INMIGRANTES SIRIOS EN TURQUÍA: SERVICIOS, SATISFACCIÓN Y SUGERENCIAS PARA LA FORMULACIÓN DE POLÍTICAS.

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Abstract

Due to the 8 years' war in Syria, Turkey faced the immigration of more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees. About a million of them are settled in the region Çukurova. Although most of them do not have a permanent residence permit it may be expected that a vast number of these Syrian migrants will settle permanently. The majority of this immigrant population is non or low-educated; they rarely participate in education programmes and intercultural communication disorders with the local community and societal tensions occur. Surveys have been conducted among adult Syrian immigrants living in Çukurova in order to identify whether their satisfaction about local services. Secondly, services and communication strategies of public institutions, municipalities and NGOs in the Adana, the main city in the region have been analysed in order to identify the range and effects of their services. Assuming that a lack of integration and intercultural communication disorders cause disturbance in the local communities, this study aims to investigate possible solutions - with the use of the integration policy of the Netherlands – in order to prevent societal unrest.

Keywords: Syrian immigrants, Local Services for Refugees, Intercultural Communication, Communication Strategies, Syrian immigrants in Çukurova.

Resumen

Debido a la guerra de 8 años en Siria, Turquía enfrentó la inmigración de más de 3.5 millones de refugiados sirios. Alrededor de un millón de ellos están asentados en la región de Çukurova. Aunque la mayoría de ellos no tienen un permiso de residencia permanente, se puede esperar que un gran número de estos inmigrantes sirios se establezcan de forma permanente. La mayoría de esta población inmigrante no tiene educación o tiene poca educación; rara vez participan en programas educativos y trastornos de comunicación intercultural con la comunidad local y se producen tensiones sociales. Se han realizado encuestas entre inmigrantes sirios adultos que viven en Çukurova para identificar si están satisfechos con los servicios locales. En segundo lugar, se han analizado los servicios y las estrategias de comunicación de las instituciones públicas, los municipios y las ONG en



Adana, la principal ciudad de la región, para identificar el alcance y los efectos de sus servicios. Asumiendo que la falta de integración y los trastornos de comunicación intercultural causan disturbios en las comunidades locales, este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar posibles soluciones, con el uso de la política de integración de los Países Bajos, para evitar disturbios sociales.

Palabras clave: inmigrantes sirios, servicios locales para refugiados, comunicación intercultural, estrategias de comunicación, inmigrantes sirios en Çukurova

Introduction

As a direct result of the eight-year long war in Syria, Turkey faced the immigration of more than 3.5 million refugees. Almost a million of them are settled in Çukurova, close to the Turkish border to Syria (Türkiye Mülteciler Derneği, 2019)

The first expectation was that local communities and refugees would have some cultural similarities. It could be argued that serious communication disorders should not occur. Nevertheless, a low level of social interaction between refugees and the local population has been observed. Moreover, host community resentments have increased due to criminal activities (i.e. theft, beggary, violence and smuggling) in which Syrian refugees are involved (UNICEF, 2018).

It could be argued that the aforementioned disorders of less participation and criminal activities are mainly derived from a lack of communication between refugees and the local community as well as the local authorities' failure to communicate the 'social rules' of the host society to the refugees: values, norms and basic expectations. In addition, a well-organized coordination between local, national and even international institutions is necessary to address complex problems (Erdoğan and Ünver, 2014). The development of effective strategies is necessary to further social integration of the refugee population in order to benefit efficiently from all the human resources, including either residents or migrants (IKGV, 2015). This challenging goal could be accomplished by overcoming intercultural and language barriers between refugees and the local community.

This study aims to determine whether local services and facilities communicate the local community's expectations, values, norms and social rules to the newcomers and the immigrants's satisfaction about distinctive services and facilities concerning education, healthcare and housing provided by the local authorities. First, this study analyses Syrian immigrants' satisfaction and expectations. Secondly this study analyses whether communication strategies of the National Refugee Centre, municipalities, education, Ministry of National Education (department Adana), NGOs and scientific research centres are appropriate and sufficient. Institutions' solutions and methods for local authorities how to deal with and to overcome communication and language problems have been analyzed as well as solutions and services provided by the local authorities (Türkiye Göç Raporu, 2017).



Methodology

First, relevant scholarly literature concerning the migration phenomenon in general and specifically in Turkey has been scrutinized. Meanwhile, the integration policy of the Netherlands – with a large number of immigrants – has been studied. Theoretical and institutional perspectives on both reasons and the possible solutions concerning the question of the lack of communication between Syrian migrants and the local community are examined. Secondly, communication strategies – within the scope of written language – of the National Refugee Centre, municipalities, schools, Ministry of National Education is analysed whether they are adequate, appropriate and sufficient for the target group (Emin, 2015).

Finally, surveys and oral interviews have been conducted with both local administrators as well as with Syrian refugees in order to identify the causes of the aforementioned problems and to recommend solutions.

Migration

The migration phenomenon at a glance

The phenomenon of globalization has a universal dimension and is increasingly spread as a result of the development of new communication and transport technologies. However, globalization can have different effects on societies in different regions. Although these effects seem to be similar, problems arise that lead to a difference between winners and losers. The real situation is that the number of the so called ‘losers’ is higher than that of ‘the winners’ (Birgili et al, 2009). The most obvious consequence of this, are the problems of social tension, economic crisis and migration at a local, national and international level in the societies of the ‘losing countries’.

Migration can be defined as relocation of people from a certain environment to another: migration to another regions or cities or to another country, due to negative consequences of globalization as economic problems, political tensions or social issues (Koçak and Terzi, 2012). Migration has been continued since the early beginning of human history. However, the most common migration activity was experienced after the Second World War.

Migration is still influenced today by wars and economic problems in the Middle East (Yılmaz, 2014). International migration, which is an important research area of intercultural communication, enforces the quick and intensive communication of individuals, groups and organizations from different cultures in the economic, political, social and cultural field. As a result, in a world order where people are more aware of each other and where they interact more intensively, cultures seem to become more similar on the one hand, but on the other they differ from each at the level of social reflexes in terms of the preservation, transmission and the promotion of their main values. Therefore, in a multicultural society formed by international migration movements, intercultural communication skills are highly important.



Cultural harmony has to be ensured, an effective and efficient cooperation needs to be created and intercultural tensions need to be avoided. According to Hofstede, culture plays a very important role in the construction of an individual's identity (Hofstede, 2015), which emphasizes the extreme influence of culture on human behaviour.

Immigrants in Turkey

Immigrants are absorbed in the new societies where they settle and try to find a place for themselves. However, the new society in which immigrants have entered, has its own cultural tradition, language, values and norms, written and unwritten (social) rules, an established order and a certain level of prosperity.

Regardless their different language, culture and lifestyle, a large number of these immigrants are still struggling attaining the fundamental level of needs. These differences are important sources of societal tensions and communication problems between immigrants and the local community.

The civil wars that took place in the Middle East in 2011 under the name of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, led in Syria to years of deep conflicts and statelessness of people. Under these unfavorable circumstances, more than 60% of the Syrian population had to leave their country. According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, this migration is aimed at Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt and Turkey, which has the longest border with Syria (911 km) and is most affected by this wave of immigration with the highest number of Syrian immigrants in the Middle East region.

More than 60% of the Syrian refugee population preferred migration to Turkey. The main reason for this preference is that Turkey is a large state without war and chaos, meanwhile it is considered to be a suitable transit route to European countries (Çapar and Koca, 2018).

Due to the fact Turkey has signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees (with the restriction that citizens of their neighbour countries are not considered as 'refugees'), the Syrians are not considered as refugees in the sense of refugees with the right of permanent stay. Turkey is partly seen as a transit country for migrants, and partly as the country of final destination. From an administrative point of view, international migration policy-making in Turkey can be divided in two categories: policy development by the central government and local authorities.

As a result of migration processes it is necessary to understand the importance of cultural issues and the promotion of interaction and communication between migrants and the local population, however Syrian migrants are considered to be under temporary protection in Turkey and are not considered to stay permanently (Şen, 2016). The lack of appropriate communication between the refugee population and local communities is an important cause of societal tensions. Prejudices will increase and conflicts will be inevitable as a consequence (Özgüzel et al, 2017).



Migrant policy in the Netherlands

The Netherlands, the most densely populated country in Europe, counts a population of 17.2 million inhabitants. More than 3.7 million of them have a non-Dutch background. Little more than half of these three million immigrants, i.e. 1.7 million people, is non-Western. The migrant population (consisting of citizens from former Dutch colonies, migrant workers and refugees) of the Netherlands comprises 21.7% of the total population. Europeans comprise 5.7% of the population, the Turks 2.4%, Indo-Europeans comprise 2.3% of the population, Moroccans at 2.2%, Surinamese with 2.1%, Caribbeans at 0.9%, Poles at 0.6%, Chinese at 0.3%, Iraqis at 0.3%, and some other ethnic groups that comprise the remaining 3.9% (World Population Review, 2019).

The Netherlands was one of the first countries in Europe that formulated and implemented a national policy on migrant integration in the early 1980s with a positive approach to the multicultural society and a strong belief in the role of scientific research as a tool for societal engineering. After the publication of

Scheffer's article 'the Multicultural Drama' that appeared in a full page in the NRC newspaper in 2000, the problems of the multicultural society and the lack of migrants' integration has been put on the national agenda (Scheffer, 2000). Since then, the Netherlands was one of the first countries in Europe to change the migration and integration policy from the multicultural model towards a model stressing the importance of citizenship and participation: integration in the receiving society and the adaptation of migrants, accepting the values and norms of the dominant society.

The negative aspects of migration in the Netherlands, which now openly was discussed at all levels of the society, led after years to the introduction in 2007 of the 'Inburgeringswet': arranging the obligated integration of migrants opting for a (semi) permanent stay in the Netherlands. According to this law, new coming immigrants in the Netherlands can only acquire a long stay permission and eventually the Dutch citizenship if they have a command of the Netherlands language at A2. This integration obligation applies to every new resident aged between 18 and 67 years and starts as soon as the migrant gets a residence permit. The examinations consist of Dutch language, Knowledge of Dutch Society, and Orientation on the Dutch Labour Market (<https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl>).

Meanwhile, mother tongue education for migrant children at primary schools was terminated in 2004 and priority was given to the improvement of Dutch language skills of migrants; both children and adults (Ozguzel, 2016)

In the period between 1980-2000, due to various reasons, ghettos with an out of proportion migrant population were formed in the metropolitan areas of the Netherlands. The immigrants' common wish to rent a house in the social housing sector, solidarity with their fellow-countrymen and close social relationships in the same language, have nurtured the arise of ghettos (Entzinger, 2016).



Immigrants' satisfaction about Turkish local services and authorities

Municipal and local public services

Municipalities, which form an important part of the Turkish public administration, both structurally and functionally due to developments and dynamics between globalization and local government, are widening their scope and taking on new tasks that range from infrastructure to employment, from social housing to the environment and gradually display a 'social municipality' that anticipates at the social state. However, this trend does not meet the desired quantity and quality. To contribute to an improvement of this situation, positive developments are important in metropolitan municipalities (Lamba, 2017).

Research population and sample of research

The population of the survey consists of the metropolitan municipality Adana in the region Cukurova, with a large Syrian migrant population. In this regard, the survey sample has to be considered as a-select.

The research population is found in the the neighborhoods with a high rate of immigrants. A questionnaire was used for 200 respondents.

Adana is one of the regions where the density of irregular migration is most noticeable due to the proximity of the Syrian border. According to data from the General Migration Management Directorate, around 240,000 Syrians have been under temporary protection since 2018. The ratio of this number to the provincial population is around 10%.

There are two return centers: one with a capacity of 80 people, managed by the Directorate General for Migration, and one center with a capacity of 400 people, supported by an European Union project.

Findings

Table 1. Gender

o.	Gender	Number	%
	Male	112	56
	Female	88	44
	Total	200	100

An attempt was made to include as many women as men in the study. Accordingly, 44% of the participants is female; 56% is male. Given the reluctance of Syrian women in the research process, these outcomes were considered to be successful. Some women even completed the questionnaire with the help of their Turkish-speaking children; most of the Syrian women are illiterate and appeared not mastering the Turkish language.

**Table 2. Age**

No.	Age group	Number	%
1	Age 18 – 30	90	45
2	Age 31 – 40	57	28.5
3	Age 41 – 50	38	19
4	Age 50+	15	7.5
Total		200	100

The largest group of respondents was, with a rate of 92.5%, in the age group of 18-30, stipulating that this rate definitely does not represent the reality of the Syrian population in Turkey. Due to the high birth rate among the Syrian population, the age group 0-9 already exceeds the number of the age group 18-30 (<https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/>).

Table 3. Marital status

No.	Marital status	Number	%
1	Single	35	17.5
2	Married	165	82.5
Total		200	100

When the marital status of the participants was examined, it was found that 82.5% of the respondents is married. In fact, it is necessary to establish that that 2/3 of single women are actually widow.

Table 4. Educational status

No.	Education level	Number	%
1	No education	24	12
2	Primary education	74	37
3	Secondary education	49	24.5
4	Pre-university education	23	11.5
5	University/higher education	30	15
Total		200	100



Nearly 50% of the respondents is (semi) illiterate. Only 24.5% of the respondents completed secondary education. The oral surveys brought to light that the illiterate respondents were mostly female which explains their wish to complete the questionnaire with the help of their children.

Table 5. Professional status in Syria versus Turkey

No.	Profession	% in Syria	% in Turkey
1	Crafts, manufacturing and farming; baker, barber, butcher, driver, farmer, furnischer, plumber, shoemaker, etc.	38	42
2	Housewife	26	25
3	Liberal professions	14	6
4	Engineering	12	6
5	Unemployed	10	21
Total %		100	100

Participants were asked about their today's profession and professional experiences. About 70% of the female respondents stated that their profession was housewife.

Physicians, pharmacists and also teachers for example are unable to find similar work in Turkey. According to the results of the survey, the respondents are more often in a state of unemployment than in their homeland although the respondents working in the crafts, manufacturing and farming sectors seem to have better opportunities than the respondents with a liberal profession or educated as an engineer.

Table 6. Reasons for migration

No.	Motives	Number	%
1	War	147	73.5
2	Terror	25	12.5
3	Unemployment	12	6
4	Relatives	11	5.5
5	Economy	5	2.5
Total		200	100



Not surprisingly, the majority of the participants in the study mentioned war and terror as the main reasons for their fly to Turkey. 8.5% of the respondents indicated they left Syria, opting for better opportunities abroad.

Table 7. Reasons for the preference of Turkey

No.	Motives	Number	%
1	Relatives	92	46
2	Employment	66	33
3	Advice	7	3.5
4	Geographical location	35	17.5
Toplam		200	100

The 911 kilometer border between Syria and Turkey makes Turkey close to the immigrants’original residence and their previous life. In the interviews that were conducted on the qualitative part of the study, some participants stated that they preferred Turkey – being a stable and save country - above other neighbour countries.

Moreover, some participants indicated their preference having the same religion and similar cultural customs and traditions, values and norms over ethnicity, race and blood ties.

Local government services

According to the answers of the respondents, considering local services, the most favorable municipal service (84% positive) were the municipal playgrounds. A nearly similar rate (76%) was positive about the quality of the municipal parks.

Regarding municipal services and assistance for Syrian migrants, the opinion of the migrants was positive concerning the distribution of food (41%), distribution of clothing (45%), basic assistance (48%) and shelter (50%). The acces to transport services (37%) and communication service (38%) was less positively evaluated.

Under this heading, 78% of the participants responded positively the question that the municipality provides help when the immigrants ask for it. This suggests that municipalities actually allocate budgets for services and assistance for immigrants and that the immigrant population is largely aware of municipal services and assistance.

Education and healthcare

Other findings relate to respondents’s satisfaction about the offered education and healthcare for their children and themselves.



95% of the respondents stated that the authorities offer them and their children education and that they have access to health services without obstacles. 85% of the respondents declared that they have access to Turkish language education.

Work and career

Another serie of questions, which also concerns the local population, are work-related questions.

88% of the respondents declares that they wish to find a job and want to stay in Turkey.

Regarding these wishes, 81% of the respondents stated they will not be able to find suitable work. Meanwhile, 58% of the respondents consider they might not be able to find a job without accepting any form of discrimination. 59% of the respondents think workers' rights are not sufficient and 64% believe that in case of a possibly employment their wages will not be sufficient.

Human rights and security

The last category of questions is related to human rights and security, a topic that also applies to the local community. First, there are two questions about human rights. It turned out that 83% of the respondents evaluated the respectation of human rights in Turkey positively. In the other category of this topic, the respondents' opinions about security questions have been examined. The participants' respondings show that they feel safe in Turkey with a percentage of 95%. The last question concerned the respondents' wish to return to their country when the circumstances were favourable: 50% of the participants expressed their wish to return. The other half stated that they did not want to return due to their concern that the circumstances might not be as good as they were before.

4 Public institutions, municipalities and NGOs' services and communication strategies

Public institutions and municipalities: services and communication strategies

Oral interviews have been held with civil servants of the Directorate General of Migration

Management District Adana, sivil servants of the Adana Metropolitan Municipality and civil servants of the Adana Provincial Directorate of National Education.

At a monthly basis, meetings are organized under the supervision of the governor of Adana, with representants of the above mentioned organizations, government services, ngo's and employers' organizations with the aim of coordinating and evaluating policies and allocating functions and tasks.



NGOs: services and communication strategies

Among the numerous helping organizations, Kizilay (The Turkish equivalent of the Red Cross), Unicef, World Health Organization (WHO) and the The Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association, RASAS (Mülteciler Dernegi) are the most widespread NGOs in Turkey, supporting the needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Kizilay, Unicef and WHO, since years worldwide operating organizations, support the basis needs of refugees. They provide shelter, food, clothing, healthcare and educational services.

The Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association (RASAS) operates for Syrian refugees in Turkey and was established in 2014. Priority activities include shelter, health, education and employment. The organization supports people in need and has a staff of different nationalities. In their website they stipulate not to discriminate on the basis of language, religion, race, gender, age, disability, political discrepancy and other reasons. RASAS works in cooperation with the private sector, NGOs and public institutions and organizations to help solve problems concerning vital needs with the aim of social inclusion.

The above mentioned organizatons communicate their services and activities via websites, brochures, leaflets and posters in different languages: Turkish, Arabic and English.

Conclusions and recommendations

Due to the fact Turkey signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, under the restriction that citizens of neighbour countries are not considered as ‘refugees’, the Syrians are not considered as refugees in the sense as refugees with the right of permanent stay. The respondents, however, are generally satisfied about their life in Turkey and wish to stay permanently. On the other hand, a low level of social interaction between refugees and the local population has been observed. Host community resentments have increased due to criminal activities in which Syrian refugees are involved. The migration issue is of great importance in many respects, in particular in the areas of national and local security, economy and society. To prevent irregular migration, regular registration and planned accommodation need to be organized.

As mentioned before, a large percentage of the respondents expressed their wish for a permanent stay in Turkey. Nevertheless, Turkey planned to host the Syrian refugees on a temporary basis. Meanwhile, Turkey has not formulated and implemented a national policy on migrants’ integration, arranging the obligated integration of migrants opting for a (semi) permanent stay in Turkey.

Relevant public institutions, municipalities and NGOs’ services support the basic needs of the refugees with shelter, food, clothing, healthcare and educational services. The above mentioned organizations coordinate and evaluate their policies and communicate



their services via internet and in written form, in Turkish, Arabic and English. The chosen media and content of the information seem to be appropriate for the target group.

Due to the high birth rate, a large proportion of the Syrian refugees in Turkey is under the age of 18 and needs education. Meanwhile, a long term stay of the larger part of the Syrian refugees seems to become the reality. In this case, adults need to be empowered and trained in Turkish language, knowledge of the Turkish society with its values and norms and orientation on education and work in order to secure their integration in the Turkish society which will benefit both the migrants and the host society. The development and implementation of a national policy on migrants' integration arranging the obligated integration of migrants opting for a (semi) permanent stay in Turkey seems to be relevant.

Being the local administration, close to the citizens, municipalities need to develop policies and strategies solving the occurred problems within the framework of the immigration policy and legislation to be determined by the national state.

Civil servants and professionals in health care and education offering services to immigrants, could benefit from professionalization in intercultural communication skills with the aim to overcome cultural barriers and stimulate a sustainable interaction between immigrants, local services and the local community.

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