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## School Management's Opinions on Immigrant Students and Their Families: The Sample of Küçükçekmece District in Istanbul<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to reveal the opinions of school administrators, who are working in regions of Istanbul with a dense refugee population, on refugee students and their families. The population of the research, which was designed with the general survey model, consists of a total of 442 school administrators, including 6 deputy principals, 151 principals and 285 assistant principals, working at different education levels of public schools in Küçükçekmece in the 2020-2021 academic year. The sample of the study is 52 school administrators selected from the population. Of the sample group, 27 were male and 25 were female, and 34 of them were working in primary school, 10 in secondary school and 8 in high school. An 11-question questionnaire form was developed and applied to obtain the research data. In addition to the personal characteristics of the participants, the questionnaire includes questions about their experiences with refugee students and their parents, the problems they face and their suggestions for solutions to the problems. The research questionnaire was digitized through Google Forms due to Covid-19 measures and participant responses were collected digitally. Open-ended questions in the questionnaire form were analyzed by content analysis. According to the participants, the most important advantage of the presence of refugee students in Turkey is the richness of culture. School administrators mainly focused on the problems they face with refugee students and their families. They stated that they had problems with refugee students and their families regarding language and communication problems, difficulties in refugee students' adaptation to school culture, refugee families' lack of interest in education, and students' tendency to violence. In order to solve the problems they experienced, the participants made suggestions for providing language and communication support to refugee students and their parents, introducing Turkish culture, organizing the curricula implemented in Turkey in a way to meet the educational needs of international migrant and refugee students, and planning adaptation activities.

**Key Words:** *immigrant, refugee, asylum, education, school administrator opinions*

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## **Göçmen Öğrenciler ve Aileleri Hakkındaki Okul İdarecilerinin Görüşleri: İstanbul Küçükçekmece İlçesi Örneği<sup>1</sup>**

### **ÖZET**

Bu araştırmanın amacı; İstanbul'da mülteci nüfusunun yoğunlaştığı yerleşim bölgelerinde görev yapan okul yöneticilerinin mülteci öğrenci ve aileleri hakkındaki görüşlerini ortaya koymaktır. Genel tarama modeli ile desenlenen araştırmanın evrenini; 2020- 2021 eğitim öğretim yılında Küçükçekmece'deki devlet okullarının farklı öğretim kademelerinde görev yapan 6'sı müdür başyardımcısı, 151'i müdür ve 285'i müdür başyardımcısı olmak üzere toplam 442 okul idarecisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın örnekleme evreninden seçilen 52 okul idarecisidir. Örneklem grubunun 27'si erkek 25'i kadındır ve 34'ü ilkökul 10'u ortaokul ve 8'i lise kademesinde görev yapmaktadır. Araştırma verilerini elde etmek için 11 soruluk anket formu geliştirilmiş ve uygulanmıştır. Ankette katılımcıların kişisel özelliklerinin yanı sıra mülteci öğrenci ve velileri ile yaşadıkları deneyimler, karşılaştıkları sorunlar ve sorunların çözüm önerilerine yönelik sorular yer almaktadır. Araştırma anketi; Covid-19 önlemleri nedeniyle Google Forms aracılığıyla dijital ortama aktarılmış ve katılımcı cevapları dijital olarak toplanmıştır. Anket formundaki açık uçlu sorular içerik analizi ile çözümlenmiştir. Katılımcılara göre; mülteci öğrencilerin Türkiye'deki varlığının en önemli avantajı kültür zenginliğidir. Okul idarecileri ağırlıklı olarak mülteci öğrenciler ve aileleri ile yaşadıkları sorunlara odaklanmışlardır. Mülteci öğrenciler ve aileleriyle dil ve iletişim sorunu, mülteci öğrencilerin okul kültürüne uyum zorluğu, mülteci ailelerin eğitime ilgisizliği ve öğrencilerin şiddete eğilimine yönelik sorunlar yaşadıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcılar yaşadıkları sorunların çözümü için; mülteci öğrenci ve velilerine dil ve iletişim desteği verilmesi, Türk kültürünün kazandırılması, Türkiye'de uygulanan öğretim programlarının uluslararası göçmen ve mülteci öğrencilerin eğitsel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayacak şekilde düzenlenmesi ve uyum etkinlikleri planlanmasına yönelik önerilerde bulunmuşlardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *göçmen, mülteci, sığınmacı, eğitim, okul yöneticisi görüşleri*

### **MAKALE BİLGİSİ**

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### **Introduction**

Due to war and regional conflicts, since 2011, five million Syrian citizens have been forced to leave their country. The mass displacement of Syrian citizens seeking asylum, particularly in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and other European countries, is defined as one of the largest humanitarian crises of the past decade (UNHCR, 2022; DGMM, 2022). Turkey is among the countries most affected by the Syrian humanitarian crisis and the consequent forced migration. Due to its geographical proximity to Syria and historical cultural ties, Turkey implemented an "open-door policy" for Syrians affected by war and conflict. This policy led to a massive migration movement from Syria to Turkey. As of November 3, 2022, Turkey hosts over 3.6 million Syrian citizens who have migrated en masse. Initially, Syrian citizens were placed in 26 Temporary Accommodation Centers established in 10 provinces, with a focus on meeting their urgent needs such as shelter, food, and health care under the assumption of their temporary stay in Turkey. However, the prolonged duration of their stay

and the continuous increase in the number of migrants led to the phasing out of Temporary Accommodation Centers in the long term, causing Syrian citizens to disperse into cities. Currently, as of the end of 2022, 3,559,041 Syrian citizens reside in various cities across Turkey (DGMM, 2022).

The Syrian citizens who came to Turkey through mass migration are under the 'Temporary Protection Status' in Turkey. Temporary Protection is defined as the protection provided to foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country they left, and come to our borders either individually during the period of mass influx or collectively, and whose individual international protection requests cannot be evaluated. According to Article 26 of the Temporary Protection Regulation, which came into effect by being published in the Official Gazette dated 22/10/2014 and numbered 29153, Syrian citizens granted Temporary Protection Status are provided with 'health, education, access to the job market, social services and assistance, as well as interpretation and similar services' (Temporary Protection Regulation, 2014).

Temporary Protection Status has revealed the initially invisible education needs of a significant portion of Syrian citizens registered with this status, especially children, during the early stages of migration (Usta et al., 2018). Due to international agreements and national legislation on the part of Turkey, it is obligated to protect the right to education for every child within its borders and ensure their access to education. In this context, temporary Education Centers [TECs] were initially established in order to provide education to Syrian children who are arriving with mass migration (MEB, 2014). These TECs, where the language of instruction is Arabic and the content is supervised by a commission, employed Syrian educators proficient in Arabic (Emin, 2016). With the "Directive on Education Services for Foreigners" dated 2014 by the Ministry of National Education, TECs were placed under the Ministry of National Education. TECs are centers where, in addition to Arabic education, Turkish instruction and the acquisition of vocational skills are provided. (MEB, 2014).

The prolonged duration of the war and conflict in Syria, coupled with a decreasing likelihood of return, has necessitated the formulation of new policies in various fields, including education. The Ministry of National Education decided, in the 2017 directive titled 'Directive on Foreign National Students,' to gradually close Temporary Education Centers and facilitate the transition of Syrian students to public schools in Turkey (MoNE, 2017). As of 2020, all Temporary Education Centers in Turkey were closed, and all students were transferred to schools of the Republic of Turkey (UNICEF, 2022: 15). While the inclusion of Syrian children of school age in public schools in Turkey is seen as a significant step towards their integration into the Turkish education system and social life, challenges persist. Research on international migration and refugee issues in Turkey indicates that refugee students in the country face various challenges, including trauma and psychological problems. Additionally, they grapple with language and communication issues in schools, cultural mismatch, academic inadequacies stemming from age and grade-level disparities during enrollment, peer bullying, exclusion, and violence (Birben et al., 2020; Karaağaç and Güven, 2019; Sarier, 2020; Şeker and Aslan, 2015). Parents of refugee students also experience similar challenges, such as language and communication issues, lack of adjustment, and problems with the Turkish education system's recognition and low parental involvement (Suna et al., 2021; Soylu et al., 2021; Tümkaya and Çopur, 2020; Üstün, Bayar, and Bozkurt, 2017). These challenges negatively impact the participation of refugee parents in education. The participation of refugee students and their families in the Turkish education system is important for refugee children in terms of preventing the danger of school disengagement,

increased crime rates, social discrimination, and lost generation. (Gencer, 2017). Participation in the education system also contributes to reducing psychological problems among refugee children and improves their communication skills and social relationships. It fosters familiarity with the culture of the host country, enhances academic success, and promotes social integration (Duman, 2016; Ertekin-Yıldız, 2019; Kağnıcı, 2017). In this context, considering the dangers posed by the lack of education for refugee children in Turkey and the benefits provided by access to education, it is essential to take the necessary measures for the integration of refugee students and families into the Turkish education system.

The physical and financial inadequacies of schools, along with communication difficulties among teachers, students, and parents, are exacerbated in areas where the refugee population is concentrated in Turkey. Examining the challenges faced by migrant students reveals a lack of experience among teachers in conducting educational activities with refugee students, as well as deficiencies in the curriculum and support systems for refugee education (Arabacı et al., 2014; Silgan, 2022; Tunga, Engin, & Çağıltay, 2020; Yılmaz, 2020). The multifaceted nature of the problems related to the participation of refugee students and families in the education system highlights the need to enhance and improve the quality of refugee education.

The aim of this research is to present the views of school administrators working in the Küçükçekmece district of Istanbul, where the refugee population is concentrated, based on their experiences regarding refugee students and families. The following research questions were addressed:

What are the experiences of school administrators working in Küçükçekmece regarding refugee students and families?

What recommendations do school administrators in Küçükçekmece have regarding refugee students and families?

The research is expected to contribute to the relevant literature by identifying the views and experiences of school administrators on refugee students and families, recognizing the problems faced by refugee students and families in the Turkish education system, and proposing solutions to address these issues.

## **Methodology**

### **Model**

The research employed a general survey model. The general survey model involves scans conducted on the entire population or a sample taken from the population to reach a general judgment about the population in a multi-element universe (Karasar, 2005).

In the questionnaire created to obtain data for this research, in addition to multiple-choice questions aimed at obtaining demographic and professional information about individuals, open-ended questions were included to reveal the experiences of administrators. Subsequently, the responses of administrators to open-ended questions underwent content analysis (descriptive analysis), and the generated codes were grouped and organized into themes based on their meanings. The phenomenological research design, aiming to reach conclusions based on individuals' lived experiences, is the research design employed in this study, and it is a qualitative research method (Creswell, 2016: 14).

### **The Research's Location, Time and Sample Selection**

The research was conducted in Küçükçekmece district, one of the neighborhoods in Istanbul, which is the city hosting the highest number of Syrian refugees in Turkey (DGMM, 2021) and where the refugee population is concentrated (International Organization for Migration, 2019). In Küçükçekmece district, there are a total of 10,071 foreign national students, mostly Syrians (Küçükçekmece District National Education Directorate, 2022). The population of the study consists of 442 school administrators, including 151 (34%) principals, 6 (1%) vice principals, and 285 (64%) assistant principals working at different levels of education in state schools in Küçükçekmece during the 2020-2021 academic year. The sample of the study includes 52 school administrators selected from this population, comprising 8 (15%) principals and 44 (85%) assistant principals. In this context, 5% of principals and 15% of assistant principals in our research population in Küçükçekmece were reached. This is positive for the inclusiveness of the research. Table 1 provides information on the demographic characteristics, professional experiences, the educational levels they serve, and the distribution of schools at the neighborhood level of the school administrators included in the study. The distribution of administrators, predominantly in the middle age group, is balanced between men and women. Of the school administrators participating in the research, 51.9% are male (27), and 48.1% are female (25). Three (5.8%) participants are in the 20-30 age range, 17 (32.7%) are in the 31-40 age range, 27 (51.9%) are in the 41-50 age range, and 5 (9.6%) are 51 years and older. There is no significant difference between male and female participants.

**Table 1:** Distribution of demographic information and professional experience durations of school administrators, along with information on the schools they serve (Code Abbreviations: OM - School Principal, M – Vice Principal)

	Characteristic	f	Participant Code	%
Gender	Female	27	M2, M3, M7, M8, M9, M10, OM13, M17, M18, M19, M24, M25, OM26, M28, M29, M31, M32, M33, M37, M39, OM40, M41, M43, M44, M47, M50, M52,	51,9
	Male	25	M1, M4, M5, M6, OM11, M12, M14, M15, OM16, M20, M21, M22, M23, M27, M30, M34, OM35, M36, M38, M42, M45, M46, M48, M49, M51	48,1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>
Age	Aged 20-30	3	M3, M17, M34	5,8
	Aged 31-40	17	M15, M23, M25, M27, M30, M33, M36, M37, M38, M41, M42, M44, M45, M46, M48, M50, M51	32,7
	Aged 41-50	27	M1, M10, M4, M5, M6, M2, OM11, M12, OM13, M14, OM16, M18, OM19, M20, M21, M22, M24, OM26, M28, M29, OM35, M39, OM43, M47, M31, M49, M52	51,9
	Aged 51 and above	5	M7, M8, M9, M32, OM40	9,6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>
Professional Experience	0-5 years	2	M1, OM16	3,8
	6-10 years	13	M3, OM13, M15, M17, M23, M30, M33, M34, M38, M41, M42, M47, M50	25
	11-15 years	12	M12, M20, M21, M22, M25, M36, M37, M44, M45, M46, M48, M51	23,1
	16-20 years	8	M2, M5, M10, M18, M24, OM26, M27, M28	15,4
	21-25 years	9	M4, M9, M14, M31, OM35, M39, OM43, M49, M52	17,3
	26 years and above	8	M6, M7, M8, OM11, OM19, M29, M32, OM40	15,4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>
School Administration	Less than 5 years	21	M1, M2, M3, M5, M17, M18, M20, M24, M25, M28, M33, M34, M36, M37, M38, M41, M44, M45, M46, M50, M51	40,4
	5-10 years	15	M7, M10, OM11, M12, M15, M21, M22, M23, M27, M32, M30, OM35, M42, M48, M49	28,8
	11-15 years	10	M4, M6, OM13, OM19, OM26, M31, M39, OM43, M47, M52	19,2

16-20 years	2	OM16, M29	3,8
21-25 years	3	M9, M14, OM40	5,8
26 years and above	1	M8	1,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 1:** Distribution of demographic information and professional experience durations of school administrators, along with information on the schools they serve (Continuation of Table 1)

	Characteristic	f	Participant Code	%
Job Type	Principal	8	OM11, OM13, OM16, OM19, OM26, OM35, OM40, OM43	15,3
	Vice Principal	44	M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M9, M10, M12, M14, M15, M17, M18, M20, M21, M22, M23, M24, M25, M27, M28, M29, M30, M31, M32, M33, M34, M36, M37, M38, M39, M41, M42, M44, M45, M46, M47, M48, M49, M50, M51, M52	84,6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>
School Type	Primary School	34	M2, M7, OM11, M12, OM13, M14, M15, OM16, M17, M18, OM19, M20, M21, M22, M23, M24, M25, M27, M28, M29, M32, M33, M34, OM35, M36, M37, M38, M39, M42, M43, M45, M46, M47, M48	65,4
	Middle School	10	M3, M9, OM26, M30, M31, M41, M49, M50, M51, M52	19,2
	High School	8	M1, M4, M5, M6, M8, M10, OM40, M44	15,4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>
Neighborhoods Where Schools Are Located and the Number of Schools in Each	Atatürk	5	OM19, M21, M27, OM43, M41	9,6
	Atakent	5	M17, M25, M32, M33, M39	9,6
	Cennet	8	M1, M4, M5, M6, OM16, M18, M30, M45	15,4
	Gültepe	3	M7, M15, M29	5,8
	FevziÇakmak	3	M31, M51, M52	5,8
	HalkalıMerkez	4	M3, M12, M14, M34	7,7
	Halkalıİstasyon	2	M9, M20	3,8
	İnönü	12	M2, M10, OM11, M22, OM26, M28, OM35, M36, M37, M46, M47, M48	23,1
	Kartaltepe	2	OM13, M38	3,8
	Yeni Mahalle	2	M8, OM40	3,8
	Other	6	M23, M24, M42, M44, M49, M50	11,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>	

The service durations of the participants were analyzed in two dimensions: teaching and administrative experience. According to Table 1, 2 participants (3.8%) have 0-5 years of teaching experience, 13 (25%) have 6-10 years, 12 (23.1%) have 11-15 years, 8 (15.4%) have 16-20 years, 9 (17.3%) have 21-25 years, and 8 (15.4%) have 26 years and above of teaching experience. In terms of school administration experience, 21 participants (40.4%) have 0-5 years, 15 (28.8%) have 6-10 years, 10 (19.2%) have 11-15 years, 2 (3.8%) have 16-20 years, 3 (5.8%) have 21-25 years, and 1 (1.9%) have 26 years and above. Looking at the participants' roles in school administration, 34 (65.4%) are in primary schools, 10 (19.2%) are in middle schools, and 8 (15.4%) are in high school education.

### Data Collection Methods

The research data were collected through an 11-question survey form. The first 8 (eight) questions in the form are multiple-choice, aimed at determining the participants' demographic characteristics and professional positions, while the remaining 3 (three) questions are open-ended, designed to assess their views on immigrants.

The open-ended questions are intended to explore the positive and negative experiences of administrators regarding students and parents, which are the subjects we want to measure in the research. The open-ended questions are as follows:

1. What positive experiences have you had with refugee and foreign-national students and their families?

2. What negative experiences have you encountered in your interactions with refugee and foreign-national students and their families?
3. What are your suggestions for potential actions regarding refugee and foreign-national students?

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic precautions, responses were collected through Google Forms. To increase participation, phone calls were made with the sample group. The survey includes questions about participants' personal characteristics as well as their experiences with refugee students and parents, the challenges they have faced, and solutions to these problems. The data obtained from the research survey were transferred to a digital environment for analysis, and efforts were made to prepare the findings for analysis.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The responses to open-ended questions obtained from the survey were analyzed using descriptive content analysis. In the analysis, the codes assigned to the responses provided by the administrators were grouped according to their meanings, and two main themes were identified: positive experiences and negative experiences. The findings were presented in tabular form.

### **Research Findings**

#### **Experiences of School Administrators with Refugee Students and Families"**

School administrators have shared both positive and negative experiences regarding refugee students and their families. Responses to these experiences have been coded and categorized.

#### **Positive Experiences:**

Table 2 presents the codes related to the positive experiences of school administrators towards refugee students and families. Eight code categories were created based on the provided responses. The number of administrators stating that they had no positive experiences is eight.

When examining the views of school administrators on positive experiences with immigrant students and families, it is evident that administrators positively assess the interest of refugee students and families in education in Turkey. They also appreciate the students' openness to communication, well-being, adaptation to school culture, academic life, and sociocultural integration. Participants view the migration process positively, especially in terms of themselves and Turkish students in their schools recognizing cultural differences. School administrators also explain that their humanitarian awareness and empathy skills have developed in conjunction with the migration process.

The school administrators most emphasized expression in *their positive experiences with refugee students and families is the interest of refugee students and families in education in Turkey* (22.5%). Among the participants expressing their views on this matter, M52 stated, "I find it positive that they are open to education and ready to do their best for the development of their students." Meanwhile, M12 expressed his opinion by saying, "I find it positive that they make efforts to send their children to school," and Ö50 stated, "Some families value and show interest in education."

**Table 2:** Codes regarding positive experiences of school administrators with refugee students and families

	<b>Positive Experience Codes</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Participant Code</b>
<b>Positive Experiences</b>	Efforts in Education	10	17,2	M6, OM11, M14, M21, M31, M32, M36, M47, M49, M52
	Strong Family Bonds	1	1,7	M10
	Positive Attitudes towards Life Adaptation	1	1,7	M34
	Openness to Communication and Collaboration	13	22,4	M3, M12, M15, OM16, M18, M20, M29, OM35, M37, OM43, M44, M47, M48
	Proficiency in English	1	1,7	OM13
	Cultural Interaction	13	22,4	M6, M17, OM19, M22, M24, M25, OM26, M28, M29, M36, M38, M39, M50
	Assistance Provided to Immigrants through the School	4	6,9	M1, M7, M14, M30
	Willingness to Adapt	4	6,9	M8, M33, M46, M48
	<b>No Positive Experiences</b>	11	19	M2, M4, M5, M9, M23, M27, OM40, M41, M42, M45, M51
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8 Different Codes</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100</b>

The second point emphasized by school administrators in their positive experiences with refugee students and families is *the openness to communication and well-being of refugee students* (12.5%). Among the five school administrators expressing their views on this matter, OM35 addresses the well-being of refugees. OM35 describes this situation as, "I find it positive that they hold onto life positively despite everything." Meanwhile, OM13 stated, "My refugee students are open to communication."

Some school administrators have also positively evaluated the adaptation of refugees. Among the participants expressing positive views on the adaptation of refugee students, 4 (10%) mentioned academic adaptation, 4 (10%) mentioned social adaptation, and 3 (10%) expressed positive statements about adaptation to school culture. Among the participants expressing their views on academic adaptation, M15 positively stated that refugees are "learning to read and write and learning the language," while M33 highlighted the presence of parents and students who are "genuinely willing to learn something."

The research includes school administrators who indicate that refugees are adapting to social life and are open to establishing social relationships in the new society they have migrated to. Among the participants expressing their views on this matter, M47 stated, "They are willing to participate in national days, celebrations, and social activities organized at school." OM40 also supported this view with the statement, "They are good at greeting and celebrating (showing adaptation)."

In the research, when discussing positive experiences related to refugee students and families, participants also mentioned changes that occurred among Turkish students and themselves. 5 school administrators (12.5%) positively evaluated the presence of refugee students and families in the Turkish community for seeing and understanding different cultures. Among the participants expressing their views on this matter, M18 stated, "I have seen different cultures," and OM26 said, "I find it positive that they make us aware of their own cultures, clothing styles, and food varieties."

From the participants discussing the positive changes brought about by the presence of refugee students and families in Turkey, 1 (2.5%) evaluated the humanitarian assistance to refugees positively, while another 1 (2.5%) mentioned the development of a sense of patriotism. M20 expressed the development of patriotism by stating, "When I talk to

(refugees), learning about the importance of the homeland, the difficulties of living in other countries, their feelings, and emotions, I feel the idea of holding on tightly to the values we have."

However, 8 school administrators (20%) did not express positive views on refugee students and families. These participants explained that "the presence of refugees in Turkey has no benefit to this country."

### Negative Experiences

The codes related to school administrators' negative experiences with refugee students and families are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Codes regarding school administrators' negative experiences with refugee students and families

	<b>Negative Experiences Codes</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Participant Code</b>
<b>Negative Experiences</b>	Language barrier	22	30,1	M8, M10, M12, OM16, M17, M18, OM19, M21, M22, M23, M24, M29, M31, M33, M34, OM35, M42, OM43, M45, M47, M51, M52
	Lack of adaptation	9	12,3	M7, M9, M20, M22, OM26, M27, M30, M33, M34
	Communication difficulties	8	11	M5, M7, M10, OM11, OM13, M14, M36, OM43
	Cultural differences	5	6,8	M18, M15, M36, M37, M44
	Propensity for violence	5	6,8	M6, M27, M28, M38, M48
	Parental neglect	4	5,5	M3, M5, M23, M50
	Weakness in family education support	2	2,7	M12, OM13
	Bullying Behaviors in Immigrant Students	2	2,7	M46, M52
	Marginalization	2	2,7	M15, M22
	Unsafe attitudes within families	1	1,4	OM11
	Attendance issues	1	1,4	M14
	Economic deprivation	1	1,4	OM11
	Large family structure	1	1,4	M39
	High percentage of immigrant students in schools	1	1,4	M52
	Prejudices	1	1,4	OM11
	Psychological insecurity	1	1,4	M49
	Those Without Negative Experiences	7	9,6	M1, M2, M4, M25, M32 OM40, M41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>	

Upon examining Table 3, it is observed that school administrators focus on language issues, lack of interest in education from refugee families, cultural differences, sociocultural mismatch, peer bullying and violence, discipline problems, academic inadequacy, financial poverty, discrimination, and psychological issues in their negative experiences with refugee students and families.

In the negative experiences of school administrators with refugee students and families, the problem most emphasized is the language barrier, accounting for 38.3% (23 participants). Participants expressing their views on this issue, such as OM13, M37, and M48, stated that they "cannot communicate with refugee students because of the language barrier."

M42 also explained, "Due to not knowing the language, students are left alone and communicate with those who speak their own language, so they cannot socialize." M14, M21, and M33 mentioned that they "cannot communicate with parents due to the language barrier, cannot access addresses and contact information," while M51 stated that "parents are insufficient in expressing themselves."

School administrators have voiced concerns about the lack of interest shown by some refugee parents in their children's education as a negative aspect. For instance, M6 stated, "Families generally do not get involved in the process. Some live alone in Turkey. They do not attend meetings." M7 highlighted parental disinterest in education, stating, "Fathers do not visit the school on any matter unless called by the school," and M52 mentioned, "They do not follow the school and student's education status since enrollment."

Another negative aspect mentioned by participants regarding refugee students and families is cultural differences (10%). Participants expressing views on cultural differences include M30, who stated that "refugee students continue the habits they learned from their families," M46, who believes that "refugees contribute to cultural degradation," and M28, who explained a "cultural conflict between Turkish culture and refugee culture."

School administrators also believe that refugee students and families experience sociocultural mismatch (8.33%). Participants expressing views on this issue state that refugee students and families need to be educated about "social rules (M31), manners and etiquette rules (OM35)," and the termination of "rude behavior (M51)" is necessary for social adaptation.

Participants also mentioned that some refugee families are prone to peer bullying and violence (6.66%), and some refugee students exhibit tendencies toward bullying and violence. Regarding this, M22 stated, "They confront me, saying that they did not register because our area is not registered," and M49 mentioned, "Sometimes when I say they are not in the school registration zone, they don't believe it and become rude."

School administrators also highlighted instances of peer bullying and violence involving refugee students. M51 mentioned that "refugee students behave rudely," OM43 stated that "there are frequent fights among students," and Ö20 said, "refugee students tend to violence."

In addition to these problems, school administrators expressed concerns about discipline problems (5%), academic inadequacy (1.66%), discrimination (1.66%), psychological issues faced by refugee students (1.66%), and financial poverty negatively impacting refugee students (1.66%). In contrast, 7 participants (11.6%) reported not encountering any negative situations related to refugee students and families.

### **Recommendations for School Administrators Regarding Refugee Student Families**

Codes related to the recommendations of school administrators for refugee student families are presented in Table 3. Participants suggested solutions to the problems, including providing language support to refugee students and families (31.25%), maintaining temporary education practices (16.6%), introducing Turkish culture to refugees (8.3%), organizing separate schools and classes for refugee students (6.25%), planning integration efforts (6.25%), providing appropriate vocational guidance for refugee students (4.16%), employing refugee students and families in agriculture and livestock (2.08%), and breaking teachers' prejudices against refugee students. Additionally, 16.6% of the participants did not offer any suggestions for the issues they encountered."

**Table 3:** Codes regarding school administrators' suggestions for refugee students and families

	<b>Codes for Recommendations</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Participant Code</b>	
<b>Recommendations for immigrants</b>			16,2	M1, M7, M9, OM16, M18 M27, M28, M29, M30, M36, M51	
	Turkish language support should be provided.	11			
	They should undergo adaptation training before being placed in regular classes.	10	14,7	M6, M7, M9, M12, M14, M23, M24, M36, M42, M46	
	They must be enrolled in adaptation training.	9	13,2	M7, OM19, M22, M27, M33, M41, M49, M50, M52	
	Special schools and classes should be planned for refugees.	4	5,9	M8, M25, M39, M48	
	Immigrant students should be included in preschool education.	3	4,4	OM11, M17, M31	
	An immigration policy should be developed.	3	4,4	M37, M38, M52	
	Families should be supported in language learning.	3	4,4	M21, M46, M47	
	Support should be provided for study sessions in the mother tongue.	2	2,9	M5, M11	
	Irregular migrants should return to their countries.	2	2,9	M20, M45	
	The density of immigrants in schools should be equalized.	2	2,9	M22, M52	
	Adaptation activities for students and parents should be organized.	2	2,9	M15, OM40	
	Families should be informed about school processes.	1	1,5	M11	
	Education should be provided in small-sized classes.	1	1,5		
	Successful immigrant children should be placed in special education.	1	1,5	OM40	
	Those who cannot adapt to Istanbul should be sent to sparsely populated areas, employed in agriculture and animal husbandry.	1	1,5	M34	
	They should continue to receive education in regular classes.	1	1,5	M41	
	Guidance should be provided on school systems.	1	1,5	OM13	
	Teachers should receive training on immigrant integration.	1	1,5	M8	
	Prejudices of teachers regarding immigrants should be eliminated.	1	1,5	M32	
	Interpreter support should be provided in communication with parents.	1	1,5	M10	
	Legal regulations should be made.	1	1,5	M34	
	<b>No Suggestions</b>				M2, M3, M4, OM26, OM35, OM43, M44
	<b>Total</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>	

School administrators have emphasized the necessity of providing language support for refugee families and students. Among the participants expressing their views on this matter, OM19 stated, "There should be a focus on teaching Turkish," M30 suggested, "They should be directed to Turkish language courses without age distinction," and M37 highlighted, "Students need to be supported by language-proficient teachers outside of school hours."

Language education should also be provided to families, and families should be informed about Turkish literacy." Additionally, M17 proposed, "Turkish language courses should be offered for mothers." Twenty-three participants expressed a common view that learning Turkish by both refugee families and students would eliminate communication problems.

School administrators have stated that the temporary education program should continue to address the educational problems of refugee students. These participants argued that admitting refugee students directly to public schools without knowledge of Turkish literacy and language skills harms their success and social adaptation, hindering academic development. M22 expressed their opinion on this by stating, "No enrollment in intermediate classes without learning to read and write. GEMs (Temporary Education Centers) should be reopened, and they should be transferred to regular classes after learning to read and write." M52 supported this by saying, "They should not be enrolled directly in schools. They should go through pre-education, learn the language, and overcome the problem of literacy."

Some school administrators have suggested that refugee students receive education in classes and schools specifically created for them. For example, M41 stated, "Refugees should be gathered in a region and receive special education," M49 suggested, "Separate schools can be built for them," M31 proposed, "A separate class should be created for these students in every school. Education should be provided based on the students' levels. A child who doesn't know how to read and write comes straight to the 7th grade and takes exams. These are our educational shortcomings, I believe," and M9 expressed, "Gathering these types of students in separate schools, guiding teachers who will educate them through in-service training can provide more beneficial education" regarding the negative aspects of admitting migrant students to state schools without proper preparation.

School administrators have mentioned that the readiness of teachers and their attitudes toward refugees can be effective in solving the problems of refugee students. In this regard, M47 stated, "Teachers' prejudices against refugees need to be broken," and explained, "Refugee teachers should be directed to in-service training."

One of the suggestions made by participants for solving the problems of refugee students and families is the introduction of Turkish culture. For instance, M12 said, "Especially during the adaptation process, it is necessary to teach the city they live in and Turkish customs and traditions," while M28 recommended "cultural trips with families." Four school administrators suggested planning integration efforts to solve issues between the host community and refugee groups. M27 expressed his opinion on this by stating, "I believe they should not be isolated from society. I think integrated efforts are needed in every field." However, administrators suggesting integration efforts did not provide details on the content and implementation of these efforts.

Another recommendation for solving the problems of refugee students and families is career guidance for refugee students (4.16%) and employment of refugee families in agriculture and animal husbandry (2.08%). While 8 school administrators participating in the research did not provide suggestions for solving the problems they face, 2 administrators stated that "Refugees should return to their countries as soon as possible."

### **Result and Discussion**

In this research conducted in Istanbul Küçükçekmece, where the refugee population is concentrated, school administrators working in official schools expressed their views on refugee students and families. Participants shared their perspectives on the positive and negative aspects of the presence of refugee students and families in Turkey. Participants

highlighted that the primary challenge faced by refugee students is language-related issues, followed by a lack of adaptation and communication difficulties. This finding aligns with existing literature on the subject, which indicates that refugee students in Turkey experience communication problems, academic inadequacy, and difficulties in adapting to school (Arslan and Ergül, 2022; Levent and Çayak, 2017; Şimşir and Dilmaç, 2018).

School administrators evaluated the interest of refugee students and families in education in Turkey positively. Research results regarding the participation of refugee families in education in Turkey vary. While some studies show that refugee families strive to benefit from educational services in the society they migrated to (Erdemir, 2017; Erdemir et al., 2018), other studies indicate that the educational interest and support of refugee families are insufficient (Suna et al., 2021; Soylu et al., 2021).

Participants positively assessed the presence of refugee students and families in Turkish society in terms of experiencing and understanding different cultures. They expressed that the presence of refugees in Turkey enhances the individual empathy abilities of Turkish students. In Turkey, where multiculturalism has emerged with the concentration of international migrants and refugee populations, viewing cultural differences as richness contributes to the integration process and the formation of a shared culture of living, increasing societal acceptance. Consistent with the research results, Canatan (2009) also explains in his study that in societies where cultural diversity is seen as a richness, social acceptance and adaptation will increase. However, some school administrators in the research hold the view that the presence of refugee students and families in Turkey is not positive for Turkish society. In contrast to this view, the TESEV (2015) report draws attention to the social and economic opportunities created in society, in addition to the challenges posed by international migration and refugees in Turkey. It is believed that this discrepancy in perspectives may be due to the participants' lack of sufficient knowledge and awareness regarding international migration and refugee issues.

School administrators have addressed challenges related to the situation of refugee students and families. According to participants, language barriers, lack of interest in education by refugee families, cultural differences, socio-cultural mismatches, peer bullying and violence, discipline problems, academic inadequacy, financial poverty, discrimination, and the negative impact on the adaptation of refugee students and families to Turkish society and their participation in the Turkish education system have been highlighted. This result aligns with existing studies in the literature. Studies conducted in both Turkey and different countries indicate that refugee students and families face language and communication problems (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Sarıtaş et al., 2016; Watkins et al., 2012). Findings by Pehlivan & Yılmaz (2019), stating low educational support and interest from refugee families, differ from the result of this research indicating efforts for education. The economic deprivation of migrants, as indicated by the negative outcomes of this research, is in line with the conclusion in the literature that refugee families struggle with economic challenges in the society they have migrated to (Doğan & Altıok, 2021). While the literature includes findings about the academic inadequacy of refugee students and their psychological problems, this research did not reach similar conclusions (Kağnıcı, 2017; Rausseau & Corin, 1996). The problems faced by immigrant students in schools resemble those faced with the increase in the number of students in host countries. There are studies indicating an increase in discipline problems in schools, exposure of refugee students to discrimination and marginalization behaviors (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015; Harb & Saab, 2014; Hughes, 2014). Additionally, peer bullying and violent incidents between refugee and settled students are observed in research

results (Demir et al., 2020; Mercy Corps, 2014). These results are consistent with the findings of this research. In addition to these mentioned problems, the research also revealed that some school administrators did not experience any issues regarding refugee students and families.

Regarding the resolution of the problems they faced, the school administrators who participated in the research proposed providing language support to refugee students and families, continuing the temporary education program, introducing Turkish culture to refugees, organizing separate schools and classes for refugee students, planning integration efforts, providing appropriate vocational guidance to refugee students, organizing in-service training for refugee teachers, and breaking the prejudices of teachers towards refugee students. In addition, they suggested employing refugee students and families in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry and recommended the return of refugee students and families to their countries. In line with the participants' views, the most emphasized recommendation in the research is providing language support to refugee families and students. Familiarity with the language and culture of the society to which refugee students migrated not only facilitates social integration but also facilitates peer communication and academic adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1992).

Regarding the educational problems of refugee students, the school administrators who participated in the research put forward two different suggestions for the resolution: maintaining the temporary education program applied in the education of Syrian refugees in Turkey and allowing refugee students to continue their education separately from Turkish students in different schools and classes. According to the administrators recommending the temporary education program, after gaining Turkish language and literacy skills through the temporary education program, refugee students should be enrolled in official schools in Turkey. According to administrators advocating for refugee students to receive education in different schools and classes, separate schools should be designed for refugee students in Turkey. Views on the ideal refugee education in the literature on international migration and refugee education vary. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) states that registering schools outside the camps for urban refugees instead of parallel education systems will facilitate the integration process of the host community into the education system (UNHCR, 2009, as cited in Ateşok, 2018). According to UNESCO, the prolonged stay process also raises concerns, such as refugees forgetting their language and culture. Practices that include both countries' curricula have begun to be implemented to preserve the cultural identity of migrating groups and to adapt to the host country's education system (UNESCO, 2003, as cited in Ateşok, 2018).

In line with participant opinions, the research also revealed the need to plan integration efforts for the resolution of problems faced by refugee students and families. However, participants expressing views on integration efforts did not provide suggestions for the content of these efforts. It is thought that this situation arises from the lack of sufficient knowledge and awareness of the school administrators who participated in the research regarding the integration of international migrants and refugees. Indeed, eight school administrators could not provide any suggestions for the resolution of problems related to refugees, and one school administrator mentioned that teachers in schools with a high number of refugees need in-service training.

Some participants explained that for the resolution of the problems of refugee students and families, students need vocational guidance, and families need to be employed in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry. Studies on the integration of international migrants and

refugees into the host society also highlight the positive relationship between the employment status of migrants and social cohesion (Lahti et al., 2011; Silove et al., 1997; Yanık, 2019).

### **Suggestions**

Based on the research findings, the following suggestions have been proposed:

**Language Support and Language Programs:** Effective language support programs should be developed for refugee students. These programs should be designed to help students rapidly improve their language skills.

**Informing School Administrators and Teachers:** School administrators and teachers should be informed about international migration and refugee education. This will contribute to the establishment of a positive school culture.

**Collaboration and Integration Efforts:** The Ministry of National Education (MEB), universities, and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should plan integration efforts collaboratively. This collaboration can help refugee students integrate more effectively into education.

**Enhancing Psychological Resilience and Guidance Programs:** Guidance programs should be planned to enhance the psychological resilience of refugee students and reduce discriminatory and othering behaviors.

**Appropriate Grade-Level Registrations and Remedial Education:** When registering refugee students in public schools in Turkey, criteria such as age and academic achievement should be considered. Students should be enrolled in remedial education to improve language proficiency and literacy skills.

**Informing and Supporting Refugee Families:** Refugee families should be provided with information about the Turkish education system, and if necessary, language or interpreter support should be provided. This can enable families to participate more effectively in their children's education.

**Cultural Education and Increasing Awareness:** Cultural education programs should be organized within and outside of schools, providing information about refugee culture to students, teachers, and other students. This can enhance mutual understanding and prevent cultural misunderstandings.

These recommendations include steps that can be taken to reduce the challenges faced by refugee students in the education process and create a healthier educational environment.

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