Teachers' Experiences on Refugee Education and Their Views on Refugees' Social Inclusion: Case of Turkey[1]

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This study had two aims: first, to reveal the experiences of educators who work with refugee students in Samsun (Turkey); and second, to divulge the views these teachers have on the social inclusion of refugees. The research was designed using a case study approach; 18 individuals participated in the research, who were selected from 12 schools within the criterion sample. A semi-structured interview form was utilized to collect data, which were analyzed using a content analysis approach. Some participants indicated that some refugee students were indifferent toward their lessons, would act in violent ways at school, experienced academic inadequacies, and possessed language and communication issues. Other teacher-participants pointed out that refugee students suffered from discrimination at school. In a general sense, the participants had a positive attitude towards refugee social inclusion, and they believed that refugees should be given employment opportunities; but refugees should also learn about Turkish culture and values. The study concluded that an equal distribution of refugees across schools and residential areas is necessary and that organizing events where refugees and Turkish citizens can join together provides the whole society with opportunities to learn about multiculturalism, which in turn can accelerate social inclusion.

Cette étude avait deux objectifs : premièrement, révéler les expériences des éducateurs qui travaillent avec des étudiants réfugiés à Samsun (Turquie) ; et deuxièmement, rendre compte des points de vue de ces enseignants sur l'inclusion sociale des réfugiés. La recherche a été conçue selon une approche d'étude de cas ; 18 personnes ont participé à la recherche et ont été sélectionnées dans 12 écoles de l'échantillon de référence. Un formulaire d'entrevue semi-structurée a été utilisé pour collecter les données, qui ont été analysées à l'aide d'une méthode d'analyse de contenu. Certains participants ont indiqué que certains étudiants réfugiés étaient indifférents à leurs cours, agissaient de manière violente à l'école, présentaient des lacunes scolaires et avaient des problèmes de langue et de communication. D'autres enseignants-participants ont souligné que les étudiants réfugiés souffraient de discrimination à l'école. D'une manière générale, les participants avaient une attitude positive à l'égard de l'inclusion sociale des réfugiés, et ils pensaient qu'on devrait offrir aux réfugiés des possibilités d'emploi, mais que ceux-ci devaient aussi apprendre la culture et les valeurs turques. L'étude conclut qu'une répartition égale des réfugiés dans les écoles et les zones résidentielles est nécessaire et que l'organisation d'événements où les réfugiés et les citoyens turcs peuvent se rencontrer donne à l'ensemble de la société l'occasion d'apprendre le multiculturalisme, ce qui à son tour peut accélérer l'inclusion sociale.

Due to its geographical location, Turkey has always been a significant crossroad for those aiming to leave countries in the Middle East, northern Africa, and Western Asia to reach Europe, although some may elect to emigrate to Turkey as well. For instance, Turkey has accepted refugees who left their countries due to the conflicts in the Middle East in 2011 (Tümtaş, 2018). More recently, Turkey has experienced waves of migration not only from Syria and Iraq but also from Afghanistan and Iran (Deniz, 2014). Turkey is the country that is most preferred by refugees as it is more stable and safer than the other countries in the region (Deniz, 2014). According to the latest data, Turkey has the greatest number of refugees in the world with 5,400,000 (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2021) having the right of temporary asylum. Around 3,640,000 of these migrants are Syrian, 175,000 are Afghan, 145,000 are Iraqi, and 40,000 are Iranian (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021), with the rest comprised of a number of other nationalities. Yet, according to unofficial figures, the number of refugees in Turkey may exceed 6 million people (Petillo, 2022). Not surprisingly, the arrival of refugees has caused significant changes in the political, economic, and social structure of Turkey.

Refugees entering Turkey mostly experience issues related to hunger, shelter, health, secure living, and secure employment, but they also face harassment, violence, and discrimination in the neighborhoods or regions they live in (Erdoğan, 2021). Furthermore, as Tahiroğlu (2022) explained, three additional concerns have become apparent: (a) Turkish unemployment has increased due to the availability of cheap and unregistered labor that refugees provide, (b) there are tensions between and amongst migrants in some settlements due to cultural differences, and (c) social tensions are increasing throughout the country due to political discourses calling for refugees to be sent back to their nations of origin. Undoubtedly, these concerns also affect other countries with an influx of refugees; however, especially in the United States, Canada, and European countries, legal regulations for refugees show that there is a will to resolve these matters (Ghahari et al., 2020; Kang, 2021), although existing regulations have not prevented discriminatory practices, discourses, and attacks against refugees (Arar et al., 2020). In contrast, Turkey's refusal to accept the status of refugees and its efforts to solve the issues with temporary legal regulations and practices has postponed rather than resolved various concerns.

Education is one of these areas of contention. According to the data from the Directorate General of Immigration Emergency Education in Turkey, there are 1,234,439 school-age refugee children with 731,564 of those having access to school (Ministry of National Education, 2020). In a general sense, it is possible to divide the educational concerns relating to refugees in Turkey into two categories. The first is composed of the difficulties and challenges teachers face when teaching refugees. Although the challenges educators encounter with respect to the education of refugees and their social integration into host countries are not unique to Turkey, it is crucial that Turkish teachers act as a bridge between the Turkish community and refugees. Taking into account teachers' experiences and challenges during the education process is also important in terms of achieving social inclusion. The second category refers to Turkish systems of education facilitating refugee students' abilities to integrate into society. Refugees who have settled in Turkey should be active participants when it comes to their acceptance into society, social inclusion, and integration; some of this can occur through participating in educational systems. Therefore, the current study focuses on the experiences of Turkish teachers and their views on social inclusion within the context of refugee education in Turkey, which highlights the need to create a foundation for refugees and citizens to live together.

Literature Review

In recent decades, Turkish researchers have increasingly engaged with issues concerning refuge education and social inclusion. Much of the literature focuses on the challenges refugees experience regarding their education, adaptation to Turkey, and social inclusion within Turkey. Şimşir and Dilmaç (2018) remarked that the leading issues in refugee education are language and communication difficulties between students and teachers, student academic proficiency levels, student disinterest in lessons, and low levels of parent participation. The aforementioned study also highlighted the sense of loneliness and exclusion experienced by refugee students as another major concern. A study carried out by İmamoğlu and Çalışkan (2017) addressed the challenges teachers encountered in refugee education, pointing out that not providing pre-service training on refugee education leads to significant difficulties for teachers. This study also underlined significant challenges such as inconsistencies concerning refugee education practice at the school level and the lack of psychological counselling services offered to refugee students. According to another study, the class materials and coursebooks refugee students use rely on content that does not consider their needs and experiences, which hinders the efforts of teachers to provide them with a quality education (Eren, 2019). In yet another study, Börü and Boyacı (2016) found that refugee students in Turkey endured their peers and some teachers attempting to isolate them. In an additional study, Sakız (2016) examined the culture of schools where refugee students were enrolled and found that Turkish school staff and students would not accept the clothing, behaviours, and different beliefs and traditions of refugee students, which negatively affected the school culture. Moreover, in their study that focused on teacher perspectives, Yurdakul and Tok (2018) determined that if parents and other stakeholders did not have an understanding of multicultural social lives, the school would be negatively impacted. Finally, Mavi (2022) emphasized that Turkey's emergency education planning for the education of refugees and the participation of parents in language teaching processes would be effective refugee students could be more easily involved in social life.

International Context

In a study conducted in Lebanon regarding the challenges faced by refugee students, Suayb (2014) found that students struggled with three different matters. First, they had trouble attaining adequate nutrition and suitable housing. Second, their parents were unable to support their education because they were otherwise occupied by their struggle for survival. Finally, because the curriculum in the host country was not reflective of their interests and experiences, students would lose interest in their lessons. Moreover, the aforementioned study highlighted the need to improve the quality of education given to refugee students in Lebanon and to rectify the socioeconomic inequalities. Similarly, another issue reported by Lebanese teachers was that they lacked the support and the necessary expertise to adequately teach refugee students (Khansa & Bahous, 2021). Jordan's education system is also difficult for refugee students. Like what is reported about refugee students in Lebanon, refugee students in Jordan have difficulties meeting their housing and nutritional needs, and encounter teachers who are not trained to teach refugees; in addition, the overall quality of schools in Jordan is considered poor (Muhaidat et al., 2020). The challenges surrounding refugee education in Jordan and Lebanon are therefore analogous to those in Turkey.

Refugee education outside of the Middle East, in contrast, is very different from that in Turkey. Taylor (2008) stated that the experiences of refugees from Libya and Sudan who live in Australia vary considerably. There are often differences amongst those from the same national origins; for instance, some children may be able to read and write in their native language while others cannot. Further, the study suggested that the traumas caused by being a refugee can be overcome through education; in turn, this education facilitates personal and intellectual development, leading to social integration. However, the study also noted that racist discourses still exist in schools as a result of negative perceptions of refugees in society, which may lead to refugees exhibiting "negative behavior" as they are discriminated against. Ultimately, the study underlined the need to develop constructive and countering strategies that consider the socioeconomic and historical background of refugees to prevent discrimination and racism against them. In a second example, Essomba's (2017) study on the education rights of refugee students in Europe stated that the EU and its member states guarantee the educational rights of refugees, but in practice, some students nonetheless experience issues integrating into the host country. Additionally, like studies conducted in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, teachers in the EU also demonstrated insufficient knowledge about trauma (Essomba, 2017); but despite this, refugees generally have greater access to education in EU countries.

As previously noted, studies conducted in Turkey focused on major challenges in refugee education; yet, there are no known studies that specifically addressed the experiences of teachers teaching refugee students and their views on the social inclusion of refugee students. Therefore, the current study aims to explore the experiences of teachers who work in areas that are densely populated by refugees and their opinion on refugee student inclusion. This study is expected to guide policy makers and practitioners about refugee education at local, regional, and international levels.

Theoretical Framework: Social Inclusion

The concept of *social inclusion* refers to the inclusion of those who face the risk of social exclusion and other disadvantages in their social lives (Genç & Çat, 2013). The theory highlights the need for these groups to have access to economic, social, and cultural systems, thereby providing them the opportunity to reach the living standards of that society as part of their basic human rights (Kılınç et al., 2016).

Another important component of social inclusion theory focuses on how individuals become a part of a society; more specifically, all people in a society should have the ability to participate in all processes within that society, which will not only prevent their alienation but also ensure obedience to social rules (Collins, 2003). Social inclusion aims to not only ensure justice for individuals but also maintain a stable social order (Collins, 2003). In this way, barriers to participation are removed as well as the physical, social, and economic circumstances that separate people from each other (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002).

Social inclusion policies intend to make the necessary institutional arrangements to improve the conditions of those who are otherwise minoritized in their society participate in the process of making decisions that affect themselves (Collins, 2003). For instance, those who have an income lower than societal average or have no income at all, as well as those who face discrimination because of their beliefs, genders, educational statuses, ethnic origins, and disabilities would benefit from social inclusion policies. Education is the only way to prevent foreigners and immigrants from being discriminated against, ensure their integration, and help them achieve

inclusion in society. In fact, it is important to provide education to refugees and immigrants—if they are school-age or not—in order to ensure their integration and participation in society.

Countries have the responsibility to ensure social cohesion and integration by making a room for all the people living within their borders in the public, social, political, and financial spheres without any discrimination or breach of rights. Accordingly, it is necessary for governments to develop policies to ensure all people are included whatever their nationality is. This is because when individuals are permanently excluded from society or feel that they are excluded, this can lead to psychological issues, and these individuals lose their trust in other people in society and social institutions (Sarıer, 2020). As a result of this, excluded individuals may commit a crime, which in turn causes social tension and conflicts (Akıncı et al., 2015). Schools are one of the places where social tensions are apparent. Such tensions cause challenges for both students and parents, which in turn affects educational institutions negatively.

Research Questions

Three specific research questions were explored in this study:
- What are the issues faced by teachers in accessing education services?

- What is the basic social inclusion policy required for refugees in Turkey to live without exclusion?

- What are refugees' views on their social inclusion?

Two other questions to be answered in line with the general purpose of the study are as follows:
- What are the teachers' experiences regarding the education process with refugee students?

- What are the teachers' views on the social inclusion of refugees?

Method

Research Model

The current study has a qualitative research design. Qualitative studies are studies that reveal how individuals interpret their experiences and what meaning they attribute to these experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In turn, these studies make it possible to develop field-specific theories by attributing various meanings to the experiences obtained from these data (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This research followed a case study approach. Case studies explore a situation, program, or social group in significant detail (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although Merriam (2009) defined case studies as "an in-depth description of a limited system" (p. 46), Stake (1995) outlined them "as investigations of a current phenomenon in its real context" (p. 63). A case study design was preferred for this research because it allowed for the exploration of teacher experiences regarding the education processes of refugees and teacher views on the social inclusion of refugees.

Study Participants

The group of participants for this study was composed of 18 teachers who worked at 12 schools in Samsun, Turkey, that were densely populated by refugee students. Study participants were found

using a purposeful, non-probability sampling method (Patton, 2014). According to the specified criteria of the current study, the participants had worked at the same school for at least one year and had refugee students of more than one nationality in their classes. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

A maximum variation in our sample was achieved by including teachers working at all grades (primary, secondary², general high school, religious vocational high school, and vocational high school) in the study sample. Five of the participants were men and 13 were women. The ages of the teachers varied between 35 and 60. Six of the participants were working at a primary school, five of them were working at a secondary school, and seven of them were working at a high school. The shortest interview—23 minutes—was with the art teacher, whereas the longest one lasted 56 minutes and was with a primary school teacher. The schools where the participants worked, their school levels, and their names were kept confidential; in addition, each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

Data Collection Tool

The researchers developed a semi-structured interview form to collect data. Creating an interview form ensures researchers use time efficiently and do not deviate from the core issue being explored during an interview (Patton, 2014). However, participants should be allowed to express their opinions on issues they want even if they do not pertain to a specific item in the interview form. The draft of the interview form was sent to academics in the field of educational sciences to receive an expert opinion on its scope, content, simplicity, understandability (Creswell, 2013), or

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Seniority	Branch	Level of School	Year of Working	Interview Duration(mn)
Arzu	F	21	Form	Elementary	7	55
Ebru	F	25	Form	Elementary	2	56
Deniz	M	25	Form	Elementary	13	45
Esra	F	25	Form	Elementary	5	53
Emine	F	37	Visual Arts	Middle	33	23
Ayşe	F	20	Mathematics	Middle	8	26
Zeynep	F	25	Mathematics	Industrial	10	30
Sami	M	22	English	Anatolian High	10	49
Eylül	F	21	Literature	İmam H. High	18	46
Mahir	M	13	Relig. Culture	Middle	7	46
Engin	M	15	Turkish	Middle	4	40
Sıla	F	15	Biology	Religion Sch.	15	50
Ezgi	F	9	Literature	Religion Sch.	3	26
Dilek	F	15	Form	Elementary	10	35
Hande	F	21	Literature	Industrial Sch.	11	50
Çiğdem	F	16	Mathematics	Middle	8	51
Sevgi	F	26	Form	Elementary	8	27
Ulaş	M	40	Rel. Culture	Religion Sch.	3	37

discourse. The researchers made the necessary changes in line with the expert opinions. Although the first draft included 20 questions, eight of them were removed from the interview form aligned with the expert opinion (due to reasons such as having very short answers, being out of scope, being too long, or requiring too much time to answer). The draft form was used with three teachers on February 25, 26, and 27, 2020, to assess the scope and style of the interview questions. These teachers did not participate in the main study group. Two more questions were removed after exploring the questions on the draft form: a) "Do you know Arabic?" and b) "What changes can be made about the curriculum?" After the two rounds of revisions, the final interview form was left with 10 questions. The interview form was composed of three sections: The first section required information on the number and date of the interview as well as the school and place where the interview was conducted. The second section asked for information on what subject(s) the teacher taught, their level of seniority within the school, the grades taught in the school, and how many years they had been teaching. The third section included questions such as "How does having a refugee student in your class affect you?" and "What are your experiences about following the curriculum?"

Data Collection

The researchers planned to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants to collect data. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic—which started in the last months of 2019 and spread during the first months of 2020—they were not able to collect all the data face-to-face and had to conduct some interviews online. Online interviews were recorded with the approval of the participants. The interviews started in late March of 2020 and were completed in mid-July of the same year. The researchers got permission from Hacettepe University Ethics Commission to ensure that the study conformed to ethical procedures.

Data Analysis

The criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985)—credibility, transferability, consistency, and confirmability—were applied to data collection in the study. To ensure credibility, audio recordings were taken with the consent of the participants which were then transcribed. Afterward, the analyzed data were sent back to the participants, allowing for the condition of "confirmation of the participant" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) to be met. To ensure transferability, the researchers did not edit the interview texts; in this way, the sample, environment, and processes were defined in detail at a level to be compared with other samples. To increase reliability (consistency and confirmability), the data collection tool, data collection process, coding process, analysis of the data, interpretation of the data, and how the results of the study were determined are explained in detail in the following paragraph.

The study data were directly obtained from the participants through first-hand interviews about their experiences and expectations. Data analysis started while the interviews were being conducted with the participants: we began to come up with some thematic codes during the interviews, although in-depth coding did not occur until after member checking had occurred. After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and interpreted in line with the theoretical framework of the study. The transcribed data were sent to the participants via text messages and emails for member checking. The data are presented in this article impartially, free from the researchers' biases. In addition, the data was sent to the field expert and approval was

obtained to ensure that the data was conveyed in an unbiased manner. During the analysis of the data, the data were compared with each other, and all the data were tried to be consistent within themselves. The content analysis method was used in the analysis of the obtained data. Content analysis is one of the most frequently used methods in qualitative research, and it is the type of analysis in which the researcher develops categories related to the research topic (Özdemir, 2010). To ensure the compliance of the research with ethical processes, a respectful atmosphere was created during the appointment and interview processes, and the purpose of the research was clearly explained to the participants. In this process, the participants were assured that their names would not be used in the research and that the research data would not be shared with anyone.

Findings

Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges Experienced by Refugee Students

The aim of this research was to examine the experiences of teachers regarding the difficulties encountered by refugee students in accessing education. After analyzing the data, a central theme emerged, which was referred to as "teachers' perspectives on the challenges faced by refugee students." This main theme was further subdivided into four thematic groups: (a) discrimination against refugee students, (b) the violent tendencies of refugee students, (c) language and communication barriers, and (d) perceptions of the indifference of refugee families and students. These categories provide a more comprehensive understanding of the obstacles faced by these students.

Discrimination Against Refugee Students

Discriminatory behavior was the issues most frequently mentioned by teachers. This category included the challenges teachers reported experiencing while educating refugee students. Some of the participants' views on this issue are provided below.

> Of course, I witness that many teachers display discriminative behaviours. For instance, when they shout more at refugee children that do not their homework, they get scared and ours get spoilt. (Arzu)

> I know that there are those who do not like refugees because of their political views. … Besides, almost all teachers, including me, have practiced positive discrimination. (Ezgi)

> There are two types of discrimination. There are also those who overdo positive discrimination. One is that there are some who act with the idea of religious fellowship resulting from Islamic thinking or jihadism, and there is this discrimination resulting from nationalist feelings (humiliation). I think both of them are really annoying. (Hande)

As stated by the participant teachers, when some teachers discriminate in favour of refugee students while others treat refugee students negatively, the opposing treatments may result in teachers having difficulty teaching and maintaining discipline in class. The participant teachers stated they themselves did not display discriminative behaviours. They did point out, however, that Turkish students did not like when some of the participant teachers displayed positive

discrimination towards refugee students—such as giving a high score on an assignment or not penalizing absences—which caused tension in class.

Expressions of Violence by Refugee Students

The following excerpts from the teacher-participants demonstrate how refugee students engaged in violent behaviours.

> Families use violence on children too much. As they suffer from violence at home, they consider violence normal. Because they have grown up with war, violence, and fear of death. When they start fighting, they hit each other to death. (Arzu)

> I mean, we have had so radical experiences from fights in class to fights in the street, and stones fly in the sky. For example, there was a student; their uncle was beating them with a belt. They were using this violence on other children in class. How can I teach in this class peacefully? Also, parents do not want these children in class. (Deniz)

The participant teachers stated that refugee students tended to show violence to a great extent, that they always fought in class and corridors, and they did not focus on lessons. The teachers proposed that the violent behaviours of the children resulted from cultural reasons, the war they had been going through, and differences among religious sects. Participants stated that the tendency for violence in refugee students had also drawn the reaction of Turkish parents.

Language and Communication Barriers

The three examples below point to the language and communication barriers the participant teachers identified as challenges during teaching.

> It gets too difficult when they first come. They do not know anything. We have communication problems. They cannot say "notebook, eraser, book, toilet." We communicated through pictures on the first days. (Arzu)

> Now, put yourself in those children's place. You do not understand the language, you do not understand those who are talking, and you have to listen to them for 40 minutes. You will inevitably get bored. (Deniz)

> Children do not know the language; their families do not know the language either and they are not interested in education at all. I mean, there is no communication between us. At first, there was not a translator, either. (Recently, they have been using some of their peers as translators as they know Turkish.) How can I teach something to this child? The child just came here and went back without learning anything. (Dilek)

The participants' teachers highlighted that they had serious communication and language issues working with refugee children. For instance, teachers and children would not be able to communicate with each early in the children's education in the host country. The participants also indicated that it would not be possible to solve this existing concern with the current methods and strategies available to them.

Perceptions of the Indifference of Refugee Families and Students

The perceived indifference of refugee students and their parents towards education is another issue that was a challenge for teachers. Some of the teachers stated their opinion on the issue as follows.

> We do not pay attention to children, and they do not have such a demand. They do not step into anything. They sit at the back; they do not have any relations and they do not have any interest. When they act this way, we also give up. Parents are also indifferent because their priority is to find food. (Zeynep)

> I think as I see that they do not have any will to learn, I do not mind any more either. When there were only a few, I was putting in great effort. But when they are more in number, it is not possible to take care of them all. And they do not mind classes as they think that they somehow pass the class. (Çiğdem)

The participant teachers expressed that the refugee students were not interested in school and classes in general; they were always sleeping in class, which might result from the fact that they could not understand the lessons. Another finding that can be obtained from the statements of teachers is that refugee students' indifference to school causes teachers to be indifferent to them. The reason why refugee students are indifferent to the school, according to the teacher-participants may be that students can pass the class even if their course grades are low.

Teachers' Opinions on Refugees' Social Inclusion

The participant teachers were asked "What is your opinion on refugees' social inclusion?" and "What can be done?" The participants' answers are organized into four categories: (a) supporting refugees through employment, (b) organizing events for refugees at school, (c) offering courses on Turkish language and culture to refugees, and (d) making demographic considerations in resettlement.

Supporting Refugees Through Employment

Most of the participant teachers stated that refugees should be given employment and spiritual support in order to ensure their social inclusion within Turkey. Three examples are provided below.

> It is necessary to give them a hand. Because they have no income. They earn their life by begging. … They should be financed somehow, or they should be integrated into life. We should give these people a job. (Deniz)

> As they have been accepted into the country, they should be given job opportunities for survival. (Ayşe)

> There should be an effort to employ them. I think that this country is enough for everyone. (Sevgi)

Although the participant teachers had different opinions about employing refugees—an important factor for their social inclusion—it is clear that the teachers mostly had positive

opinions. The participants stated that it is necessary for the government to provide employment opportunities for refugees to prevent them from begging on the streets and to enable them to support themselves. Teachers also believed that refugees should not be seen as a burden on the economy and that granting them the right to work is important because it would facilitate their social integration.

Organizing Events at School

The participant teachers indicated that arranging joint events at schools for refugees and non-refugees would be beneficial in ensuring the social inclusion and acceptance of refugees. Two examples from participants are offered below.

> Gathering them together at places and quarters where they live and organizing events can ensure integration, but I am not sure if I go (laughing). If there is an integration, it should happen spontaneously. (Ayşe)

> There are UN projects financially. We used funds in various projects. If money is spent on projects, families and children have nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep at home. You take this kid to the cinema. I mean, it is necessary to develop projects in which people can know each other better. (Mahir)

The participant teachers indicated that it was necessary to arrange events designed for both refugees and Turkish citizens both at schools and the places where refugees were living in order to make it easier for refugees to achieve social inclusion and to be accepted by society. Such events would allow refugees and non-refugees to learn more about each other. The participants stated that national and international funds can be utilized for joint activities.

Offering Courses on Turkish Language and Culture

According to the participant teachers, another prerequisite for refugees to merit social inclusion and ensure their acceptance by society is that they should receive training in Turkish culture and values. They have stated their opinions about that as noted below.

> If they are to go on living in Turkey, they should learn about the Turkish rules, traditions, and values, or we should teach them. Otherwise, there will be many problems. It would be very difficult for us to accept. (Arzu)

> If they want integration, parents of these students should be gathered and taught about hygiene, Turkish culture, and our values. I mean, these people should be aware that they are living in a different culture. I remember that in the first years, they used to walk in the streets at 12 a.m. at night speaking loudly in Arabic and laughing. You find it strange. Why haven't they adapted to this culture in which they are living yet? They are laid-back. If you want to stay here, you will learn this country's culture so that this nation can accept you. They will comply with us so that they will not be isolated. (Dilek)

The fact that most of the refugees coming to Turkey were Muslim-led Turkish people to be more tolerant of refugees in the beginning (Kındap Tepe & Aktaş, 2019). However, as the number of refugees increased over time—and accordingly so did their visibility within Turkish society—Turkish people began to view some refugee behaviours as strange, as noted by some of the teacher

participants. Özgüler (2018) stated that to facilitate the coexistence of people from different cultures, parties need to be educated to be more sensitive to each other's customs and traditions. Otherwise, it has been expressed that it will be difficult to achieve social harmony.

Demographic Considerations in Resettlement

When refugees enter Turkey, they try to settle down in places where they have relatives or acquaintances. Because they are poor, refugees mostly settle down in slums or low socioeconomic districts (Büyükikiz & Çangal, 2016). This phenomenon also affects the demographic structure of these places (Orhan &Gündoğar, 2015). For instance, Turkish parents might remove their children from a school if they believe that there are too many refugees registered. The participant teachers thought that to ensure the social inclusion and social acceptance of refugees, they should be distributed to schools and residential areas in a balanced way.

> Canik [a district with a low socioeconomic level] is already problematic; it is a place where the crime rate and use of drugs is high. They are also caught up in this issue because they are idle fellows. They also have no money. Those who settle here turn out to be the same. And people believe that they are bad. In fact, they do this because they are hungry. The state should place them in a controlled manner. (Arzu)

> If they are high in number, grouping comes out. And this time, conflicts arise. But it is a problem when they are all together. Therefore, they should be distributed in a balanced way both at schools and in settlements. (Sevgi)

The participants noted that the excessive concentration of refugees in certain neighborhoods, schools, and classrooms draws negative reactions from Turkish citizens. They stated that although having three to five refugee students in a classroom is not seen as a problem, an increase in the number of refugee students is a concern. At the same time, the teachers emphasized that when there are larger groups of refugee students in certain areas or classes, they tend to spend time with together rather than with Turkish students. As a result, according to the teachers, there are delays in refugee student integration.

Negative Views on Social Inclusion

Some of the teacher participants had negative opinions on social inclusion, which can be grouped into two thematic categories: (a) discrimination and (b) competition for employment.

Discrimination

Some of the teachers, who approached social inclusion negatively, rejected the premise that the social inclusion and social integration of refugees was important. The participant teachers stated that social inclusion is challenging to achieve and that it is not necessary.

> I don't think there will be a complete integration, because there are political reasons lying behind it. Local families can come to Bodrum [a popular holiday city], but it is a big event when an Arabic oil-rich person comes. This mentality should change. If it doesn't, integration is impossible. (Mahir)

Social inclusion is very hard. I mean, it is very difficult for us to integrate with them. No matter whom you ask, no one wants a Syrian in their apartment. (Ayşe)

If I had a teenage kid, I would definitely not want him/her to be with them. But I would like my kids to be with Westerners. A German or an Italian. There are also good people among them. But you should see what they look like. They are just like an Isis fan. I don't want to offer different exams for them and then enter a university with the same rights just for the sake of inclusion. To be honest, I am not in favour of integrating with them. (Sıla)

The teachers who approached refugee social inclusion negatively expressed that the society (and in fact, they) mostly have a negative viewpoint towards refugees. However, it should be noted that Turkey is a nation-state, and its education system is based on nationalism, which is an important factor that makes citizens see foreigners as "others." It is understood from the statements of the participants that they have prejudices, especially against those who come from the Middle East.

Competition for Employment

Some of the participant teachers opposed refugees' social inclusion because they did not want refugees to be employed. The participants stated that the employment resources provided by the Turkish state were not enough for both Turkish people and refugees, as stated below.

Perhaps, it will be a nationalist approach in terms of their settlement and having a job, but I would prefer Turkish people to be employed first of all. (Ayşe)

There is already unemployment here in our country. And they have too many kids. I think this will also be a problem in the future. How long will we take care of these people? They are already a burden on us financially. (Eylül)

When there are so many imams and teachers waiting out there, it will be a problem if you appoint a foreigner as an imam. There will be a lot of provocation and fighting then. (Mahir)

The participant teachers who were against refugee social inclusion and social integration highlighted that during a time when employment opportunities were already few in Turkey, it is not right to create employment opportunities for refugees. Comments from study participants revealed the assumptions that refugees generally have issues maintaining employment, and often work illicitly; as a result, they are paid poorly and must change jobs very frequently. Furthermore, participants classifying refugees as a burden on Turkish society is important in demonstrating the extent of refugee hostility.

Discussion

The current research focuses on teachers' experiences of education with refugee students and their views on refugees' social inclusion. The study data were organized into one theme, four codes related to teacher experiences, while their views on social inclusion fell under six categories. The study reveals that teachers face significant challenges with refugee students in their classrooms. The participant teachers emphasized that (a) refugee students cannot focus in class due to the

discrimination they face, (b) refugee students are likely to engage into violent behaviour due to their trauma, and (c) the teaching and learning environment is compromised for both teachers and students because of language barriers and the perceived indifference refugee students have toward their education. The participants also pointed to the fact that the high number of refugee students in their classes causes them to not be able to spend enough time with each of their students. The findings of this research are supported by a variety of other studies in the literature. For example, in a study about discrimination toward refugee students, Börü and Boyacı (2016) concluded that some teachers will treat refugee students well, while others will not. Discrimination against refugees can be prevented only by developing strategies to struggle with racist policies and constructing educational systems within the framework of anti-racist laws and legislation (Onsando & Billet, 2017).

The findings of the current study around expressions of violence by refugee students coincide with the same in the literature: students are mostly violent among themselves (Akbasli & Mavi, 2019). Because they cannot express themselves well in the language of the host country (Kardeş & Akman, 2018), they become frustrated and engage in negative behaviour understood to be violent (Ersoy & Turan, 2019).

The research findings indicated that language and communication issues are a predominant concern in all countries where refugees receive education; accordingly, each country has different methods to solve this problem (Galloway & Jenkins, 2009). Although some studies have found that refugee students have poor attendance or drop out of school due to communication difficulties (Büyükhan, 2019; Karakuş, 2019), the same conclusion was not reached in this study.

It should not be ignored that refugee students and parents are primarily preoccupied with their livelihoods, living in already poor neighborhoods, and their participation in the education process is pushed into the background as a result (Şimşir & Dilmaç, 2018; Yurdakul & Tok, 2018). Other studies also showed that parents are disinterested in education because they do not speak the language and do not prioritize education (Kardeş & Akman, 2018). However, a study conducted by Jihae (2020) with refugee students in a refugee camp in Kenya concluded that students have a high level of motivation to complete their studies despite all the difficulties such as trauma and the work they must do in the home.

Participants in this study suggested that joint activities involving Turkish and refugee participants would facilitate social inclusion and integration, which was echoed in the literature. For instance, Altıntaş and Balçık (2018) revealed that social activities to be held at schools with students will ease the harmony between refugees and Turkish people as well as the process of acceptance In addition, Yanar and Erkut (2020) mentioned that the municipalities in İstanbul have arranged many activities through social service units to gather refugees and Turkish people together; having all local authorities conduct similar activities can make it easier for communities to accept each other.

According to another study finding, Turkish citizens believe that refugees must learn more about Turkish language and culture, and "act Turkish" to be accepted. There are three possibilities for bridging this cultural gap. First, refugee students can be educated by mediators who know the Arabic language and culture (İngleby et al., 2013), which will introduce them to Turkish norms. Second, all refugees should receive sensitivity training regarding living in places that may have different cultures and cultural values than the country they migrated from (Nayir & Sarıdaş, 2020). Finally, it is also important to educate Turkish people about accepting multiculturalism and being more sensitive. Therefore, the priority should be to give teachers sensitivity training as they will have an active role in giving such an education to the public.

When refugees enter Turkey, it is inevitable for them to settle with their relatives or acquaintances (Büyükikiz & Çangal, 2016). This situation increases the refugee density in certain regions and affects schools as well. In this regard, Akman (2018) emphasized that refugees should be included in language and adaptation training upon entering the country, and then they should be distributed to cities, quarters, and schools, as is the process in Germany. The participants in the study suggested implementing a similar process in Turkey as well. These findings support the previous studies in the literature (Brennan et al., 2019; Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Kılınç et al., 2016; Oxoby, 2009; Schostak, 2019; Shuayb, 2014; Veck et al., 2021).

Although the majority of teachers participating in the study had a positive attitude towards the social inclusion of refugees, some participants rejected the need for social inclusion and objected to how refugees were integrating themselves into society. These results are consistent with previous studies conducted on this topic. For instance, Sakiz (2016) found that some school administrators had negative attitudes toward refugee students receiving education in their schools and argued that education for refugee students should be provided in segregated environments. Another reason against social inclusion given by participants was that because refugee employment was unregistered and cheaper than for Turkish citizens (Diker & Karan, 2021), it led to an overall decrease in wages. Additionally, participants claimed that the employment of refugees caused Turkish people to become unemployed (Koç et al., 2015). These perceptions are not unique to Turkey. There are negative attitudes toward refugee employment in developing and underdeveloped countries, which is why, for example, employing refugees is completely banned in Indonesia (Nola, 2020). In order to ensure social integration in Turkey, refugees must be granted the same opportunities as those Turkish people, including participation in employment processes (Türk, 2019). Social inclusion is the desire of society to live in peace and under equal conditions. It is a behavior that should be advocated by all members of society for individuals to maintain a dignified life due to being human.

Implications and Future Research

The current study has some implications for both policymakers and practitioners. First, some policies should be developed to decrease the number of refugee students in one class to an optimum level. However, to help students benefit from learning and teaching at a maximum level, their level of language should be determined, and classes should be created in accordance with their language level. Supporting refugee students to join cultural activities as well as art and sports activities can help their social integration. Social activities that will gather school leaders, teachers, parents, and students at schools can be helpful for social inclusion. Also, social justice leadership at schools can be of vital importance for the integration of refugee students into the school. In addition, teachers should be given training on teaching individuals from different cultures to decrease the frequency of issues they encounter, as noted in this study. Teachers can be supported better in pedagogical terms if such training on inclusive education is given by experts, and it can even be more effective to establish cooperation with higher education institutions (Brennan et al., 2019). In sum, it is necessary to construct a school environment in a way to overcome such issues through inclusive policies and practices.

The current study has some limitations. Firstly, the current study reflects the experiences of a limited number of teachers. Therefore, researchers can conduct similar studies based on quantitative or mixed-design methods in different institutions with a much larger sample. Carrying out similar studies in different cultures can also contribute to the literature.

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Notes

1. This paper is based on the first author's dissertation research project: Topaloğlu, H. (2020) *Mültecilerin sosyal içerilmeleri bağlaminda eğitime erişmelerinde yaşanilan problemler ve çözüm önerileri* [*Education in the context of the social inclusion of refugees: Problems in accessing and solution suggestions*]. [Doctoral dissertation, Haceteppe University].
2. A secondary school in Turkey is equivalent to a middle school in North America.

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