

Communication Issues and Practices of Syrian Students Receiving Education in Turkey

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Abstract

The influx of refugees from Syria to Turkey started in April, following the Syria crisis, which began with the demonstrations known as the Arab Spring in 2011. Concerning the distribution of refugees who took refuge in Turkey after the Syrian crisis by country, it is observed that Syrians are in the first place. It is seen that intensive works are carried out especially in the fields of integration and education for Syrian families and their children who live in Turkey at the present time. The aim of this study is to determine the communication status and daily life communication problems of Syrian students who have come from Syria and study at schools in Turkey together with Turkish students, with their Syrian and Turkish friends. In this research using a case study, one of the qualitative research designs, semi-structured interviews were held with 20 Syrian students studying at a state secondary school of a middle socioeconomic level in the Marmara region. The data obtained were subjected to content analysis. As a result of the study, it was determined that the most important problem faced by Syrian children was the language issue and this problem also affected other communication areas. Syrian students stated that they had problems with other students, teachers, and school administrators in their daily life and at school due to their insufficient level of knowing Turkish. Therefore, they indicated that they frequently met their Syrian friends both at school and outside the school, and they would like to spend more time with their Syrian friends if they were to make a choice. As a result of the study, it was also revealed that Syrian students had fewer communication problems and they tended to spend more time with Turkish students as the time they spent in Turkey increased.

Keywords: Immigration, Syrian Students, Communication, Communication Problems, Educational Settings, Refugees

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals desire to continue their lives in places where they believe that they can meet their needs such as nutrition, shelter, security and education, can be at peace and can live in better conditions in the future. Occasionally, these conditions cannot be completely or partially fulfilled due to individual and political, economic, social or cultural reasons (Ünal, 2014; Sevinç et al., 2018). In this context, people have migrated to different geographies for different reasons from past to present. Migration is defined as "the movement of individuals or communities from one country to another, from one settlement to another for economic, social and political reasons, moving, emigration" (Turkish Language Institution [TDK], 2018). The concept of migration implicitly involves moving from one socio-economic system to another, from one cultural system to another (Bal, 2008). Along with migrations, individuals face different cultures, and the obligation to live together arises. As a result of living together, conflicts and various adaptation problems arise (Aksoy, 2012). Nowadays, the concepts of "asylum-seeker" and "refugee" are most frequently used for migrating people.

The concept of refugee used for migrating people refers to individuals who are outside the country of their nationality because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion and who cannot benefit from the protection of this country (United Nations [UN], 1951).

The influx of refugees from Syria to Turkey started in April, following the Syria crisis, which began with the demonstrations known as the Arab Spring in 2011 (Tunç, 2015). Syrian refugees have preferred Turkey because of its location at the intersection of migration routes in the Middle East, its democratic structure, and its high development level and economic potential compared to neighboring countries (Tarman & Gürel, 2017). According to statistics dated July 12, 2021, provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it was emphasized that 3 million 650 thousand refugees took refuge in Turkey and that Turkey was the country with the highest number of refugees around the world. Considering the distribution of the number of refugees, Syria ranks first by 3 million 574 thousand, followed by Iraq (173 thousand), Afghanistan (116 thousand), Iran (27 thousand) and Somalia (5700), respectively (UNHCR, 2021).

Adult refugees can create a safe and familiar environment for themselves by living together with individuals of the same origin in the new environment and society where they have just arrived. However, when considered from the point of view of children of those families, difficulties increase even more. Although the school environment in the society where refugee children have just arrived provides a stable and safe environment for them, these children have to exert extra efforts to adapt to school for reasons such as the sudden and difficult migration processes they have experienced, having different backgrounds and cultural characteristics, and not sharing a common language (Hart, 2009; Rutter, 2003).

Massfeller and Hamm (2019) suggested that the feelings of loneliness and alienation felt by many immigrant students and the studies on the arrival and harmony of asylum-seeker students to schools should be revealed. When considering educational institutions' context, the increasing demographic change and diversity can create additional difficulties and complexities. Syrian children may have difficulty adapting to life in a foreign country because of their feelings of alienation, concern for losing their identity, and longing to return home (Moussa, 2014). Syrian children's social isolation can intensify more to discrimination against them (Boswall & Al Akash, 2015).

Concerning the social integration of children, schools are the places where the dominant culture is gained. In this context, schools have an important function for the integration of refugee children into the society they have just joined (Kağnıcı, 2017). The phenomenon of refugee and the policies toward these people have become important with the arrival of Syrian refugees in Turkey. In particular, the high number of Syrian refugees requires that the educational services to be provided to them should be systematically structured. When considered from this point of view, it was attempted to improve the policies followed for the education of Syrian children on the assumption that the

Syrians would return, their education was maintained with an Arabic curriculum instead of the Turkish curriculum, and thus, it was aimed that the Syrians would not have any problems when they returned. However, along with the change of the relevant assumption in line with the changing political conjuncture and socio-economic conditions, intensive works have been started to prepare the legal ground and the necessary infrastructure for the schooling of refugee children in our country since 2014 and steps have been taken for permanent solutions (Aksakal, 2017). One of these steps was the establishment of the Foreign Students Information System (YÖBİS) for the easy tracking of students' enrollment, success, and attendance-absence. Although the legal regulations concerning the educational services to be provided to refugee children were prepared based on Syrian refugees, it has also been made possible for other refugees to benefit from these services (Arslan, 2015). It is observed that academic publications on the problems of Syrian refugees have also increased in recent years, although they are few in number. However, it is striking that these publications mainly focus on general problems. There are also studies on the education of Syrian children and the difficulties they experience in educational environments.

It is of great importance for educators who will work with refugees to have special training in this field and to provide these people with an efficient and accurate education (Aydın et al., 2017; Canales & Harris, 2004). Despite this fact, previous studies show that teachers who teach refugees do not receive a quality education, and after a brief training period, they start to teach students. Moreover, they try to overcome their deficiencies in this area with their efforts and the support of their colleagues (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015).

In previous studies on the challenges experienced by Syrian children (Gülüm & Akçalı, 2017; Erdoğan & Erdoğan, 2017; Çerçi & Canalcı, 2019; Baloğlu Uğurlu & Akdovan, 2019; Çoban et al., 2020; Tunga et al., 2020; Ünal & Aladağ, 2020; Sarier, 2020; Topaloğlu & Özdemir, 2020; Abay & Güllüpınar, 2020; Biçer & Özaltun, 2020; Yenen & Ulucan, 2020; Koşar & Aslan, 2020; Kandemir & Aydın, 2020; Cülha & Demirtaş, 2020; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021; Yıldız-Yılmaz & Demir, 2021; Sözer & Işıker, 2021; Alkalay et al., 2021; Yiğit et al., 2021), the biggest problem was found that they did not know the common language spoken in Turkey. As a phenomenon that can be turned into an advantage at this stage, refugee children's being talented to learn the language of their new country of origin compared to their parents when they are given a good training can be used to accelerate the process of learning the new language (Durón, 2004; Zhao, 2001).

Cultural difference appears as another important problem that Syrian students have in school settings. Students who have been educated according to the culture of their own country have problems in the process of adapting to the Turkish culture they have just entered (Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Külekçi et al., 2020; Koşar & Aslan, 2020; Sözer & Işıker, 2021; Yiğit et al., 2021).

Another important problem of Syrian students in school settings is the problem of school adaptation. Students who have entered into a new education system and do not know the school culture have difficulties in school adaptation, which brings along problems with other students, teachers, and school administrators (Biçer & Özaltun, 2020; Yıldız et al., 2021; Alkalay et al., 2021; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021). Exposure to exclusion and prejudices is another important problem experienced by Syrian students in school settings. Syrian students are excluded due to the influence of various prejudices and the lack of knowledge and have difficulty in joining the circle of friends (Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Topaloğlu & Özdemir, 2020; Abay & Güllüpınar, 2020).

McBrien (2005) states that since 1975, the United States has resettled more than 2 million refugees, about half of whom were children. Refugee children are more prone to traumatic experiences that may hinder their learning. The United Nations has stated in its conventions that training is necessary for the psychosocial adaptation of refugee children. However, government officials, public opinion, and researchers often have differed on what is best for the healthy acculturation of refugees.

When the relations of Syrian students in educational environments are examined, it is seen that most of them have behavioral disorders containing violence and psychological problems. It has also

been revealed that it is crucial to support the emotional needs of these students (Gürel & Büyüksahin, 2020; Ünal & Aladağ, 2020; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021; Topaloğlu & Özdemir, 2020). The trauma levels experienced by these children were also revealed in a study conducted in a refugee camp in Turkey (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Again, some studies have revealed a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental disorders among refugee adolescents and associated these symptoms with exposure to trauma before migration (Alpak et al., 2015; Nehring et al., 2021). More specifically, Alpak et al. (2015) revealed that PTSD among Syrian refugees in Turkey may be an important mental health issue among refugees in refugee camps, especially female refugees who have been exposed to two or more traumatic events and have a personal or family history of psychiatric disorders.

Salam et al. (2019) classified behavioral and emotional problems of parents (IEP) into two categories as emotional and destructive behaviors. Emotional problems, also known as internalizing behavior problems, can be evaluated as anxiety, sadness, or social deprivation. Common disruptive behavior problems include aggressive and impulsive behaviors called externalizing behavior problems, compulsive and non-adaptive. It has been determined that internalizing problems outnumber externalizing problems.

For young people born from traumatic and fragmented pasts, it was the focus of their prosperity to re-establish their order and to reveal a clear view of the future. Similarly, areas, where people who have not experienced such turmoil need in their lives, can make theoretical to promote personal development, self-respect, and trust. Therefore, balancing stability and more dynamic prosperity is a conceptual challenge that requires more analysis. However, the impact of the ontological security lens on future debates surrounding prosperity is extensive (Chase, 2013).

Another study reveals how they have only partially been responsible for explaining the following aspects of their lives since they arrived in the United Kingdom and the conditions surrounding their search for asylum in the UK. It indicates that young people's decisions about how much they share their present or past lives with others are more complex than mentioned in previous research. In terms of selective explanation, the dominant driving force of many young people wants to take part in an active role in society while they are passing through immigration, asylum, social care, health and education systems and trying to take place in that society at the same time (Chase, 2010).

In addition to those mentioned above, Syrian students living in Turkey have violence and behavioral problems (Ünal & Aladağ, 2020; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021; Topaloğlu & Özdemir, 2020), and they also face various problems for reasons such as low schooling rate (Yenen & Ulucan, 2020; Tunga et al., 2020), their insufficient level of academic readiness (Kandemir & Aydın, 2020; Yiğit et al., 2021), the lack of orientation in schools (Yenen & Ulucan, 2020; Kandemir & Aydın, 2020), physical barriers (Külekcı et al., 2020), the lack of qualified teachers (Tunga et al., 2020), the lack of orientation to schools (Yenen & Ulucan, 2020), negative teacher attitudes (Yiğit et al., 2021), indifference and lack of education of families (Koşar & Aslan, 2020), and peer relationships (Yiğit et al., 2021). This study has tried to determine the communication problems of Syrian refugee children in the school environment and their reasons, their making friends, their choice of Turkish and Syrian friends, and what level of issues they have with which group of friends. In this context, it is thought that the study will contribute to the field.

METHOD

Research Design

This study was conducted to determine the communication status and daily life communication problems of Syrian students who have come from Syria and study at schools in Turkey together with Turkish students, with their Syrian and Turkish friends. The study was conducted using the case study design, one of the qualitative research methods. As is known, with the case study design, the researcher performs an in-depth analysis without intervening in an event and

attempts to understand the case in this way. Furthermore, he has the opportunity to make inferences about the effect or relationship of the investigated case on the individual, participant, or society. With the case study, answers are sought to the questions of how or why, specifically to a current situation investigated, and the researcher is allowed to collect in-depth and rich data (Yin, 2004; cited by Akar, 2017). In the case study, based on the experiences of individuals, how they consider themselves, and their perceptions and emotions that may change depending on the context are examined in depth along with their underlying causes (Gillham, 2000). In brief, factors related to a situation are investigated with a holistic approach by focusing on how they affect the relevant situation and how they are affected by the relevant situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005: 77). In this regard, interviews were held with 20 students from different schools in line with the aim of the study. Based on the availability of the students, interviews were held with 2 students in their schools every day. During interviews with the students, the semi-structured interview form was used. Here, the goal is to provide more in-depth data with drilling questions when necessary. Before the interview, students were given information about the aim of the study and explained that their answers would be kept confidential and used only in scientific research to relieve students. After the interviews were completed in this way, the visual records were transcribed, and the participant students were allowed to read them and they were allowed to add or remove the parts where they found necessary. After this stage was completed, the analysis process was started. Case studies are designed in themselves according to the dimensions of the cases. The holistic multiple case design was preferred in this study. The aim of preferring this design was to have more than one case that could be perceived as holistic by itself, to consider each case holistically in itself, and then to compare them with each other (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

Study Group

The study group consisted of 20 Syrian students, including 12 male and 8 female students, who migrated to Turkey as refugees and were studying at a secondary school (5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades) in public schools of different socio-economic levels in the Marmara Region. When the duration of stay of the study group in Turkey was examined, it was observed that 18 participants lived in Turkey for 5 years or more, and the remaining two participants lived in Turkey for 4 years. In particular, it was observed that 7 participants lived in Turkey for 7-8 years. Considering the time they spent in Turkey, it can be said that the vast majority of the participants had sufficient time to adapt to the new country and environment. It was observed that 30% of the participants took a language course when they came to Turkey; however, the remaining 70% of them did not take it. The participants indicated that they learned Turkish by communicating with people around them and after being involved in the education system in Turkey. As is known, the sample size varies by the focus of the study, the amount of data and theoretical sampling (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005: 114-115). Therefore, the participant group was limited to 20 students to collect more in-depth data.

Data Collection Process and Analysis

The interview form was used as the main data collection tool in the study. The interview form was developed by consulting a specialist in social sciences education who has fifteen years of experience in the field and has studies on Syrian refugees and an assessment and evaluation specialist with twenty years of experience in the field. Interview questions were applied to five participant students in total for two weeks. The interview form was finalized after this preliminary application. Convenience sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used based on voluntariness and considering the aim of the study. Thus, it was attempted to communicate with the students more easily. The interviews were completed within 10 working days in the participants' schools. After the interviews, the audio recordings made with the permission of the students were transcribed and analyzed. Each question was analyzed under its heading. During the analysis, they were subjected to descriptive analysis. During the descriptive analysis, a framework was first created for descriptive analysis, and it was determined under which themes the data would be organized and presented. Secondly, the data were organized and processed according to the thematic framework created. Thirdly, the organized data were identified and supported by direct quotations when necessary.

Finally, the results identified were explained, associated, interpreted, and reported (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

Validity and Reliability

Depth-based data collection, expert review and participant confirmation were employed to ensure the credibility of the study. In the interviews held with the students, detailed questions were asked, and an attempt was made to collect in-depth data using probe questions when necessary. In this process, it was also attempted to minimize the margin of error through expert review. Interview transcripts were read together with the social studies specialist, and a similarity rate of 0.93 was obtained by calculating the similarity rate according to Miles & Huberman (1994) formula. Moreover, participant confirmation was used. After completing the transcription of the interview recordings, the interviewed students were allowed to read them, and they were allowed to make corrections if they wanted to add or remove something. Detailed description and purposive sampling were used to reveal the transferability of the study. The detailed description refers to the transfer of the raw data as faithfully as possible to the nature of the data without adding comments to the reader in a rearranged way according to the emerging concept and data. Purposive sampling methods, which aim to reveal both events and phenomena that typically occur and their varying characteristics, are used in purposive sampling. It was attempted to ensure the confirmability of the study through confirmation review. In this review, it is aimed to compare the results of the study with raw data and to examine whether the confirmation mechanism works (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, the data obtained as a result of the interviews with the students were tabulated, and it was attempted to present them to the reader with a holistic perspective. The results of the study were divided into themes as general communication status/problems in school settings, preferences for choosing friends at school, preferences for spending time in the circle of friends at school, problems of Syrian students according to friend groups in school settings, problems of Syrian students with Turkish students due to language difference.

Theme I: General communication status/problems in school settings

Concerning the first sub-theme of the study, the question "Do you have communication problems with other students at school?" was asked to the students in the study group. The answers to this question are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Whether Syrian students have communication problems or not

Opinions	f	%
I have communication problems	13	65
I don't have communication problems	7	35

When Table 1 was examined, 65% of the participants indicated that they had problems in the school setting. On the other hand, 35% of the participants indicated that they did not have any problems. The participants who had problems in school settings gave their reasons by stating "they make fun of us because we don't know Turkish" as the first reason and "inability to make friends easily" as the second reason. With regard to difficulties pointed out by the participants, while KK4 stated, "Yes, I have because I am a little bit withdrawn and shy. I have difficulties communicating with my friends. I cannot make friends easily.", KK1 stated, "I had some difficulties with the students. They think they are better than us. Some of the students think they are polite. They do not include us in the team while playing football since we are strangers." KK8 stated, "Yes, I have. Students say that you are ignorant, you are not human. They say there is war. Like these bad things." KK5 said, "Sometimes. I am also a little bit shy. I have difficulty communicating with teachers to whom I have difficulty in responding in some courses." EK2 indicated, "Yes. Some of the students make fun of us because we did

not [do not] understand Turkish." EK11 stated, "I feel that my classroom teacher discriminates against us when our turn comes. My math teacher does not call me to the blackboard. I raise my hand when he asks a question, but he never calls me to the blackboard.", and EK6 said, "Students, teachers, and administrators make fun of us because we don't speak Turkish well." On the other hand, with regard to the participants who emphasized that they did not have any problems, while EK12 stated, "No, I don't have any difficulties.", EK10 indicated, "No, I don't have adverse difficulties. I just have difficulties outside of school.", and KK7 said, "No, there is no difficulty. We get along and understand each other very well. I have no problem with anyone. No one has a problem with me."

Theme II: Preferences for choosing friends at school

Concerning the second sub-theme of the study, the question "What about your preferences for choosing friends at school?" was asked to the students in the study group. The distribution of the answers given by the students to this question is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Syrian students' preferences for choosing friends

Opinions	f	%
I choose a Syrian friend	13	65
I choose a Turkish friend	5	25
I choose from both of them	2	10

When Table 2 was examined, it was observed that 65% of the participants would like to spend time with their Syrian friends at school. The most mentioned reasons were the statements, "I get along better" and "They understand me better." With regard to the participants who clearly mentioned that they would like to spend time with their Syrian friends at school, EK11 stated, "I think my Syrian friends because they understand me better." EK4 stated, "I would like to spend time with my Syrian friends.", and KK7 said, "I would like to spend time with my Syrian friends. However, I do not want to spend time with my Turkish friends."

It was observed that 25% of the participants would like to spend time with their Turkish friends at school. The most mentioned issues as a reason were the statements, "I like to spend time with my Turkish buddy" and "I spend more time with my Turkish friends." With regard to the participants who indicated that they would like to spend time with their Turkish friends at school, KK4 stated, "I would like to spend more time with my Turkish friends if I were to make a choice because now we are living with them, spending time with them and studying with them and my language is close to theirs." KK5 indicated, "I would like to spend time with my Turkish friends because I want to learn more information." KK8 said, "Of course I want my Turkish friend because I love all people. Turkish people are very lovely, but Syrians did not like." EK12 stated, "I choose my Turkish friends because they get on well with me. If I ask the meaning of the word, they will tell.", and EK8 said, "Because I get along better with my Turkish friends."

It was observed that 10% of the participants would like to spend time with both their Turkish and Syrian friends at school. The issue mentioned as a reason was the statement, "Both of them are very good." Concerning this situation, EK5 stated, "I will choose both of them because both of them are good." and EK6 said, "I would like to spend time with both of them." Hence, they revealed that they would like to spend time with both their Turkish and Syrian friends at school.

Theme III: Preferences for spending time in the circle of friends at school

With regard to the third theme of the study, the question "What about your preferences for spending time with your friends at school?" was asked to the students in the study group. The participants' answers to this question are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Syrian students' preferences for spending time in the circle of friends at school

Opinions	f	%	Reasons
I spend time with my Syrian friends	10	50	We meet more We also meet outside of school We do our homework
I spend time with Turkish friends	5	25	We play games together I spend more time
I spend time with friends from both groups	5	25	We study together We play games We don't meet outside of school

When Table 3 was examined, it was observed that 50% of the participants spent time with their Syrian friends at school. The most mentioned issues as a reason were the statements "we meet more," "we meet outside of school," and "we do our homework." Concerning this situation, EK4 stated, "I spend time with my Syrian friends. We play with them, we talk. We don't meet outside of school." EK3 said, "I meet more with my Syrian friends. We do our homework. Yes, we meet outside of school." EK11 indicated, "I spend more time with my Syrian friend.", and KK6 stated, "I spend time with my Syrian friends. Yes, we also meet outside." Thus, they revealed that they spent more time with their Syrian friends at school.

It was observed that 25% of the participants spent time with their Turkish friends at school. The most mentioned issues as a reason were the statements "we play games together" and "I spend more time." With regard to this situation, KK1 stated, "I hang out with my Turkish buddy. We eat together, just like this. His house is near me. Sometimes, we play with a ball." KK1 said, "I spend more time with my Turkish friend. We play together and solve questions. I don't meet anyone outside of school." EK12 indicated, "I spend time with Turkish people. We play football, we ride bikes. I also meet them outside of school.", and EK8 stated, "I spend better time with my Turkish friends. We play with a ball together." Therefore, they revealed that they spent time with their Turkish friends at school.

It was observed that 25% of the participants spent time with both their Turkish and Syrian friends at school. The most mentioned issues as a reason were the statements "we play games together" and "we do our homework." Concerning this situation, KK4 stated, "I spend time with my Syrian and Turkish friends at school. We study together, we play games. We don't meet outside of school." KK5 said, "I like to spend time with my Turkish and Syrian friends. I meet by chance outside of school." EK5 indicated, "I choose my Turkish friends when I am in the classroom. When I take a break, I pass on to my Syrian friends." EK6 stated, "I spend time with both. We do our homework. No, we don't meet outside of school.", and EK1 said, "I have both Syrian friends and Turkish friends. Sometimes, we meet on the way out." Hence, they revealed that they spent time with both their Turkish and Syrian friends when they were at school.

In relation to the main question above, the question "How many Syrian friends do you have at school and how do you spend time with them?" was asked to the students in the study group. The analysis of the answers to this question is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The number of Syrian friends of Syrian students and their reasons for choosing them

Number of Syrian friends	f	%	Reasons for meeting with Syrian friends	f
2	3	15	Sharing	14
3-4	6	30	Chatting	6
7-9	2	10	Playing games	5
9 and more	9	45	Doing homework	4
			Singing	1

When Table 4 was examined, it was observed that while 45% of the participants had 9 and more Syrian friends, 30% had 3-4 Syrian friends, 15% had 2 Syrian friends, and 10% had 7-9 Syrian friends. When their reasons for meeting with their Syrian friends were examined, the reasons were chatting, playing games, doing homework, and singing, respectively. With regard to this situation, *KK5* indicated, "I have got many friends. Yes, I meet with them. My relationship with them is very positive. I have a good time." *KK5* indicated, "Yes, I have got Syrian friends at school. Every Syrian at school is my friend. Yes, I meet with them. My relationships are good." *KK2* said, "I have got three Syrian friends. I meet with them, my relations are OK. We study together." *KK8* said, "I have got two friends. Yes, I meet with them. Every break, we chat and sing." *EK11* stated, "I have got four friends. Yes, I meet with them every day. We play games during breaks. Sometimes, we chat." *EK6* indicated, "I have got twenty-one friends. I sometimes meet with them. My relations are good. Sometimes, we do homework.", and *EK10* stated, "I have got seven friends at school. I love them. We play games together during breaks." Thus, they indicated that their communication status with their Syrian friends was going well.

Theme IV: Problems of Syrian students according to friend groups in school settings

With regard to the fourth theme of the study, the question "What about your status of having problems according to friend groups at school?" was asked to the students in the study group. The participants' answers to this question are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The number of Syrian friends of Syrian students and their reasons for choosing them

Opinions	f	%	Reasons
I have problems with Turkish friends	8	40	Occurrence of fighting Making fun of us
I have problems with Syrian friends	5	25	Occurrence of fighting I have a problem of misunderstanding There may be offenses
I have problems with friends from both groups	5	25	Occurrence of fighting I have difficulties in communicating
I don't have any problems	2	10	I have difficulties in making friends

When Table 5 was examined, it was observed that 90% of the Syrian participants had problems with their friends at school. It was found that 10% of the participants did not have problems with their friends from both groups.

Among 90% of the participants with problems, 40% of them stated that they had problems mainly with their Turkish friends. The most mentioned issues as a reason were the statements "occurrence of fighting" and "they are making fun of us." Concerning this situation, *EK3* said, "I have more problems than the Turks. They make fun of us and swear at us. As if we don't understand them." *EK1* indicated, "I have more problems with my Turkish friends. For instance, I had a fight with my friend. So, the minutes were taken." *EK4* stated, "I have more problems with the Turks. I don't understand, it seems as if they don't like us." Hence, they revealed that they mostly had problems with their Turkish friends at school.

Of the participants who had problems with their friends at school, 25% stated that they had problems with their Syrian friends. They indicated their reasons with the statements of "occurrence of fighting," "I have a problem of misunderstanding," and "there may be offenses." Concerning this situation, *KK2* indicated, "I have more problems with my Syrian friends. Arguments, offenses etc." *KK7* said, "There is no problem with my Turkish friends at school. However, there is a problem with my Syrian friends. Like fighting, like saying bad words, like hitting." *EK10* stated, "I have more problems with Syrian friends. So they slander me, that's why I don't like them very much. Because it is a sin." *EK8* indicated, "I have more problems with my Syrian friends. I have a problem of misunderstanding. Fighting may occur." Therefore, they indicated that they had problems mostly with their Syrian friends at school.

Of the participants who had problems with their friends at school, 25% stated that they had problems with both their Syrian and Turkish friends. They indicated their reasons with the statements of "occurrence of fighting," "I have difficulties in communicating," and "I have difficulties in making friends." Concerning this situation, EK7 stated, "No one realizes. Problems may arise with both my Syrian and Turkish friends." KK4 said, "I sometimes have problems with my Syrian and sometimes with Turkish friends. Sometimes, I have difficulties communicating. I never know the reason. I have difficulty in making friends." KK12 stated, "I sometimes have problems with my Turkish friends and sometimes with my Syrian friends. Sometimes, we have small arguments since we react to each other without understanding each other very well." KK1 indicated, "I mean, I don't go out with people with whom I have problems. I mean, not necessarily Turkish or Syrian, some people hit me, they swear, and someone grabbed me while I was walking around during the break and said why did you do that and then started hitting me.", and they indicated that they had problems with both their Turkish and Syrian friends at school.

Theme V: Problems of Syrian students with Turkish students due to language difference

Concerning the fifth theme of the study, the question "Do you have problems with Turkish students due to language difference at school?" was asked to the students in the study group. The students' answers to this question are presented in Table 6, and their reasons are presented just below the table.

Table 6. Syrian students' status of having language problems with Turkish students

Opinions	f	%
I do not have language problems with Turkish friends	12	60
I have language problems with Turkish friends	8	40

When Table 6 was examined, 60% of the participants indicated that they did not have language problems in their relations with their Turkish friends at school. They indicated their reasons with the statements "I know Turkish well" and "our languages are close to each other." With regard to this situation, KK4 said, "No, I do not have any because our languages are close to each other. We do not have problems in our communication." KK1 stated, "No, not. Sounds normal, never." EK10 indicated, "No, I have just learned. I had had troubles before I learned. First, I had a problem in the spoken language.", and EK8 stated, "No, I do not have because my Turkish is good. I have no difficulties." Thus, they indicated that they did not have any problems in their relations with their Turkish friends due to language difference at school.

Of the participants, 40% indicated that they had problems in their relations with their Turkish friends at school. They indicated their reasons with the statements "I have difficulties establishing relationships with my Turkish friends" and "they laugh at me when I don't know a word." Concerning this situation, EK6 said, "Yes, I have problems. My friends sometimes laugh at me when I don't know a word. They laugh at me when I make a mistake while speaking Turkish.", and KK8 stated, "Yes, I have. I have difficulties chatting. I have difficulties teaching." Hence, they indicated that they had problems in their relations with their Turkish friends due to language difference at school.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When the study results were examined holistically, it was observed that the vast majority of the Syrian participants had been living in Turkey for five years and more. A significant part, namely 70% of the participants, indicated that they did not attend any course to learn Turkish when they first came to Turkey. The participants stated that they had significant difficulties in their daily lives, could not express themselves and were misunderstood since they could not speak a common language with people in Turkey. This result of the study is also supported by other studies (Akgül et al., 2015; Baloğlu Uğurlu & Akdovan, 2019; Başar et al., 2018; Candappa, 2000; Cırıt-Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Çerçi & Canalcı, 2019; Çetin, 2016; Emin, 2018; Kirova, 2001; Tosun et al., 2018; Şeker &

Aslan, 2015; Solak & Çelik, 2018; Sarıtaş et al., 2016; Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Levent & Çayak, 2017; Emin, 2018; Cırtı-Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Kultas, 2017; Tamer, 2017; Çiğerci & Güngör, 2016; Ereş, 2016; Şeker & Sirkeci, 2015; Saklan & Erginer, 2017; Doğutaş, 2016; Tösten et al., 2017; Özenç & Saat, 2019; Çoban et al., 2020; Tunga et al., 2020; Ünal & Aladağ, 2020; Sarier, 2020; Topaloğlu & Özdemir, 2020; Abay & Güllüpinar, 2020; Biçer & Özaltun, 2020; Yenen & Ulucan, 2020; Koşar & Aslan, 2020; Kandemir & Aydın, 2020; Cülha & Demirtaş, 2020; Tunga, Engin & Çağiltay, 2020; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021; Yıldız et al., 2021; Sözer & Işiker, 2021; Alkalay et al., 2021; Yiğit et al., 2021). In this regard, it is necessary to open Turkish language courses for students who have just arrived in Turkey and will participate in education life and their families by establishing a national education program. In this process, only opening courses for students does not provide a very good result because the learning process of students who continue to speak their mother tongue with their families at home is extended. Only in cases when it is not possible to open separate Turkish language courses, Turkish language courses can be supported after school or at weekends. The significant reason for the language barrier to be an essential problem for Syrian students has been revealed as the lack of the course materials used in the Turkish education system (Beyhan & Epçaçan, 2018; Biçer & Kılıç, 2017; Doğan & Ateş, 2018; Eren 2019; Gerçek, Alkan, Aloğlu & Kurtuluş, 2018; Koçoğlu & Yanpar Yelken, 2018; Sevilay Kanat Özlem & Demet, 2018). For example, Ereş (2016) revealed in his study that the language barrier adversely affects friendship relations.

According to the study results, it was concluded that the participants had problems due to their language inadequacy in daily life and at school with other students, teachers, and school administrators. This result is also consistent with the results of various studies (Börü & Boyacı, 2016; Emin, 2018; Erdem, 2017; Levent & Çayak, 2017). In this regard, students can be supported in terms of effective communication skills in addition to a basic language course. Moreover, it may be useful to provide information about Turkish culture and life. Similarly, Taştan and Çelik (2017) have also shown that multicultural and migration-themed in-service training can help develop a positive attitude. In this process, they stated that the media developed a positive language for Syrian students and that the Ministry of National Education should take the necessary measures regarding the attitudes of school administrators because these measures will facilitate reaching the goals. The most frequent problems that Syrian students and Turkish teachers experience are caused by the inability to communicate with each other and cultural conflict. This result is similar to the study results of Şimşir and Dilmaç (2018).

The participants indicated that they largely (65%) had problems in their school settings. As the most significant problem they faced, they stated that other students made fun of them, they could not make friends easily, and, accordingly, they felt lonely since they did not know Turkish. This result of the study is consistent with the results of previous studies (Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Şimşir & Dilmaç, 2018; Topaloğlu & Özdemir, 2020; Abay & Güllüpinar, 2020; Biçer & Özaltun, 2020; Yıldız et al., 2021; Alkalay et al., 2021; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021). In this regard, it should be ensured that Syrian students learn Turkish quickly, and it may be useful to provide education on empathetic thinking for other students.

The participants indicated that they had at least two and more Syrian friends at school, that they had good communication with these friends at school and that they also met with them outside of school. They stated that they mostly met outside to do their homework. In this context, it may be useful to provide training by experts for both Syrian and Turkish students to eliminate prejudices and stereotypes.

The participants said that they would like to spend more time mostly (65%) with their Syrian friends if they were to make a choice. As a reason for this, they put forward the reasons that they could get along better and understand themselves better. The ratio of those who would like to spend time with their Turkish friends (25%) and both Turkish and Syrian friends (10%) was 35%. The participants who stated that they would like to spend time with their Turkish friends indicated that they enjoyed spending time with them and wanted to learn more from them. From this point of view, the

rate of spending time with each other of Syrian and Turkish students will increase by increasing the opportunities for communication among students.

Half of the participants (50%) indicated that they spent time with their Syrian friends at school. On the other hand, while 25% of them stated that they spent time with their Turkish friends, 25% of them stated that they spent time with both their Syrian and Turkish friends. In total, half of the participants indicated that they communicated and spent time with their Turkish friends. This result revealed that the participants who lived in Turkey for a long time and overcame their communication problems also made friends with Turkish students and enjoyed spending time with them. In this context, training can be provided by school counselors or more professional trainers so that both Turkish and Syrian students can better understand each other.

The participants indicated that they had problems at school by 90%. When the distribution was examined, the answers were Turkish friends by 40%, Syrian friends by 25%, and both of them by 25%. These rates increased the rate of the participants who had problems with their Syrian friends to 50%, which indicated that the participants had similar problems with both Turkish students and their Syrian friends. In this context, it may be beneficial to provide training to both Syrian and Turkish students to increase their problem-solving skills.

It was observed that a significant part of the participants (60%) did not have language problems with Turkish students. However, 40% of them had problems. This result reveals that some of the participants living in Turkey for a long time still have language difficulties. Concerning this situation, it may be useful to provide language support to Syrian students during the process and adopt a continuous language teaching policy in this regard.

When study results are examined holistically, it is seen that the findings are primarily in line with the results of previous research. On the other hand, unlike other studies, it has been determined that many Syrian students have problems in their school environment, have at least two or more Syrian friends, and mostly come together to do their homework. Regarding the choice of friends, it was concluded that 65% of the participants wanted to choose Syrian friends, while 25% of them wanted to choose Turkish friends. Furthermore, when the participants' spending time at school was examined, it was concluded that 50% of them wanted to spend time with Syrian, 25% with Turkish, and 25% of them with both their Syrian and Turkish friends. Considering the participants' having problems at school, it has been determined that 90% of them had various problems. 40% of them experienced these problems with Turkish students, 25% with Syrian, and 25% with both Turkish and Syrian friends.. However, since most of the participants have been living in Turkey for a long time, it was concluded that more than half (60%) did not have language problems.

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