An Analysis on School Psychological Counselors' Dealing with Difference in Multicultural Contexts

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Abstract

Migrations caused by wars and economic depression have become one of the most important problems of Turkey. Considering multicultural structure of the country and the migration wave from Syria, it is aimed to find out how school psychological counselors perceive difference, how they cope with conflicts and how they perceive themselves with respect to multicultural competencies. For this reason, 28 school counselors were interviewed from two cities of Turkey. This study, conducted with a qualitative research design, aims to describe the current perceptions of school counselors. In order to analyze the data, content analysis was used. According to the findings; most of the counselors perceive differences as wealth. However, it is also stated that multiculturalism causes conflict. While the counselors' schools seem to have a culture that fosters and nurtures differences in general terms, it has become clear that some schools do not welcome cultural differences. A significant amount of school counselors do not regard themselves competent, while others find themselves partially competent.

Keywords: Multicultural education, difference, multicultural competency.

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Introduction

Schools have more and more immigrant students who escape from war zones around the world. These schools found themselves undertaking the responsibility to educate students with different languages and ethnic backgrounds. Besides, they have faced the mission to make students gain more complicated skills for surviving in global economies (21st Century Workforce Commission, 2000).

In the first decade of the 21st century, approximately 200 million people have migrated to the different countries from which they were born. Domestic migration is thought to be much more than this number (Global Comission of International Migration (GCIM), 2005). International migrations are one of the major results of mass population movements. These movements increase ethnic diversity in host societies. Language and culture-related differences might cause societal conflicts. Besides, immigrants have to work in particular jobs and live in particular settlement areas called ghettos. Differences between host societies and immigrant communities are politically dealt with in the context of ethnicity and race, resulting in the articulation of "foreign" and "non-citizen" labels for immigrants' status. Especially nation states emphasizing cultural and ethnic homogeneity easily adopt policies that marginalize immigrant communities (Castles & Miller, 2003). Countries need to develop a multicultural philosophy and adopt necessary educational policies in order to minimize societal conflicts and survive in ever-changing global context.

Multiculturalism and Education

Multi-culturalism is a concept that embraces different cultures in any society. Thus, it strictly criticizes and opposes all kinds of assimilation policies inflicted by any country. It is critical that different cultures not only exist in a society, but also create their own public spaces. To be more precise, multiculturalism refers to the creation of public spaces in which communities from different racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds can interact; enrich their cultures; create new reconciliation structures that reflect their own identities (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Eryaman 2008, 2009). Educational institutions play a great role in creating such spaces. Adopting a multicultural perspective in education is not only critical for the existence of different cultures, but also for raising generations that respect other cultures. Researchers supporting multicultural perspectives in education advocate that a democratic and united society becomes possible when minorities are visible in public institutions and schools. A school curriculum cannot be democratic and effective without reflecting experiences, voices and hopes of all communities in society (Aydin, 2013). Garcia (2009) asserts that multicultural education should have following goals: creating a safe, peaceful and effective learning environment for all students, raising awareness towards global issues, strengthening cultural consciousness and inter-cultural awareness, making students aware of various historical perspectives, developing critical thinking, preventing prejudice and discrimination.

Teachers and students do not share the same cultural experiences and backgrounds most of the time. But multicultural education requires many responsibilities and roles for teachers by nature. Diamond and Moore (1995) identified three major roles for teachers to create a classroom culture together: *cultural organizers, cultural mediators, orchestrators of social contexts* (p.35). As cultural organizers, teachers provide a learning environment that facilitates varied ways of knowing and welcomes cultural and ethnic diversity. Students with different cultural backgrounds can have the opportunity to express themselves in such environment. As cultural mediators, teachers create opportunities for critical diaogue and behaving to understand differences. Thus, students not only know their own culture closely, but also respect for other cultures. Lastly, teachers manage learning environment like orchestrators so that instruction aligns with differences. To do so, teachers provide various learning structures that help students to discover their own emotions, ideas and philosophies according to their own experiences and to live and work in harmony with every human being.

Fox and Gay (1995) emphasize that teachers are well aware of cultural aspects of students with different ethnic, racial, religious and social backgrounds. Teachers, sensitive to values and communication, can bridge cultural differences. Multicultural perspectives in education insist that teacher education and curriculum should become more sensitive to cultural differences and critical thinking skills. According to Banks (2001), teachers must help students become critical individuals in pluralistic democratic nation states. So, teachers need to be aware of national and global identities and identification processes of individuals. Teachers should not place themselves in a non-ethnical and non-cultural position in the classroom, which might lead them to associate "difference" with "others". Banks (2001) suggests that teachers also see themselves as individuals with different cultural, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. Teacher education needs to include critical analysis of concepts related to diversity such as race, ethnicity, culture and religion etc.

As a multi-cultural country, Turkey is always in need of teachers that value and appreciates different cultures. Various groups and communities with different languages, religions and cultures resides in various regions of Turkey, historically called Anatolia (Cirik, 2008). Anatolia has a multicultural structure on the grounds that it not only hosted archaic civilizations, but also it has become one of the higly popular migration points throughout the centuries. Tacoglu, Sagir and Arik (2016) point out two views that multicultural discussions about this land gather around. One acknowledges Anatolia as a melting pot that continues to host various religious, ethnic and cultural groups. Tacoglu et al. (2016) actually studied the religious and cultural identity of an Arab-Orthodox village in Turkey, which supports the first view. The other view focuses on Turkish-Islamic civilization, which is a result of migrations from middle Asia. During these migrations Turks changed their religion to Islam and affected the current social structure of Turkey. This population mass from Asia has determined the fact that Turkey's majority is composed of Sunni Turks today. However; there are various religious, cultural and ethnic groups. According to KONDA, a research company in Turkey, (2006) residents of Turkey defined themselves as Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Zazas, Laz, Circassians, Gerogians, Chechnians, Balkan origined communities (Bosnian, Bulgarian Turks), non-muslim communities (Armenian, Greek, Jewish, Assyrian) and Asian Turks (Tatar, Azeri, Central Asian Turkish Tribes). Since its foundation, Turkish Republic has faced many problems due to its geo-political position and national and international migrations. Anatolia still is a migration point for many communities especially for the one escaping from war zones. Recent war in Syria has caused mobilization of millions of Syrians towards Turkey as one of the nearest countries. Based on the data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it is calculated that approximately five million Syrian citizens are in refugee status in various countries around the world (2016). The General Directorate of Migrational Administration, a unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Turkey, released a press conference in 13 August 2015. According to the unit, there were 1.905.984 registered Syrian immigrants across 81 cities and 262.134 of these immigrants were placed in 25 temporary refugee camps in 10 cities (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2015). Actual numbers are speculated to be much more. Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (DEMP) indicated that temporary refugee camps hosted 258.333 on 12 December 2016. According to a joint research conducted by DEMP of Turkish Republic and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 83% of children reside in refugee camps and only 14% of those could register to a school (DEMP, 2016). The same study showed that approximately 50.000 refugee children could go to a school.

Ministry of National Education's statistics show that only 37% of Syrian children could go to school in Turkey in 2015. Although schooling rate of Syrians go up to 60 % in 2016, this rate is quite low compared to schooling rates of Turkish students (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), 2017). Transition to inclusive education without any proper preparation has affected both Turkish and Syrian students adversely. Teachers and school administrators have faced many problems because of cultural conflicts and language barriers. Considering the national educational policies disregarding multicultural education in spite of its multicultural structure, teachers and administrators are not prepared for overcoming such problems. Educators in Turkey need to gain multicultural competencies in order to provide a proper education for all. Being aware of and sensitive to cultural differences and varieties is particularly important for school psychological counselors in

both counseling and supervision processes. As a result of post-modernism, the interpretation of cultural traits and subjective realities of individuals and the affect of culture on individuals have become significant isuues in psychological counseling. Acknowleged as the forth strength in psychological counseling (Pedersen, 1991), multiculturalism has resulted in an understanding that responds to cultural needs, and cultural awareness and sensitivity is defined as a multicultural competency for psychological counselors (Cetinkaya & Karairmak, 2012). Research in Turkey about multiculturalism in psychological counseling is limited and there are various aspects that needs to be examined. So far there are compilation articles of western literature, therotical articles and some research to determine multicultural competencies of counselors in Turkey. Although research on multicultural education has been rising lately, there is not enough study to examine what school psychological counselors actually think about cultural differences and their students with various backgrounds. In addition, most of the universities do not offer mandatory or selective courses related to multicultural counseling and guidance in undergraduate programs. In one study conducted by Kagnici (2011), it is shown that multicultural psychological counseling courses facilitate the multicultural counseling competencies of undergraduates. Our study aims to examine the areas that has not been yet researched. For this reason, before detecting their multicultural competencies, we aim to find out what counselors really think about cultural differences and their students from different cultures. It is also important for us to see how the counselors perceive their multicultural competenecies, whether they feel incompetent about the issue or not. Considering its multicultural structure and migration waves from Syria, Syrian students are members of a minority group in classes. Due to language barrier, teachers, administrators and school psycjological counselors are having hard time to integrate those students to into academic and social life.

Regarding issues about multicultural counseling, minorities and recent war forcing millions of Syrians to migrate to our country, in this study we examine how school psychological counselors perceive difference and Syrian students, how they cope with the problems posed by cultural differences and how they perceive their own multicultural competencies and biases. To get a deeper and closer understanding, two multicultural cities (Tekirdag and Sanlıurfa) from east and west of Turkey were selected. Tekirdag is a neighbour city to Edirne which has borders with Greece and Bulgaria. Sanlıurfa has densely populated by Syrian refugees due to its border with Syria. Two cities are in junction of migration routes and populated by various ethnic groups. Two cities were chosen for their multicultural sturucture because it is intended to see how school psychological counselors perceive cultural differences and the presence of Syrian students and how they cope with conflicts caused by the the encounter of Turkish and Syrian Culture. This study aims to find out how school psychological counselors' working in a multicultural context – in Tekirdag and Sanlıurfa- perceive difference, presence of Syrian students and their own multicultural competencies, and how they deal with difference and conflicts resulting from encounters of cultures. For this purpose, following research questions are formed by the researchers:

1. What are the multi-cultural educational backgrounds of school psychological counselors?

2. How do school psychological counselors describe the culture of their schools?

3. How do school psychological counselors perceive difference in educational settings?

4. What kind of prejudicies do school psychological counselors and their colleagues have against Syrian students?

5. How do school psychological counselors cope with cultural conflicts?

6. How do school psychological counselors perceive their own multicultural competencies?

Methodology

Research Design

This study is designed as a basic qualitative research. In practical areas such as education, management, health and social services, basic qualitative research is commonly preferred. Merriam (2009) suggest that a researcher can conduct a qualitative research that does not fit in the boundaries of phenomenology, case study, grounded theory, ethnography or discourse analysis. These researchers describe the design of such studies as "basic interpretative qualitative research" (p. 22). However, they suggest using basic qualitative research as a term since all qualitative studies are interpretative by nature. Qualitative research focuses on how individuals construct reality during their interactions with the social world. In this study, we aim understand how school psychological counselors working in multi-cultural contexts construct the meaning of difference, how they perceive Syrian students' presence in their schools and their own multicultural competencies. Crotty (2003), asserts that meaning "is not discovered, but constructed… Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (pp. 42-43). Researchers conducting a basic qualitative study try to understand (1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, (3) what meaning they attribute their experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). Since this study aims to portray meanings attributed by counselors based on their experiences and views, a basic qualitative research design is preferred.

Study Group

One important advantage of qualitative research comes from its focus on analyzing individuals or groups which experience the selected phenomenon or event in various aspects (Anderson, 1998; Creswell, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to reach individuals or groups that can provide rich data about a specific concept. Regarding this focus, study group of the research consist of school psychological counselors working in two multicultural cities receiving both domestic and international migration. According to the statistics released by Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management (MoIDGMM), in both Tekirdag and Sanliurfa, up to 1000 illegal immigrants from countries such as Syria, Afganistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Uzbekistan and Bangladesh are documented every year. There are 2858 immigrants (other than Syrians) in Sanlıurfa and 2912 immigrants in Tekirdag with residencial permit (2017). Tekirdag has been one the most domestic migration-receiving cities in Turkey. Özdemir (2008) indicates that between 1995-2000, Tekirdag was the first in the statistics of domestic migration. In 2013, Tekirdag received 45.313 domestic migration from various regions of Turkey (Metropolitan Municipality of Tekirdag, 2014). Although Sanlıurfa is not among the top domestic migration-recevining cities, it has a unique multicultural structure. Sanlıurfa hosts Turks, Kurts, Arabs, Zaza, Alevi, Kirmanci among other etnic and religious groups (Yircali, 2015).

For the purposes of the study, Tekirdag and Sanliurfa were chosen. These cities are situated in west and east of Turkey, respectively. Apart from their multicultural structures, these cities accommodate Syrian refugees. Regarding its border with Syria, Sanliurfa is the most densely populated refugee city in Turkey with its approximately 405 thousand Syrian immigrants. Tekirdag hosts approximately 6 thousand Syrians (MoIDGMM, 2017).

10 of the 28 psychological counselors who participated in the study work in the province of Sanliurfa and 18 of them work in the province of Tekirdag. Snowball sampling method was used to determine the participants. The method of snowball sampling begins with the attainment of several participants with features that enable researchers to reach their goals and continues with their suggestions about potential participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, researchers preferred snowball sampling method because it provides more homogenous participant group. 22 participants are female and 6 participants are male. 21 of the participants have undergraduate degrees and 6 of them have master's degrees in psychological guidance and counseling.16 out of 28 school

psychological counselors have 1-5 years; 5five out of 28 have 6-10 years; five out of 28 have 11-15 years; two out of 28 have 16-60 years of professional experience.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, semi-structured interview questions were formulated to examine how school psychological counselors perceive cultural differences and their own multicultural competencies. The data were collected through face-to-face interviews. Some demographic information was also noted during the interviews. Interview questions were formed according to the literature (Acikalin, 2010; Aksit, Bozok & Bozok, 2015; Banks, 2001; Esen, 2009; Sue et al., 1992) related to multicultural education, multicultural counseling and migration studies. In order to contribute to credibility and authenticity of the interview questions, two specialists checked and commented on the questions. The specialists work in Educational Administration and Psychological Guidance and Counseling departments at a public university. The last version of interview questions was formed according to the comments of the specialists. The final version of the interview form included 3 demographic and 7 semi-structıred questions (see Appendix 1). It took 30-40 minutes to administer the form. The interviews were recorded after the necessary permissions were taken from the participants. The interviews were done in places where the participants felt themselves comfortable.

Data Analysis

Scientific reporting of the data was carried out by using content analysis. A deductive and an inductive approach was used during content analysis. Generel categories (titles presented in the findings) are formed according to research questions. As stated earlier, each category/finding was generated with the literature knowledge. After data were ready to analyze, researchers leave behind any presuppositions about codes and themes. This phase of content analysis is described as inductive. Inductive content analysis includes open coding and creation of themes (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this study, researchers identified the codes; gathered them under meaningful themes. Lastly, emerging themes are presented under certain categories. Data analysis process was completed after the findings were evaluated by two specialists. These specialists examined the codes, themes (categories) and asserted that they agreed with most of the findings. They also presented their suggestions. Researchers reorganized the findings according to their suggestions. The categories and themes are presented below:

Educational Status of Multicultural Guidance and Counseling (Category 1):

Undergraduate Education (Courses taken as a required course, No required or selective course, Courses taken as an elective**.** *Inservice Education:* Relevant inservice education, no relevant inservice education. *Personal Professional Development:* Seminars and research, No personal development activities.

Perception of Difference (**Category 2**)**:** Positive contribution to socialization, Richness, Conflict, Adaptation to dominant culture.

School Culture (Category 3): Respectful Culture, Discriminating Culture, Supportive Culture, Ambiguous Culture.

Observed Teacher Prejudices against Syrian Students (Category 4): No prejudice, Lowering overall achievement, Societal prejudices reflected upon students, Ruining societal integrity.

Counselors' Own Prejudices (Category 5): No prejudice, Societal prejudices reflected upon

students, Ruining societal integrity, Victimization.

Conflict Resolution Strategies (Category 6): Empathy Exercises, Individual guidance activities, Raising awareness to differences, Groupwork, Parent-teacher-student meetings, Hospitality, Peer mediation, Focusing on similarities, Uniformity in teacher practices.

Perceptions of Multi-cultural Competency (Category 7): Competent, partially competent, not competent.

Findings

In this part of the study, findings are presented according to research problems. Each research problem is accepted as a category. Data relevant to each question was analyzed with content analysis and presented as themes under each finding/category.

Educational Status of Multicultural Guidance and Counseling

This finding aims to reveal whether participants got any courses, trainings or education related to guidance and counseling in multicultural contexts. For this purpose, data gathered were organized under three categories: undergraduate education, inservice education activities, and personal development. Findings related to multicultural guidance and counseling education can be seen in Table 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1. Undergraduate Education

Undergraduate Education	f
Courses taken as a required course	5
No required or selective course	22
Courses taken as an elective	1

Five of the participants indicated that their undergraduate education included courses related to multicultural guidance and counseling whereas 22 participants asserted that their undergraduate education did not provide any required or selected courses related to multicultural counseling or any topic related to multiculturalism. However, one out of 28 participants said that s/he took one course as a selective from another faculty. Statements of some participants can be seen below respectively:

"We took a course called Psychological Counseling in Multicultural Settings." (P26)

"We did not have any course related to counsel students from different ethnicities, religions or cultures." (P7)

"I took Social Psychology course as a selective from other faculty, not my department's course." (P19)

Two of the 22 participants who did not take any required or selected course stated that they did gain a certain understanding about multi-cultural education although they did not take any courses. An example statement is below:

"I did not take courses, but because we were trained according to multi-culturalism, I think we developed indirectly although we didn't get a specific course." (P23)

Table 2. Inservice Education

Inservice education	f
Relevant inservice education	15
No relevant inservice education	13

As seen in Table 2, 13 out of 28 participants stated that they did not get any inservice training related to multicultural guidance and counseling whereas 15 of them stated otherwise. Numbers of both groups are quite close. Nearly half of the participants seem to get no relevant inservice training. An example statement is written below:

"I joined training about immigrant students. The training focused on how to get over with the problems of immigrant students of different languages and cultures." (P26)

Table 3. Personal Professional Development

Personal Professional Development	f
Seminars and research	9
No personal development activities	19

As seen in Table 3, only nine participants indicated that they voluntarily participated in seminars and make research about multicultural guidance and counseling. 19 participants, on the other hand, admitted that they did not engage in any personal development activities and research for multicultural guidance and counseling. Two participants with interest in multicultural education explain their personal efforts as such:

"I did some research about Syrian students. I tried to find how they live in their country, what are their cultural aspects because they experience a culture shock. They find themselves in a different context. In order to approach these students appropriately, I needed to improve myself." (P5)

"I participated in Teacher Academy trainings for immigrant students." (P2)

Some of the participants with no personal efforts said that they had very tight working schedules and some of them reported familial responsibilities and regional disadvantages such as lack of educational seminars and courses as obstacles.

"I wanted to participate in some seminars, but due to some family issues, and because there is a lack of seminars in my district, I couldn't." (P1)

"I can't make time for development due to intense guidance schedule." (P3)

Perception of Difference

This finding aims to reveal how school psychological counselors perceive cultural, ethnic, religious difference in school environment. Counselors' perceptions shaped by their views and experiences are categorized in Table 4.

Table 4. School Psycoholgical Counselors' Perceptions of Difference in Schools

Perception of Difference	f
Positive contribution to socialization	2
Richness	19
Conflict	6
Adaptation to dominant culture	1

Participants reflected their views and experiences regarding the differences in school environments. As seen in Table 4, coexistence of cultural, religious, ethnic differences was perceived as positive contribution to socialization by two participants and as cultural richness by 19 participants. However, six participants' views are gathered under 'conflict' theme. These participants think that differences causes conflicts in school and society. One participant viewed cultural differences as a process in which minority culture adapts to the dominant culture. Example statements are written below:

"I personally think that having different cultures, ethnicities and religions in school contributes to socialization. Socialization of the students." (P1)

"I think differences create richness. I mean it created richness in our school. When we managed to communicate with children (Syrian Children), we could exchange ideas about different implementations." (P14)

"We can say that Syrian students generally cause conflict in the classroom because local people don't like them at all. So students transfer their family's reactions to the classroom. These reactions are quite negative." (P2)

"Differences end in adaptation to the majority. Families from different cultural backgrounds final adopt society's way of living after an adaptation period." (P5)

Although 19 school psychological counselors say that they see differences as richness, some of them indicated that this richness can only happen under certain circumstances. According to these participants, school management and teachers should provide a peaceful environment for all students; local people should be tolerant to different cultures. Example statements of this finding are written below:

"I think differences create richness. If a peaceful environment in which students are in harmony with each other created, they can learn much about different cultures." (P23)

"Teachers should form a classroom environment in which differences are not felt as a disadvantage with the support of inclusive education. None of the students should say 'Do I belong here?' (P17)

School Culture

This finding focuses on discovering how school psychological counselors evaluate their schools' culture in terms of cultural differences. In addition to counselors' perceptions of difference, it is aimed to find out how they perceive other people's reactions to diversity and difference.

Table 5. School Psychological Counselors' Perceptions of School Culture

School Culture	f
Respectful Culture	14
Discriminating Culture	8
Supportive Culture	3
Ambiguous Culture	3

School psychological counselors speculated on their schools' culture according to their experiences (see Table 5). Findings show that 14 participants described their schools culture as respectful to cultural differences. Eight participants labeled their schools' culture as discriminating against minorities and cultural differences whereas three counselors described their culture as supportive to students of minority cultures. Three participants identified schools they work in as ambiguous in terms of culture. Some participants who described their schools' culture as respectful

said that there were not any discriminating aspects in school environment because all students were treated equally by teachers, administrators and by their peers. An example statement can be seen below:

"None of us has any disrespectful attitude towards students or our colleagues. The structure and atmosphere respects differences." (P10)

Some participants' statements display that certain schools have discriminating cultures. It was emphasized that discriminative behavior and attitudes can be seen among students and teachers due to family and societal pressure. Such discriminations are not only directed towards Syrian students, but also towards other minorities. A school psychological counselor explains discrimination in his/her school below:

"We, as teachers, try to prevent discrimination at school, but kids behave according to examples they see after school in their own environment. Unfortunately Gypsy students experience this lot. Maybe because of this, teachers expect less from Gypsy students. Discrimination is especially noticed in the language that students use to one another." (P8)

According to findings, some schools are described as supportive to different cultures. Counselors indicated that students and teachers try together to help the students who are accepted as disadvantaged adapt to school and attain some level of academic achievement. A participant's statement of such a school culture is written down:

"Teachers provide literacy support (for Syrian students); search for institutions to support students with low socio-economic status. Students embrace their disadvantaged friends more easily than adults." (P5)

In ambiguous culture, counselors reported that there were not specific attitudes towards students of different cultures because differences were ignored as if they did not exist.

"Actually we can talk about a school culture in my school for differences. Teachers seem not to be aware of differences of children. If students are not successful, teachers quickly accept them as failures." (P18)

Observed Teacher Prejudices Against Syrian Students

In this finding, school psychological counselors are asked to comment on teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards Syrian students. It was aimed to find out whether teachers are prejudiced against refugee student or not in the eyes of school psychological counselors. Findings related to teacher prejudices are reported in Table 6.

Table 6. Observed Teacher Prejudices Against Syrian Students

Observed Teacher Prejudice	f
No prejudice	17
Lowering overall achievement	5
Societal prejudices reflected upon students	2
Ruining societal integrity	5

School psychological counselors reflected on whether their colleagues were prejudiced or not against Syrian students. 17 participants out of 28 indicated that they did not witness any prejudiced attitude directed to Syrian students by teachers. These participants focused on professionalism and accepted their colleagues as professionals. A participant explains this view below:

"... I think that I work with professionals who don't behave differently to Syrian students even if they develop a negative attitude towards them in their personal lives. I think teachers in our school are professionals who set aside their own prejudicies." (P1)

12 participants acknowledged that teachers at their schools somehow display prejudiced behaviors or attitudes towards Syrian students. These prejudices are group under three themes: *lowering overall student achievement, societal prejudices reflected upon students, ruining societal integrity*. According to findings, Syrian students are thought to negatively affect other students in the class. Counselors asserted that some teachers considered Syrian students would be definitely unsuccessful and would lower classroom achievement.

"Teachers who are prejudiced react not because they come from Syria but because they are incompetent. The real source of prejudice is caused by lowered classroom achievement." (P5)

Two participants thought that some teachers reflected societal prejudicies upon Syrian students. It is generally believed that Syrian immigrants lack basic hygene habits, so they can spread illnesses. This way of seeing is applied to all Syrians and teachers might keep a distance from Syrian students. Another feature that our society attributes to Syrians is laziness. Syrians are perceived to avoid from working. An example statement can be seen below:

"There are colleagues with prejudicies. And sometimes I might have some, too. They are so lazy. Most important of all, they don't know our language, but they don't make an effort to learn it. I think they hide behind being refugees for getting things done or for being exempt from certain responsibilities." (P28)

Five participants directly expressed that they do not want Syrian students in their classrooms. School psychological counselors observed that some teachers see Syrians as the breaker of societal peace. A participant's statement displays the last theme below:

"Teachers think that they can't form a healty communication with Syrian students and families. They think that their way of living ruins our social integrity and affects our children negatively." (P21)

School Psychological Counselors' Own Prejudices

Another finding related to prejudice includes school psychological counselors' awareness about their own prejudicies against Syrian students. Table 7 displays themes related to counselors own prejudices.

Table 7. School Psychological Counselors' Own Prejudices

Counselors' Prejudices	f
No prejudice	19
Societal prejudices reflected upon students	5
Ruining societal integrity	3
Victimization	1

When participants asked to scrutinize their own prejudices (if there is any), 19 out of 28 indicated that they didn't have any prejudicies against Syrian students. As seen in the statement below, having no prejudice was associated with professional ethics.

"I don't have any prejudices. Every child as a human being is valuable. So, I desire to step forward as an educator and embrace all of my students regardless of their differences." (P2)

Some participants have admitted they have some prejudices against Syrian students. Some of them have similar features with teachers' prejudices explained previously. According to the findings, five participants are affected by societal prejudices and sometimes reflect them on students. Similar with teachers that counselors commented on in the previous finding, some counselors also think that Syrians don't follow basic hygene rules, they are lazy, so they make their children beg on the streets. An example statement of one school psychological counselor summarizes this view:

"Actually children are accepted in our schools and society as far as possible. But because of their unhygienic and laidback lifestyles, which stems from their roots and culture, not only society but also we develop prejudicies. For example, when we give them homework or other duties, they go out to beg for themselves or because of their families. I tend to think that they do not care about what we say, what we do. Then it is normal to have prejudicies." (P5)

Three participants expressed that Syrians were a potential threat to our society and they ruined social structure and peace. One participant explains his/her worry about the future:

"I have prejudices that many of the Syrian students will become jhadists and terrorists in the future due to nonsense empozed to them. I declare this everywhere openly. I am realist and I have no hope for the future." (P19)

One participant stated that s/he acknowledge Syrian students as victims all the time. This participant was worried about disregarding other needs because of the prejudice that Syrian students had very traumatic lives.

"I think I might have formed an image of these students as being victims of war, traumatized and beyond help. This might be a prejudice since everywhere from refugee camps to cities there are Syrian refugees and they all have different needs. Chidren that seeks help from me might have been heavily traumatized individual from a camp or an individual that came here 3 years before. First one might initially want to survive and the other one might need to overcome communication obstacles. Considering this, I always examine myself whether I am stereotypical or not." (P26)

Conflict Resolution Strategies

This section focuses on conflict resolution strategies used by school psychological counselors to prevent problems faced during the integration of Syrian students to our schools. Findings related to the strategies are in table 8.

Table 8. Conflict Resolution Strategies Used by School Psychological Counselors

Strategies	f
Empathy Exercises	9
Individual guidance activities	4
Raising awareness to differences (cultural, ethnical, religious etc.)	4
Groupwork	3
Parent-teacher-student meetings	3
Hospitality	2
Peer mediation	2
Focusing on similarities	1
Uniformity in teacher practices	1

26 out of 28 school psychological counselors asserted that they experienced conflicts because of the cultural differences whereas only two of them stated they didn't have any conflicts during the integration of Syrian students. Conflict resolution strategies used by counselors display varieties. According to the findings, nine participants use empathy exercises to solve the conflict in schools. Accordingly these counselors explain the situation of Syrians to all of the students. Then they try to

develop sympathy and empathy between students. Some participants said that they used case studies and creative drama activities to develop empathy.

"I play creative drama games to make students feel what it is like to be outcast and to see cultural differences as wealth. In this way, I think students acquire the situation rather than just being told." (P8)

Four participants expressed that they use individual guidance activities to solve the conflict among students while three of them preferred groupworks to do so. An example statement including both strategies can be seen below:

"I offer a student, for example, with lower self-esteem an environment to gain mor confidence by making him/her responsible for something. When I have a conflict in the class, I assign tasks to groups scuh as creating a bulletin board, project planning etc. We constantly talk about empathy to focus on problem-solving." (P7)

Four participants pointed out that they inform students with cultural, religious and etnical differences to create awareness. They aimed to form positive images in the heads of students. A statement is given below:

"I absolutely start with an explanation of the situation. I believe that theoretical understanding is necessary before the application. First I listen to students about what happened, then I explain what they should do to solve the problem." (P4)

Three school psychological counselors used parent-teacher-student meetings to solve the conflicts in the classroom and to integrate Syrian students into the school.

"I gather parents, teachers and students together. I arrange regular meetings and keep track of our progress until the problem is solved." (P7)

Another strategy to solve conflicts includes giving local students host roles. Counselors expect local students to hospitable to Syrian students and other minorities. Two participants indicated that they used this strategy.

"Actually we try to solve such problems by imposing host roles to local students in our school. It can be argued, but it really works. Communicating with the strong and healthy side is an easy and a constructive solution." (P12)

Apart from strategies shown above, one participant stressed the importance of focusing on similarities between different cultures while 1 participant stressed the uniformity among teachers' practices. Statements of both participants are given below:

"I absolutely believe that there are fields that disadvantaged groups are good at. These fileds should be highlighted. Similarities, not differences, should be stressed." (P17)

"Teachers should always consult each other. A common language should be used instead of different applications and students should be approached in uniformity." (P2)

Perceptions of Multicultural Competency

In this finding, it is aimed to find out how school psychological counselors perceive themselves in terms of multi-cultural competencies. Table 9 summarizes participants' views of multi-cultural competency.

Table 9. Perceptions of Multi-cultural Competency

Perceptions of Multi-cultural Competency	f
competent	9
partially competent	5
Not competent	14

In this part of the study, we try to find out whether counselors see themselves competent in maintaining cultural differences and counseling and guiding students of different cultures. As seen in above, nine participants acknowledge themselves in multi-cultural counseling; five participants see themselves partially competent; 14 of them find themselves incompetent in multi-cultural counseling. Example statements of this finding are written below respectively.

"I did a lot of research on this topic in college and master education. I am trying to use theory whenever possible on my students and use theory positively." (P6)

"I have times when I don't feel confident and competent." (P7)

"I don't feel competent. Firstly, although I do research, I don't have enough information about their lives in Syria. In addition they are too young and don't know our language. So I have a communication problem. Some parents don't know Turkish well. They have problems in reflecting their feelings and I have problems in understanding them." (P5)

School psychological counselors who do not consider themselves competent in multi-cultural counseling and guidance commented on topics they had troubles. According to findings, counselors seem to have serious language and communication problems with Syrian students; they think themselves incompetent in multicultural contexts; they lack theoretical and practical knowledge in multicultural counseling and guidance; they have a hard time in detecting the needs of Syrian students. There is also one school psychological counselor indicating that s/he has troubles in internalize cultural differences.

Discussion, Results and Suggestions

It has been observed that the vast majority of school psychological counselors of this study, whose professional experiences vary from 1 to 20 years, have not received training related to multicultural counseling and guidance during the undergraduate education. However, nearly half of the participants stated that they have got some experience and training in multicultural counseling via in-service education after they have been employed in the profession. The trainings taken with individual efforts have been preferred by a very small number of consultants. When cultural structures of schools in which these counselors work are examined, only five teachers express that they work in a school where only one culture is dominant. The schools our participants work have one significant aspect in common apart from their multicultural stuructures: providing education to Syrian students.

All of the findings indicated above highlights the importance of multicultural counseling and attitudes of counselors displayed in the presence of cultural, ethnic, religious and language-related differences. One of the main purposes of this study is to elicit the perceptions of school psychological counselors towards cultural, ethnic, religious and language-related differeneces. The data have shown that a large majority of school psychological counselors perceive differences as wealth. In addition, they have stated that cultural differences contribute positively to socialization and improve adaptation skills. However, it turns out that for some participants cultural differences are not perceived as a positive feature. In fact they are perceived to be a cause for conflict. Esen (2009), in a study focusing on classroom teachers' perceptions of difference, shows that some teachers are insensitive to the differences they have in class; some have reduced cultural, religious or ethnic differences purely to individual differences; some of them are sensitive to differences. Similar to this study conducted in Turkey, school psychological counselors seem to have negative views.

When school psychological counselors were asked to assess cultural aspects of their schools, it turned out that most schools had a culture that respects and supports cultural differences. However, some of the counselors perceived their schools' culture as discriminating. It was stated that discrimination was displayed towards both Syrian students and students of other minorities. The counselors of these schools seemed to have hard time in practicing peoper counseling and guidance. Participants expressed that some colleagues (teachers in their schools) have prejudices against Syrian students. According to these statements, it was thought that Syrian students would reduce total classroom achievement. Besides, it is striking that the negative judgments regarding Syrian society were attributed to the students. Some teachers were reported to be thoughtful and worried that Syrian students would ruin the societal peace and order. Castles and Miller (2003) suggest that the behavior patterns of immigrant communities may differ. These researchers believe that refugees may receive harsh reactions from some parts of the home society; multidimensional changes can occur in home society both socially and economically as a result of migrations; the local culture can perceive the refugees as a threat of trust because of the changes in living conditions; refugees might be perceived to take over the labour market and to overload social services. In addition, people of home country might see refugees as the source of sickness and crime. Similarly, Erdoğan (2014), Oytun and Gundogar (2015), Zencir and Davas (2014) found that there were economic concerns due to the fact that refugees work for much less wages; that refugees were acknowledged as the source of sickness and crime; there were a feeling distrust against refugees in our country. Topkaya and Akdag (2016) reached similar findings in the study they interviewed with teacher candidates. According to this study, teacher candidates had worries about teaching Syrian students because they considered that Syrians are too crowded; they beg; they pollute the environment and disturb the traffic; they ruin the urban fabric. In our study, similarly schools psychological counselors asserted that teachers in their schools regard Syrian refugees as lacking basic hygene rules and transmitting diseases. They were also observed to think that Syrian students would not make any effort to study because they come from a society in which laziness is credited.

Basbay and Aktas (2010) and Moodley (2007) stress the significance of multicultural competencies for occupations that provide support services. It is a crucial need to develop competencies in people working in the fields such as applied psychology, social services, psychological counseling and guidance and education. Multicultural counseling and guidance is especially vital for school psychological counselors. Regarding the Syrian children in our country, who experienced a war trauma, research in multicultural guidance and counseling must be examined for developing competent school psychological counselors in education faculties. Sue, Arredondo and McDavis (1992), describe three types of basic competencies that cross-cultural counselors should have: (a) being aware of one's own values, assumptions and prejudices (b) appreciating the world views of counselees being member of different cultures (c) applying various intervention methods and techniques. In our study, school psychological counselors indicated that there were conflicts in schools due to cultural, ethnic and language differences. Therefore they used a variety of methods to handle and manage conflicts. Schools psychological counselors seem to have mainly used empathy exercices and developing awareness about differences.

Psychological counselors need to be aware of their own cultural values, beliefs and prejudices (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler & MCullough, 2016). This internal awareness help schools psychological counselors to understand the world views of their students and to see the relation between culture, power, privilege, oppression and counseling. This emphasis on awareness is utmost importance for multicultural counseling.

Most of the school psychological counselors who participated in this study stated that they did not have any prejudices against Syrian students, and argued that the professional ethics would not allow any prejudice. However, some counselors stated that they were transferring prejudices about Syrian society to Syrian students, just as the teachers they evaluated. Only one advisor emphasized that his/her seeing Syrian students as victims is also a prejudice. Ratts et al. (2016), emphasize that psycohological counselors should give social justice counseling. By starting this point of view, Ratts and the associates identified multicultural and social justice counseling competencies. According to

their study, psychological counselors should internalize differences and multiculturalism concept in counselor-counselee relationship; comprehend negative effects of oppression on mental health and well-being; realize individuals in the context of social environment; integrate various counseling methods with social justice advocacy. In our study, none of the school psychological counselors mention any method regarding social justice and activism although they experienced conflicts and used various methods to manage those conflicts.

After conducting multiple case studies, Sanders, Haselden, and Moss (2014) suggested using critical reflection and developing self-awareness about beliefs, perceptions and practice in order to prepare candidate teachers for cultural differences. Cook, Krell, Hayden, Gracia and Denitzio (2016) have examined the apprenticeship experience diaries of 16 psychological counselor candidates. According to the candidates' diaries; the qualifications required for multicultural counseling are listed as 'open-mindedness, believing that all students can learn, desire to understand disadvantaged groups, being open to diversity'. Another significant finding of this study indicates that psychological counselors should develop awareness towards values, priviliges and prejudice. Accordingly, psychological counselors need to be well aware of the concepts of ethnicity, gender and privilege; to detect how the culture, in which they grow up, affect them; to be knowledgable about their students' culture; to be critical about their own prejudices; to be open to appreciate other cultures; to notice educational injustice and inequality.

In our study, most of the school psychological counselors regard themselves incompetent in multicultural contexts. Particularly some counselors think that they could not offer proper counseling for Syrian students because of language barrier. They stress that speaking different languages intervene with their counseling practices. Similarly, Uzun and Butun (2016) indicated that pre-school teachers experienced same language problem. To clarify, pre-school teachers expressed that they could not communicate with Syrian children and help them communicate with their peers. As result these children seem to become isolated. Not being able to overcome language problem causes teachers to feel that they strive alone and cannot succed. Apart from language barrier, our study showed that Syrian families cannot provide proper food, accommodation, and sanitary needs of children. As a result, other families, children, teachers and even some school psychological counselors behave to Syrian students and think about them in a biased way.

Syrians are in temporary protected status in Turkey. Despite this designation, they have a lot of similar features with the people accepted as universal refugees. Accordingly, Syrians are different from Turkish citizens in that they have a different language, culture and lifestyle. Most of the Syrians in our country come from a low socio-economic status; most of the populatin having settled in Turkey consists of women and children (DEMP, 2013; 2014; Kanat & Ustun, 2015; Oytun & Gundogar, 2015). Even for a small percentage of Syrian children, sustainable support is vital to combat the lasting effects of trauma and to assist families in the resettlement process. Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2015), advise policy makers and practitioners to ensure that Syrian refugee children have access to high quality mental health services, which also includes special education. Even though all Syrian children are entitled to education in our country which is desely populated by Syrian refugees, it can not be said that this education is facilitative and effective for them. We need to see that school psychological counselors and their professional activities are vital for reducing the traumatic effects of of war and re-settlement process of Syrians. Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2016) offer some suggestions for the education of Syrian children. According to these researchers, the following measures should be taken:

- Providing multi-faceted, culturally sensitive services in various contexts such as schools, community centers, health centers and centers for Mother and Child Health and Family Planning.

- Training teachers to recognize the signs of trauma and to ensure that children cope with trauma.

- Helping students to adapt to the new culture without breaking their ties with Syria culture.

- Ensure that those working with Syrian refugees know their work on refugee needs.

Our findings and other studies on the field show that school psychological counselors should be sensitive to different cultures and intervene effectively in cultural conflicts. For this to happen, it is proposed that counseling and guidance education in faculties should be re-organized in the context of multiculturalism, and that teachers should focus on their working skills in multicultural settings.

Findings show that teachers feel themselves inadequate regarding multicultural competencies. They also think that they have low readiness level for multicultural contexts, especially in the case of Syrian students. In order to avoid potential problems in the future, necessary measures should be taken at the level of national curriculum of education faculties and at the level of in-service training activities designed by Ministry of National Education. All members of occupations and units that provide counseling services should be mobilized for the education of pschool psychological counselors and teacher. School psychologists need to have sufficient theoretical and practical equipment to exercise their professions in multicultural settings.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW FORM

1. Gender:

2. Education:

3. Years of experience as a School Psychological Counselor:

4. Regarding multicultural counseling and guidance,

    a)   What kind of courses or trainings did you take in college education?

    b)   What kind of courses or trainings did you take in in-service education programs of Ministry of National Education?

    c)   What kind of professional development activities did you attend?

5. How do you regard ethnical, religious or cultural differences at school?

6. Can describe your school's culture regarding its approach to people of different cultures?

7. Can you tell the prejudicies of teachers working in your school against Syrian students based on your observations?

8. What kind of prejudices do you think you have against Syrian students?

9. How do you cope with conflicts caused by cultural differences among students?

10.   How do you find your multicultural competencies regarding maintaining cultural differences?