

Investigation of Secondary School Students' Attitudes towards Refugee Students

Dr. Semih ÇAYAK

Ministry of National Education

semihcayak@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-4360-4288

Assoc. Dr. İsmail KARSANTIK

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi,

ismailkarsantik@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-0279-7397

Abstract

The purpose of the present research is to examine secondary school students' attitudes towards refugee students in terms of some variables. The population of the research, which was designed in a single survey model, consisted of 40791 secondary school students studying in public schools in Pendik district of Istanbul in the second semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The sample of the study consisted of 355 students selected by simple random sampling method. A personal information form and the Attitude Scale Towards Refugee Students were used to identify the attitudes of students towards refugee students studying at their schools in collecting the research data. The scale consisted of 24 items with 3-point Likert type and one dimension. As a result of the analysis, it was found that secondary school students' attitudes towards refugee students were at a "high" level. In addition, their attitudes towards refugee students did not differentiate significantly according to the gender of the students, the number of classes they study and whether there are refugee students in their classes, but according to the variable of the class studied, the attitudes of the 5th and 7th grade students towards refugee students were higher than that of the 6th and 8th grade students, and this difference was found to be statistically significant.

Keywords: Refugee student, attitude, immigration, secondary school

Turkish Abstract: Ortaokul Öğrencilerinin Mülteci Öğrencilere Yönelik Tutumlarının İncelenmesi

Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı ortaokul öğrencilerinin mülteci öğrencilere yönelik tutumlarını bazı değişkenler açısından incelemektir. Tekil tarama modelinde tasarlanmış olan bu araştırmanın evrenini 2021-2022 eğitim öğretim yılının ikinci döneminde İstanbul ilinin Pendik ilçesindeki kamu okullarında öğrenim görmekte olan 40791 ortaokul öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini ise basit seçkisiz örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen 355 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verilerinin toplanmasında kişisel bilgi formu ve öğrencilerin okullarında öğrenim görmekte olan mülteci öğrencilere yönelik tutumlarını belirlemeye yönelik "Mülteci Öğrencilere Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Ölçek üçlü likert tipi 24 madde ve tek boyuttan oluşmaktadır. Verilerin analizi sonucunda ortaokul öğrencilerinin mülteci öğrencilere yönelik tutumlarının "yüksek" düzeyde olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca öğrencilerin mülteci öğrencilere yönelik tutumları öğrencilerin cinsiyetlerine, öğrenim gördükleri sınıf mevcutlarına ve sınıflarında mülteci öğrenci olup olmamasına göre anlamlı bir farklılık göstermediği ancak öğrenim görülen sınıf değişkenine göre 5.ve 7. sınıf öğrencilerinin mülteci öğrencilere yönelik tutumlarının 6. ve 8. sınıf öğrencilerine göre daha yüksek olduğu ve bu farklılığın istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olduğu bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mülteci öğrenci, tutum, göç, ortaokul

Introduction

The concept of migration differentiates cultural, political and economic dimensions throughout human history. People tend to migrate to geographies with better conditions for various reasons, including these dimensions. Among these reasons, the difficulty of geographical conditions, economic conditions, cultural conflicts and wars can be shown. Our country has gained rich experience in receiving immigration throughout history due to its location on migration routes and the richness of its cultural and historical texture (Aydm, 2020). These experiences show that it is important to be prepared for education and to make the necessary arrangements.

There are various definitions of the concept of refugee. Boyd (1999, p. 8) defined the concept of refugee as the situation in which individuals are deported out of the country they are in due to forced migration and the related persons are taken out of national borders. Refugeeism, which is seen as an international problem, includes various problems both in terms of the country of immigration and the country exposed to immigration (Yükseker, 2006). The main of these problems are listed as housing, nutrition, health, differences in competitive conditions, social cohesion, inequalities and education. Children and Their Rights Protection Platform (ÇHKP) (2016) reported that 7% of the problems experienced by Syrian refugee children living in Turkey were related to health, 7% to shelter, 16% to hunger, 46% to education and 24% to other means.

It can be said that children who start a different life in a new country after their families and relatives have a limited choice compared to adults. Steps are taken to ensure that the priority is life safety and to have a better life in all aspects. However, recognizing that children are ineffectively at the center of this process is important for new steps to be taken to protect the rights of refugee children. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2021), emphasized the importance of refugees benefiting from their right to education in the countries where they seek asylum, and listed the important issues in the education of refugee students:

- Education is the most basic human right,
- Education protects refugee children from forcibly joining armed groups, child labour, being part of the sex trade and forced marriages at a young age,
- Education enables refugees to be productive, equips them with the knowledge and skills to lead a fulfilling and independent life, and empowers them,
- Education provides important opportunities and supports the efforts of refugees to rebuild their lives and communities.

Turkey has been hosting the world's largest registered refugee population since 2015. In addition, more than 4 million refugees and asylum seekers are registered, including approximately 1.7 million children (UNICEF, 2022). The annual report published by UNICEF (2021) demonstrated that:

- 96% of refugee students attended public schools and the integration process took place in public schools to a large extent.
- The capacity of the education system was increased with the aim of enabling children, including those with disabilities, asylum seekers and all other risk groups, to receive inclusive and qualified education in the period from early childhood to adolescence.
- The number of children benefiting from Conditional Education Assistance was 410.740 in December 2018. It was observed that it increased to 562.016 in December 2019.
- Accelerated Education Program (HEP) was established and expanded in order to offer certified learning opportunities to refugee children who are not in formal education. From the start of the program in 2018 to the end of 2019, 17.492 children benefited from the program. 47% of them were female students. On the other hand, 48% completed the relevant HEP process and were included in the formal education system.
- The coverage of Turkish language classes offered in Youth Centers and other settings supported by UNICEF has been increased. In 2019, 11.937 children benefited from these courses, of which 47% were girls.
- The Teacher Training Program was developed within the scope of inclusive education, and new training modules were delivered to almost 24.000 administrators and educators working at different education levels. Educators were given the opportunity to create an inclusive school environment, guide the classrooms and teach Turkish as a second language.

Studies conducted in our country on the education of refugee students have contributed to understanding the sensitivity of the issue. The 2016 migration report of the General Directorate of Migration Management revealed that 232.714 foreign students, 166.482 Syrian and 23.971 Iraqi students, continued their education in Turkey in the 2016-2017 academic year (Migration Management, 2017). Educational processes, including the psychosocial and psychocultural aspects of refugee students' adaptation processes, should also be handled sensitively (Rah & Nguyen, 2009). In order for refugee students to have a successful adaptation process, education processes must be planned smoothly (Doğan, 2020; Emin, 2016; Şeker & Aslan, 2015). One of

the most important stakeholders of planning is students. In order for refugee students to socialize, communicate and develop in a healthy way at schools, it is thought that it is important to consider the attitudes of students at school towards refugee students. It is thought that the current study will contribute to the literature, since there are few studies on the attitudes of students towards refugee students. To this end, the purpose of the study is to identify the secondary schools students' attitudes towards refugee students.

Method

Research Model

This research was designed in a single survey model. Survey models aim to describe a past or present situation as it exists (Karasar, 2010).

Population and Sample

The purpose of the research consisted of 40.791 secondary school students studying in public secondary schools in Pendik district of Istanbul in the second term of the 2021-2022 academic year. The sample of the study consists of 355 students selected by simple random sampling method. When the demographic characteristics of the students constituting the sample group are examined, 192 (54%) of the students are female and 163 (46%) are male. Of the students, 81 (22%) are in the fifth grade, 95 (27%) are in the sixth grade, 88 (25%) are in the seventh grade, and 91 (26%) are in the eighth grade. When the number of students in the classes they study is examined, 156 (44%) are 30 and below, 160 (45%) are between 31 and 40, and 39 (11%) are studying in classes with 41 or more students. In addition, 297 (84%) of the students have refugee students in their class, while 58 (16%) have no refugee students in their class.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form

In the personal information form prepared by the researcher, questions about the gender of the students, their grade level, class sizes and whether there are refugee students in their classes were included.

Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scale

Developed by Kilcan, Çepni, and Kılınc (2017), Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scale aims to determine secondary school students' attitudes towards refugee students. The one-dimensional scale consists of 24 items with 3-point Likert-type. The lowest score that can be

obtained from the scale is 24, and the highest score is 72. Rising scores indicate that students' attitudes towards refugee students have increased. The percentage of total variance explained by the scale items is 44.65. Kılcan, Çepni and Kılınç (2017) found the Cronbach α internal consistency coefficient of the scale to be 0.92. When recalculated within the scope of this study, the Cronbach α internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.91. This shows that the reliability of the scale is high.

Data Collection and Analysis

The scale link prepared through Google forms was sent to the students who wanted to participate in the research voluntarily. The analysis was conducted with the data of 355 scales. The data were analyzed using the SPSS program. Before the analysis, the skewness and kurtosis values of the data were examined first. According to Kalaycı (2014, p. 8), the fact that the kurtosis-skewness value is between -2 and +2 indicates that the data exhibit a normal distribution. Based on this, the kurtosis and skewness values of the total score of the scale in Table 1 showed that the data exhibited a normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests were used in the analysis of the data. Thus, the first and second questions of the study were investigated by means of arithmetic mean, the third and sixth questions by independent groups t-test, and the fourth and fifth questions by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

In the interpretation of the arithmetic means of the Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scale, students' opinions were digitized by giving 3 points for the "agree" option, 2 points for the "I am undecided" option, and 1 point for the "I disagree" option in the triple likert-type rating scale. According to the interval coefficient calculated for 2 intervals in the triple scale $(3-1=2)$ $(2/3=0.67)$, the range of 1.00-1.66 is "I disagree", the range of 1.67-2.33 is "I do not agree" in the interpretation of the average scores obtained from the items of the Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scale. "I am undecided" and the range of 2.34-3.00 was evaluated as "agree".

Results

In this part of the study, first of all, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the scores of each item of the Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scale and the whole scale were presented in order to determine the level of students' attitudes towards refugee students in their schools.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics*

Items	n	\bar{x}	SS	Çarpıklık	Basıklık
M1	355	2.33	.770	-.64	-1.04
M2	355	2.64	.684	-1.63	1.10
M3	355	1.35	.670	1.67	1.29
M4	355	1.78	.801	.42	-1.32
M5	355	2.68	.653	-1.83	1.82
M6	355	1.97	.828	.06	-1.54
M7	355	2.62	.676	-1.51	.83
M8	355	1.74	.791	.49	-1.24
M9	355	2.65	.669	-1.69	1.33
M10	355	1.84	.825	.30	-1.47
M11	355	2.10	.891	-.19	-1.72
M12	355	2.08	.826	-.15	-1.52
M13	355	2.61	.686	-1.49	.75
M14	355	1.99	.849	.03	-1.61
M15	355	1.37	.673	1.59	1.05
M16	355	2.58	.673	-1.33	.43
M17	355	1.97	.846	.06	-1.60
M18	355	2.73	.611	-2.09	2.93
M19	355	2.47	.690	-.94	-.37
M20	355	2.66	.672	-1.72	1.41
M21	355	2.70	.649	-1.91	2.10
M22	355	2.21	.870	-.43	-1.55
M23	355	2.51	.670	-1.04	-.13
M24	355	1.58	.714	.82	-.63
Total	355	2.37	.421	-.57	.13

Table 1 showed that the attitudes of secondary school students towards refugee students are mostly "I would like to make friends with refugee students in my next education life" (Item 18), (=2.73) and "I would like to be in the same group with refugee students in classroom activities" (Item 21), (=2.70) items, while the items with the lowest attitudes towards refugee students of secondary school students were that "I would not accept refugee students into our country if I

had the opportunity” (Item 3), (=1.35) and “I think that refugee students disturb the peace of the school.” (Item 15), (=1.37). The arithmetic mean value of the overall scale was found to be (=2.37). This value showed that students' attitudes towards refugee students were in the range of "I agree", hence it could be said that students' attitudes towards refugee students were at a "high" level.

Independent groups t-test was conducted in order to determine whether the scores of the students forming the sample group on the scale of attitude towards refugee students showed a significant difference according to the gender variable (Table 2).

Table 2

The Results of the Independent Samples T-Test Conducted to Determine Whether the Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scores of the Scale of Attitudes Differ According to the Gender Variable

Score	Groups	N	\bar{x}	sd	SE	t Test		
						t	Sd	p
Attitude Scale Towards Refugee Students	Female	192	2.35	.40	.03	-1.04	353	.301
	Male	163	2.40	.44	.04			

As can be seen in Table 3, as a result of the independent groups t-test, no significant difference was found between the groups according to the gender variable for the secondary school students' attitude scale scores towards refugee students ($t = -1.04$; $p > .05$). Based on this finding, it could be said that the gender of the student did not have any effect on the attitude towards refugee students.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether the students' attitude scale scores towards refugee students, who constituted the sample group, differed significantly according to the grade level variable of the students (Table 3).

Table 3

The Results of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Conducted to Determine Whether the Attitude Scale towards Refugee Students Scores Differ According to the Variable of Grade Level of Education

<i>f</i> , \bar{x} ve <i>ss</i> Values					ANOVA Results					Post hoc(LSD)
Score	Groups	n	\bar{x}	sd	Var. K.	SS	Sd	MS	F	p
	5th Grade	81	2.44	.40	Between Groups	2.213	3	.738	4.259	.006

Attitude Towards Refugee Students	6th Grade	95	2.31.47	Within Groups	60.800 351 .173	5-6
	7th Grade	88	2.47.37	Total	63.013 354	5-8
	8th Grade	91	2.29.42			7-6
	Total	355	2.37.42			7-8

As can be seen in Table 3, as a result of the one-way analysis of variance, the students' attitudes towards refugee students differed significantly between the arithmetic means of the groups according to the grade level variable of the students ($F=4.259$; $p < .05$). Complementary analyzes were carried out in order to determine which groups caused the significant difference. For this purpose, first of all, homogeneity of variance was checked with Levene's analysis and variances were found to be homogeneous ($LF=1.980$; $p > .05$). For this reason, the LSD test was preferred. As a result of the LSD test, the difference between the 5th grade students and the 6th and 8th grade students was in favor of the 5th grade students. It was determined that between the 7th grade students and the 6th and 8th grade students, it was at a $p < .05$ level in favor of the 7th grade students.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether the total and sub-dimension scores of the students constituting the sample group showed a significant difference according to the variable of the grade level of the students (Table 4).

Table 4

The Results of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Conducted to Determine Whether the Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scale Scores Differ According to the Variable of Student Size in the Class They Study

<i>f</i> , \bar{x} ve <i>ss</i> Values			ANOVA Results							
Score	Groups	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	<i>ss</i>	Var. K.	<i>SS</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Attitude Scale Towards Refugee Students	30 and less	156	2.35.44		Between Groups	0.559	2	.280	1.577	.208
	31-40 and more	141	2.49.37		Within Groups	62.453	352	177		
	Total	355	2.37.42		Total	63.013	354			

As can be seen in Table 4, as a result of the one-way analysis of variance, the students' attitude levels towards refugee students according to the variable of student size in the class they study the difference between the arithmetic mean of the groups was not found significant ($F=1.577$; $p > .05$). This finding obtained from the research revealed that the class size was not effective on the attitudes of the refugee students.

Independent samples t-test was conducted in order to determine whether the attitude scale scores of the students constituting the sample group towards refugee students showed a significant difference according to the variable of whether the refugee student receives education in the classroom or not (Table 5).

Table 5

The Results of the Independent Samples T-Test Conducted to Determine Whether the Attitudes towards Refugee Students Scores of the Scale of Attitudes Differ According to the Variable of Whether the Refugee Student Receives Education in the Classroom

Score	Groups	N	\bar{x}	ss	Sh $_{\bar{x}}$	t Test		
						t	Sd	p
Attitude Scale Towards Refugee Students	Yes	297	2.37	.41	.02	-783	353	.434
	No	58	2.41	.49	.06			

As can be seen in Table 5, as a result of the independent groups t-test, no significant difference was found between the groups according to the secondary school students' attitude scale scores towards refugee students according to the variable of whether the refugee student received education in the classroom or not ($t = -783$; $p > .05$). Based on this finding, it could be said that whether or not the refugee student receives education in the classroom had no effect on the attitude towards refugee students.

Results and Discussion

It is thought that it is important for refugee students to adapt to the new culture and social structure they live in and to continue their social development in the most effective way. In this direction, the importance of not only refugee students but also the conditions of the environment they live in can be emphasized in the adaptation process. It can be stated that one of the stakeholders contributing to the formation of environmental conditions is students. In this

direction, the aim of the present study is to examine the attitudes of secondary school students towards refugee students.

The overall value of the scale showed that the attitudes of the students towards refugee students were in the range of "I agree". In this case, it can be interpreted that students' attitudes towards refugee students are at a "high" level. In other words, it is observed that the participants want to take part in in-class activities with refugee students and emphasize that they can be friends with refugee students in their next education life. In the study conducted by Palaz, Çepni, and Kılcan (2019), it was found that students had positive attitudes about refugee students' residence in our country. Şensin (2016) also stated in his study that students had positive attitudes towards refugee students. From this point of view, results of the studies carried out in the relevant field support those of the present study.

The study revealed that the scores of the secondary school students' attitude scale towards refugee students did not differ significantly according to the gender variable. The study conducted by the Konak Guidance and Research Center (2018), showed that there was no significant difference in the attitudes of girls and boys in the 3rd and 4th grades of primary school towards refugee students. This situation is explained as the psychosocial development levels of the participants are not yet at a sufficient level. Considering the developmental levels of the students in the current study, it can be thought that this situation led to the finding that there was no significant difference in terms of gender variable. Similarly, Ercoşkun and Nalçacı (2008), Karadağ, Baloğlu and Yalçinkayalar (2006), Tatar (2009), Yazıcı (2011), Kiroğlu, Elma, Kesten and Egüz (2012) also found no difference in terms of gender in their studies. The finding in these studies was clarified by the effect of upbringing. The study conducted by Ersoy (2009), found that the gender variable created a significant difference and that the hormonal factors of the difference may be effective in the formation of gender identity. Yıldırım and Akpınar (2016), on the other hand, examined the awareness levels of refugee students and the level of perception of social events, and concluded that female students had a higher level of awareness than male students.

As a result of the one-way analysis of variance conducted to determine the students' attitudes towards refugee students, the difference between the arithmetic averages of the groups according to the grade level variable of the students was found to be significant. Complementary analyzes were carried out in order to determine which groups caused the significant difference detected. For this purpose, first of all, homogeneity of variance was

checked with Levene analysis and variances were found to be homogeneous. For this reason, the LSD test was preferred. As a result of the LSD test, the difference between the 5th grade students and the 6th and 8th grade students was in favor of the 5th grade students. It was also found that 7th grade students and 6th and 8th grade students were in favor of 7th grade students. İnel and Gökalp (2018) concluded in their study that 6th grade students had a higher perception of tolerance than 8th grade students and explained this situation with the egocentric mood change brought about by adolescence. Similarly, Palaz, Çepni, and Kılcan (2019) concluded in their studies that 6th and 7th grade students had more positive attitudes towards refugee students than 8th grade students.

Lastly, as a result of the independent groups t-test, there was no significant difference between the groups according to the secondary school students' attitude scale scores towards refugee students, according to the variable of whether the refugee student received education in the classroom or not. Tatar (2009) and Kalın (2013) concluded in their studies that was no significant difference between students' tolerance levels. In this respect, it can be stated that students have tolerance towards refugee students.

The present study shows that students' attitudes towards refugee students are at a high level and that especially the students in lower classes have higher attitude levels. On the other hand, when examined in terms of gender and the presence of refugee students in the classroom, it is concluded that there is no significant difference. When examined in terms of the class variable, it is revealed that the attitudes of the students in the lower classes towards refugee students are at a high level. Based on these findings, the recommendations are presented below.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were developed:

- 1) Educational and sportive activities can be organized to improve the attitudes of the students in the upper classes.
- 2) Attitude studies towards refugee students can be carried out in other education levels.
- 3) Qualitative studies that examine the students' attitudes towards refugee students in depth can be carried out.

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