

## Turkey from the Perspective of the Refugee Children

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### Abstract

Migration can be described as a movement of people from the location they are in to elsewhere due to economic, social, political, and cultural reasons. Turkey is in a position that both allows immigrants and creates an area of transition for immigrants. With the concept of refuge, many social problems also entered the world's agenda. One of these problems, of course, involve refugee children. The aim of this study is to reveal the perception of Turkey of the refugee children who live in the city of Aksaray, in the context of their problems and needs. The students who participated in the study were determined with convenience sampling, a method included in purposeful sampling. The study was conducted with the approach of phenomenology, a qualitative data collection pattern. The data was collected with an interview form that consisted of open-ended questions, between March and June in 2016. The data was analyzed through content analysis. The findings were evaluated according to demographic information such as gender, age, number of siblings, the accommodation unit the family immigrated (village, town, county, city), socio-economic level, and whether the family had experienced migration before.

**Keywords:** migration, refugee, asylum-seeker, perception of Turkey, social sciences, child

### 1. Introduction

Throughout the history, people have migrated due to various reasons. Migration, as a concept, has transformed the homogenous structure of societies, and caused the emergence of human groups with different names. Needs and problems of each group come to the fore from time to time (Şeker & Aslan, 2015). Described as the geographical activity of human beings and the dynamics of population due to this activity (Emiroğlu & Aydın, 2003), migration also involves the permanent movement of individuals or human groups across symbolic or political borders, to new settlements and societies (Marshall, 1999). In our day, migrations have become increasingly global, and emerged as a result of necessity, not a preference. The emergence of those displaced as refugees or asylum-seekers indicates this fact (Kara & Korkut, 2010). According to Geneva Convention of 1951, refugee is a status acknowledged by the United Nations that involves certain social and legal rights to those who have to leave their country due to reasons such as war, genocide, and natural disasters. Asylum-seeker, on the other hand, defines those who leave their country, seeking asylum in another land, but do not have the refugee status yet. Only part of the Syrian immigrants in Turkey and the world are registered refugees—the rest are asylum-seekers (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1998).

Whether refugee or asylum-seeker, these are people who had to emigrate because of torture, political or religious pressure in their country, and do not have the possibility to return (Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Roxas, 2010; UNHCR, 1998). Because of the traumas they experienced, immigrants are disadvantaged compared to other groups in a society. These individuals have less opportunity to achieve their future plans because of social uncertainty, socio-economic difficulties, and the traumatic events they encountered (Hodes, 2000; Buz, 2003). For this, they need more support in gaining the skills and competence required to have a longer life in the society they live in.

In 2015, 65.3 million people were displaced for various reasons. 21.3 million of these people are refugees, while 3.2 million are asylum-seekers. 51% of the displaced consist of children under the age 18 (UNHCR, 2015). Wars, conflicts, disruption, political and religious negativity, economic crises, and natural disasters also cause people to

move (Betts & Kaytaz, 2009). The problems of the people who leave their country by necessity actually start to unfold in their country. The people who no longer have the chance to survive in their country request asylum from other countries, encountering many problems in the process of reaching that country and living there (Buz, 2003). It is a fact that refugee groups are taken into consideration less by the society, since they are not thought to settle for long in the country they immigrated. However, the in-country period of those who do not meet the requirements in the admission of third country extend, and in this process, they and their family members have to interact with the society and institutions. The opinion of the society as to foreigners reveal some richness, along with several problems and responsibilities in the context of human rights (Şeker & Aslan, 2015).

In the societies they participate, asylum-seekers suffer from various problems related to their daily lives. They have to overcome these problems, while also having to struggle to integrate into the society (Birman, 2002). Asylum-seekers lose their social status and relationships from their previous lives, and feel passive, worthless, and useless because of the restrictive practices in the countries they immigrate to (Lobo, 1993). The adults in the refugee/asylum-seeker groups may come together with the individuals who have shared roots in the host society, establishing a safe, familiar, and viable environment for themselves. However, refugee children are observed to adapt harder to the society and environment, compared to their parents.

Due to the reasons such as experiencing sudden and troublesome migration processes, having different cultural and historical backgrounds, and not being capable of communication, refugee/asylum-seeker children strive harder to adapt to their lately-introduced school environment (Hart, 2009; Rutter, 2003). These children also have to meet their need to education with individuals from different ethnic backgrounds at school (Pinson & Arnot, 2010). For children who lead their education lives as refugees/asylum-seekers, it is a particularly determinative experience to be an outsider in crowds. For these children, it is a key factor to adapt to the education system for a successful and happy life. Today, it is an obligation for the needs of these children in the process of education to revealed and determined, and be met by educational institutions and teachers (Atasü Topçuoğlu, 2014). In order for refugee/asylum-seeker children and teens to adapt to the society and school, they must be enabled to benefit from the opportunities based on cooperation between institutions, and suitable learning environments that will help children develop in physical, cognitive, and psychological senses in a safe environment must be established (Kirk & Cassidy, 2007).

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' statistics of July, 2016, there are 41.055 refugees and 233.648 asylum-seekers in Turkey (UNHCR, Monthly Statistics of Turkey, 2016). However, these numbers are thought to be higher due to the constantly-continuing migrations of today (UNHCR, 2016). Approximately 30% of refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey consist of children and teens between the ages 0 and 17 (UNHCR, Monthly Statistics of Turkey, 2016). The vast majority of refugees in the country consist of Syrians, while the other 90% is composed of Iraqis, Iranians, Afghans, and Somalians. The crises and long-term uncertainties in neighboring countries increases the attraction of Turkey, and causes a rise in the number of foreigners coming to the country. Turkey, in the geographical location it is present, is a rare country that allow immigrants and lets out emigrants, and also is a transition route for immigrants (Kara & Korkut, 2010).

In various periods of time, there have been several migration waves towards Turkey. In these waves, children with their families or on their own are thought to have come to Turkey (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2012). Along with the centers of population where the refugees/asylum-seekers compulsorily reside due to the reasons of security, asylum-seekers are also known to have spread many cities in Turkey (Kara & Korkut, 2010). Determining the perception of Turkey of the asylum-seekers who reside in Turkey should provide significant data for social scientists, politicians, and decision-makers.

The aim of this study is to determine the perception of Turkey of middle-school students in the city of Aksaray, an important center of population. To this end, the following questions were tried to be answered:

- What were the opinions of the students on Turkey before they arrived in the country?
- What are the opinions of the students on Turkey after they arrived in the country?
- What are the negative attitudes and behaviors (from religious, sexual, ethnical, and physical aspects) the students have encountered in Turkey?

## 2. Method

This study was built with the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research method is used in studies in order to establish a thorough evaluation towards a certain situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011; Yin, 2003; Woodside, 2010). The pattern used in the study was phenomenology, which focuses on the experiences of participants. The phenomenological pattern concerns with questioning the meaning the participants attribute to

their experiences (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the perception of Turkey of the asylum-seeker students were examined basing on their own perceptions and expressions.

### 2.1 Study Group

The study group of the study were determined with convenience sampling, a method included in purposeful sampling. The criteria focused on to form the study group of this study were being willing and voluntary to participate in the research, being a middle-school student, and being an asylum-seeker. In addition, students coming from with different social, cultural, and historical backgrounds, from different countries, who also study at the same school were preferred in the study. 12 asylum-seeker middle-school students who studied in Aksaray in the spring term of 2015-2016 school year participated in the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Personal information on the participants

Participant No	Gender	Age	Nationality	Number of Siblings	Receiving social and economic support	Residence time in Turkey	Reason to leave their countries	Willingness to return to their countries when the appropriate conditions emerge
S1	Female	14	Iraq	4	No	3 Years	War	I do not know
S2	Male	13	Iraq	5	No	1,5 Years	War	Yes
S3	Male	13	Iraq	2	No	2,5 Years	War	No
S4	Male	13	Somali	5	Yes	5 Years	War	No
S5	Male	13	Somali	3	Yes	5 Years	War	I do not know
S6	Female	13	Iraq	3	No	7 Months	War	Yes
S7	Male	14	Iraq	3	No	1,5 Years	War	No
S8	Female	13	Iraq	5	No	3 Years	War	No
S9	Male	12	Somali	5	Yes	5 Years	War	No
S10	Female	13	Yemen	4	Yes	5 Years	War	Yes
S11	Male	13	Iran	1	No	6 Years	Prohibitions	No
S12	Male	12	Afghanistan	4	Yes	8 Years	War	No

8 (66.6%) of the students participating in the study were males, while 4 (33.3%) were females. Considering the ages, 8 (66.6%) were 13 years old, 2 (16.6%) were 12, and 2 (16.6%) were 14. 6 (50%) of the students were from Iraq, 3 (25%) from Somali, 1 (8.4%) from Iran, 1 (8.4%) from Yemen, and 1 (8.4%) from Afghanistan. All of the students reside in their own houses. 7 (58.4%) of the students expressed that they had not received any support from the government, nor from anywhere else, while 5 (41.6%) of them expressed that they make living by support. Regarding the residence time of the students, it is seen that 4 (33.3%) of them have been living in Turkey for 5 years, 2 (15.8%) for 3 years, 2 (15.8%) for 1.5 years, while 1 (8.3%) has been residing in Turkey for 2.5 years, 1 (8.3%) for 8 years, and 1 (8.3%) for 7 months. 4 (33.3%) of the students have 5 siblings, 3 (25%) have 4 siblings, 3 (25%) have 3 siblings, 1 (15.8%) have 2 siblings, while 1 (8.3%) has 1 sibling. 11 (91.7) of the participant students left their countries because of war. Supposing that the appropriate conditions emerged, it is seen that the majority of the students ( $f = 7$ ; 58.5%) do not want to return to their countries, while 3 (25%) want to go back, and 2 (15.8%) are irresolute.

### 2.2 Data Collection

In this study, a semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions, which is accepted as a data collection technique in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2012; Mason, 2005; Newton, 2007; Tochon & Okten, 2010). Comprising of two sections, the interview form involves personal information about the students in the first section, and open-ended questions as to the students' perception of Turkey in the second. For validity, the interview form was presented to three experts on the field. In accordance with the views of the experts, the required adjustments were made, and the testing device was made ready. The data was collected in April and May of 2016. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with the students in the school's office for counseling

service. In the study, considering that the students' level of Turkish might be low, and that they may have troubles with speaking, questions on the testing device were asked simply and elementarily. The sufficient time was given to the students to answer the questions. The interviews lasted for 15 to 20 minutes each on average. The answers of the students were recorded by writing.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed with the technique of content analysis, in order to examine the students' perception of Turkey in detail and as a whole, and to gather them in the context of several concepts and themes so as to transform them in order for the reader to grasp them (Bauer, 2003; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Regarding the conceptual framework and the questions of the study, the data was analyzed in compliance with the preparation, organization, and reporting stages indicated by Elo and Kyngäs (2007).

In the preparation stage, the data obtained from the participants was put in writing. Each student was given a code number that started with an "S", so that the participant students were coded from 1 to 12. In the organization stage, a draft on the research question was prepared, and the themes were determined, through which the questions would be organized and presented. The interview questions were determined as the main theme. In the reporting stage, main and child themes were presented explicitly. For the sake of validity and reliability of the research, the findings are presented in an objective manner, along with direct quotations from the participants (Wolcott, 1990). In addition, methods such as data variation and research verification were used so as to strengthen the validity of the study.

In order to establish the reliability of the study, the path which was defined by Stemler (2001) as data validation or single-coder reliability was used. Besides, for unanimity, the reliability formula by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used. The results of the calculations indicated that the reliability was 90%, and the study was considered reliable.

## 3. Results

The findings are presented based on the sub-problems of the study. In this context, the findings involve the views of the students as to the reasons they immigrated to Turkey, their opinions on Turkey before they immigrated, the changes in their opinions on Turkey after their arrival, and the positive and negative attitudes and behaviors they encountered in Turkey.

### 3.1 The Reasons for the Asylum-Seeker Students to Immigrate to Turkey

It is seen that various reasons have influence on the participants' immigration to Turkey (Table 2). A majority of the participant students ( $f = 9$ ; 75%) expressed that they had immigrated to Turkey because it was a safe and warless country.

Table 2. The reasons for the students to immigrate to Turkey

Opinions	Participant	<i>f</i>	%
A safe and warless country.	S1, S2, S7, S9, S10, S11, S12, S3, S4	9	75
A country which accepts immigrants without conditions and visa.	S3, S4	2	15.8
Because of financial impossibilities.	S5	1	8.3
Because we love Turkey very much.	S6	1	8.3
It is a Muslim country.	S9, S10	2	15.8
It is a tolerant and free country.	S11	1	8.3
I do not know.	S8, S12	1	8.3

It is seen that the students' expressions of causality resemble each other. It is observed that some students show the chaos, fear, and death of several members of the family in the war as a reason, while some others give prominence to poverty and being stranded in the house because of war. The students said these on the subject matter:

*"We left Iraq and Mosul because of the war..."* (S1).

*"We came to Turkey, because many members of our family died in Iraq because of the war..."* (S2).

*"We left Somali because of the war..." (S4).*

*"We came to Turkey, because there was war in Iraq. There was war, we were in a difficult condition; we were poor. They threatened us with guns, there was conflict..." (S7).*

*"We came here because of the war... You can also walk around here, without fear" (S9).*

*"We came here, because there was war in Yemen... We came to Turkey, because it is safe" (S10).*

Two (f = 2; 15.8%) of the students stated that they immigrated to Turkey because it was a country that accepted them without conditions or visa. It is also stated that Turkey being a Muslim country had an influence on their immigration to Turkey.

*"Turkey accepted us even though we did not have passports. Other countries did not" (S3).*

*"There are no mosques in America or other countries, they are not Muslim. My father said, 'There are mosques here'" (S9).*

*"We came to Turkey, because America is not a Muslim country" (S10).*

Only one (8.3%) of the students stated that they came to Turkey because of financial impossibilities. It is also seen that there are students (f = 2; 15.8%) who asserted that they preferred Turkey because it was a beautiful, tolerant, and free country.

*"...We could not go to other countries, because there was not money... We would want to go to Canada if there was money..." (S5).*

*"My parents came from Iran... We had houses... Because everything was forbidden there... For example, children could not go out, we could not walk around with T-shirts..." (S11).*

*"We came here because Turkey is beautiful, we like it..." (S6).*

### 3.2 Opinions of the Asylum-Seeker Students on Turkey before Their Arrival

It is seen that a vast majority (f = 10; 83.3%) of the participants had not had any information on the country before their arrival. Part of the students, on the other hand, were observed to have had fractional information about Turkey, due to their relatives who had come to Turkey beforehand (Table 3).

Table 3. Opinions of the asylum-seeker students on Turkey before their arrival

Opinions	Participant	f	%
I did not know anything.	S1, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12	10	83.3
It is a fine and beautiful country.	S2, S3	2	15.8

Thoughts of some students on the subject matter are as follows:

*"I did not know anything about Turkey before we came here. Only... its name..." (S1).*

*"I had had no idea about Turkey before we came here. My parents knew, even though a little..." (S4).*

*"I did not know a country named Turkey when I was in Iraq" (S7).*

*"I had not known Turkey before we came to Turkey, neither had my parents..." (S9).*

*"We had known things about Turkey before we came. My cousin had come to Turkey before us, and liked it here, then we came here" (S2).*

Another group of students (f = 2; 15.8%) stated that they had thought that Turkey was a fine and beautiful country before they came here. Some students are observed to compare Turkey with the country they came from, thus emphasizing war, theft, disrespect, and unemployment in their countries.

*"There are more fine people here (in Turkey), we knew it; but there... they enter houses with guns in their hands. They steal money, they curse; no one in Iraq accepts to work..." (S3).*

### 3.3 Opinions of the Students on Turkey after Their Arrival

It is understood that fundamental changes occurred in the opinions of the students on Turkey after their arrival in the country. On the subject matter, the views stated were as follows: Turkey is a big and beautiful country; there are tolerant and respectful people; it is a safe country with no wars or conflicts; living conditions are fine; the language is difficult to learn (Table 4).

Table 4. The opinions of the students on Turkey after their arrival

Opinions	Participants	f	%
Turkey is a big and beautiful country	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12	12	100
People are tolerant and respectful	S1, S11	2	15.8
People are charitable	S1, S3, S2	3	25
There are no wars or conflicts	S2, S4, S8, S12	4	33.3
Living conditions are fine	S2, S3, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9	7	58.3
The language is difficult to learn	S10	1	8.3

All (f = 12; 100%) of the students stated that Turkey was a big and beautiful country. Some statements of the students on the subject matter are as follows:

*"I love Turkey after we came here. It is beautiful..."* (S2).

*"I love Turkey after we came here. I love the school, the cars..."* (S6).

*"Turkey is beautiful... schools and hospitals are clean..."* (S9).

*"I love it here very much, it is beautiful. There are school here, there are children, I have friends..."* (S12).

Along with this, the asylum-seeker students stated that relationships in Turkey are based on respect, love, and tolerance, that it had a better technological infrastructure, and that schools and education system were advanced. In addition, they shared their views such as that there was a more comfortable life-style, there was a better health system, and in this respect, the hospitals were cleaner (f = 7; 58.3%).

*"Our apartment building is very nice and comfortable... There was no electricity back then; here, there is power all the time"* (S3).

*"...food is very different. Water is very good here; there was little back then. Hospitals are very nice here; back in my country, they were not; there was blood everywhere..."* (S5).

*"Turkey is a beautiful country... In Somali... there are no computers, no markets; water was so little, it was not enough..."* (S5).

*"For example, our home here is more comfortable. We have cabin heater here, we did not in Iraq. There were heating stoves in schools in Iraq; but here, there are cabin heaters..."* (S7).

*"There is more food here. There is not in Iraq"* (S8).

The asylum-seeker students stated that Turkey was a safe country with no wars or conflicts (f = 4; 33.3%). From the students' assessments, it is understood that they compare the social and political environment in their countries and the one in Turkey.

*"There is no war here, people are great"* (S2).

*"There is war in Somali, and we could not get out of the house... Rockets fell down on our homes, but it is not like that in here"* (S8).

*"There is no war in Turkey, it is better and more comfortable..."* (S8).

2 (15.8%) of the participant students stated that Turkey was a country where tolerant and respectful people lived. The students expressed their views such as that their relationships with their friends at school were based on respect and care, tolerance was prioritized, there were no prohibitions or restrictions, and Turkey was a liberal country.

*"After we came here from Iraq, my friends talked with me, played with me; they never said, She came from Iraq; we won't talk with her, we won't play with her"* (S1).

“...everyone here is very nice; it is a clean and liberal country... No one is ill-treated. You can walk around in T-shirts and shorts” (S11).

Some (n = 3; 25%) of the students stated that Turkey was a country where charitable people lived. On the matter of the charity of the people in Turkey, the students shared the examples of the Turkish students helping them in language learning, and aids of the Turkish families and neighbors to the asylum-seeker families.

“...I did not speak Turkish in the fifth grade, it was difficult. My friends helped me... So, I learned Turkish easily... I can speak fluently now” (S1).

“...there are very nice, charitable families here...” (S3).

“We have neighbors who ask how we are, who bring us food” (S2).

One of the participant students thinks that Turkish is a language hard to learn. This student states that she learned Turkish even though in a long while, but some of her family members could not.

“After we came to Turkey, the language was difficult. I learned it in two and a half years. My mother could not learn it yet” (S10).

### 3.4 Negative Attitudes and Behaviors the Students Encountered in Turkey

The views of the students on whether they have encountered any negative attitudes are listed on Table 5. 6 (50%) of the students stated that they were considered outsiders because of their being foreigners, 5 (41.6%) for their physical appearances, 1 (8.3%) for her religious belief. 4 (33.3%), on the other hand, stated that they have never encountered any negative behaviors in Turkey. The students’ opinions on the subject matter are as follows:

Table 5. Whether the students have encountered any negative behaviors in Turkey

Reason	Participant	f	%
Religion	S1	1	8.3
Being a foreigner	S2, S3, S4, S5, S9, S12	6	50
Physical appearance	S3, S4, S5, S9, S10	5	41.6
I was not exposed to discrimination.	S6, S7, S8, S11	4	33.3

“Some people say, ‘Get out of here! Why did you come from Iraq? Go away, do not disturb us’, to us” (S2).

“Sometimes people say things to us... For example, some students at this school say, ‘Why did you come here?’” (S3).

“They call us, ‘Hey, Somalians!’ I promise, we do not say anything to them... We go on silently” (S4).

“Some people ask, ‘Why did you come here?’ because we are from Somali... They call us, ‘Hey, Somalians!’ They say a lot more... I have no idea why they are treating us like that” (S5).

A majority of the asylum-seeker students stated that they encountered several negative behaviors in the society because they were foreigners, they had come from other countries, they disturbed the people who lived where they settled. It is understood that some of the teachers and students at the school had a quizzical attitude towards the asylum-seeker students as to where they had come from, and why, which is observed to disturb these students. Along with this, some students stated that they were perceived differently because of their physical appearances:

“...sometimes they call as ‘black’...” (S3).

“...They call us ‘black’ because we are from Somali” (S4).

“They call me ‘black’ or ‘Obama’ because of my skin color. They make fun of me” (S9).

Some asylum-seeker students, on the other hand, stated that they had not encountered any negative attitudes or behaviors, that they were not ill-treated by their friends and neighbors even though they had come from other countries, and that everyone is treated respectfully in Turkey:

“My friends and the neighbors did not ill-treat us because I came from Iraq...” (S7).

“My friends at school treat me well... Our neighbors are very nice, they never ill-treated us...” (S6).

“...Our friends here treat as very well... The do not discriminate. We are all the same...” (S8).

“...I have not encountered any discrimination here” (S11).

One of the greatest problems of the asylum-seekers' future plans is that they do not belong to any country. To the question of whether the students preferred to live the rest of their lives in Turkey in the case the government conferred citizenship, the students in general answered, “I would stay in Turkey” (Table 6).

Table 6. Whether the asylum-seeker students prefer to continue to live in Turkey

Opinions	Participant	f	%
I will stay if conferred citizenship.	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9, S11, S12	10	83.3
I may stay if conferred dual citizenship.	S10	1	8.3
I will not stay even if conferred citizenship.	S7	1	8.3

10 (83.3%) of the students stated that they wanted to live the rest of their lives in Turkey in the case they were conferred citizenship. It is understood that these students have a positive attitude towards Turkey.

“Of course we would stay here if it was up to me. Because I have friends; I know them, I know they are good people. Besides, I now know the language, and it is good” (S1).

“I would like to stay here if Turkey gave us citizenship. Turkey is beautiful, because there are no wars here...” (S2).

“We would like to stay here if Turkey accepted as citizens... I love my country as well, but not that much” (S4).

“If Turkey gives us citizenship, I would like to live the rest of my life in Turkey. I do not want to return to Somali, I do not remember much about back there, anyways” (S5).

A vast majority of the asylum-seeker students stated that they would like to stay if conferred citizenship. The reasons for them to think this way are that they have friends here, they learned the language, there is no war, it is calm here, they do not remember the country they came from, they like Turkey very much, and they have been living in Turkey for a long time. Nonetheless, one (8.3%) of the students stated that he would not want to spend the rest of his life in Turkey under no circumstances, and that he saw Turkey as a transition.

“I do not want to live in Turkey. I want to live in Canada” (S7).

One student, on the other hand, stated that he would like to spend the rest of his life in Turkey in the case the government conferred dual citizenship.

#### 4. Discussion

Asylum-seekers are those who had problems from the aspects of physical torture, violence, chaos, and war in the conditions of their countries, thus migrating out of necessity, not preference (Harrell-Bond, 2000; Pynoos, Kinzie, & Gordon, 2001; Roxas, 2010). The reasons for human activity from under-developed or developing countries towards developed countries vary in categories such as economic, political, social, and cultural. In this respect, factors such as economic problems, war, terror, political disturbance, and discrimination based on race, religion, and gender play the main role, generally (İçduygu & Toktaş, 2002).

The human activity towards Turkey is mostly from Middle-Eastern and African countries. The reason of migration from Africa, and Somali for particular, is common social violence; from Middle-East, especially Iraq and Afghanistan, it is war; from Iran, the reasons are generally based on politics, ethnics, and gender (Nasirova, 2014). It can be asserted that the participant students in this study immigrated to Turkey due to physical violence, turmoil, and war in their own countries. On the other hand, it is also understood that another reason for these students to have migrated to Turkey is that other countries did not accept these students and their families, imposed certain conditions, and that Turkey is a Muslim country. Research reveals that the reasons for children to migrate are various; a dominant majority of these reasons stem from the reasons for the family to migrate; this finding is in compliance with the study of Edmonds and Salinger (2008). Among the participant students, all of those who came to Turkey migrated as a result of their fathers' decisions. These families are seen to have migrated due to economic reasons, will to escape war, or seeking asylum.

It is understood that the opinions of the asylum-seeker students on Turkey have change after their arrivals in the country. It is seen that they think that the living conditions in Turkey is better. The factors that influenced the



refugees to decide to migrate to Turkey were that Turkey was more flexible compared to the EU countries, that there is UNHCR, which is considered the main respondent for refuge, and, unfortunately, the huge size of human trafficking (Martin et al., 2002; Paçacı Elitok & Straubhaar, 2010). Considering the circumstance in the neighboring countries, it is reasoned that the problem of refugees should occupy our agenda for a very long time.

Conditional asylum-seekers who encounter several problems with being sent to a third country have to wait for a long time, experiencing troubles for the needs on social, economic, health care, educational, and housing matters (Şeker & Aslan, 2015). Research shows that asylum-seeker children have various problems in the process of education due to parents' lack of awareness on the process of education, children's incompetence on language, their being uneducated or having had deficient education, and the negativity of the school environment and the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and administrators (Candappa, 2000; Oikonomidoy, 2010; Hek, 2005; Rah, Choi, & Nguyen, 2009; Roxas, 2011). Asylum-seekers need to benefit equally from the rights that are presented to other citizens, such as primary education, public support, and social security (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam, 2007). Schools are the most important institutions where children adapt to the society, develop their physical, cognitive, and social skills, learn social codes, and especially where refugee children have the opportunity to be involved in the society (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Sabah, 2007; Boyden, 2009). Just as every other citizen, refugee children must be adapted to the education system, their needs must be met, and they must be prepared for the future (Roxas, 2010). In various studies, it has been demonstrated that it is not easy for refugee children to adapt to the education system, and that they are exposed to problems such as discrimination due to linguistic and cultural differences (Kirova, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

Along with the losses suffered in the emigrating countries, violence, and torture, the potentially traumatic events during the course of migration and in the country settled, breaking up with the family, poor living conditions, and racism are also among the events encountered. All of these processes might affect negatively refugee children and teens' development (Hodes, 2000; Rutter, 2003; Anderson, Hamilton, Moore, Loewen, & Frater-Mathieson, 2004). Most of the asylum-seeker students stated that they were perceived differently by the society because they were foreigners. Along with this, asylum-seeker children are also exposed to inconsistent and unstable behaviors of their teachers, friends, and the local community (Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland, & Doumbia, 2003). Especially teachers, as culture workers, must be in cooperation with families for the refugee students to learn different cultural structures, to prepare for the change, to acquire reading and writing skills, to learn and fluently use the language, and adapting to the society (Exposito & Favela, 2003; Roessingh, 2006; Birman, Weinstein, Chan, & Beehler, 2007).

It causes various problems for asylum-seeker children to be evaluated together with the group they belong to in their relationships at school and in classroom. These processes experienced at school and in classroom are the concern of the theory of social relation (Bauman, cited in Szilassy & Arendas, 2007). In this theory, outsiders are classified in two categories as "friends" and "foes". Adaptation to the school, while including academic success, should also involve healthy intercultural relationships. Refugee children coming from different social structures may suffer from visible or ambiguous problems of race, religion, language, and cultural identity (Szilassy & Arendas, 2007). Educational environments bear a huge responsibility in establishing healthy relationships among groups, preventing discrimination and racism, and diminishing ambiguity and tension (Şeker & Aslan, 2015).

It is seen that a vast majority of the refugee students state that they would stay in Turkey, should the government confer citizenship. These students justified their views with that they had friends in Turkey, that they learned the language, that Turkey is a no-war region, that they love Turkey, and that they had been living in Turkey for very long. Many immigrants might encounter various problems in the areas they settle. Especially with the short- or long-term migrations between countries of regions with cultural differences, the main problem is of adaptation (Deniz & Etlan, 2009). Linguistic competence is crucial for participating in the new social environment and society. Besides, linguistic competence of refugee children is important not only for their own professional careers, but also for the adaptation of posterity (Heath, Rothon, & Kipli, 2008). Considering the critical conditions of refugees, teachers and the school staff must be more careful and attentive with these children.

A vast majority of the asylum-seeker children stated that Turkey was a modern, advanced country; that they liked the schools, classrooms, and teacher quality in Turkey better; and that Turkey was a beautiful country with its natural properties. These statements are in compliance with general tendencies. For migrations take place from undeveloped places to developed ones, from places where there are political and social turmoil towards peaceful and prosperous lands. Considering the long duration of acceptance of the asylum-seekers in Turkey by the third countries, education of these groups seems a matter to which thorough and rigorous thought and effort must be given.

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## Note

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