

Challenges, Practices and Recommendations of Schools with Refugee Students

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Abstract

Following the ongoing forced migration from middle east to Türkiye, refugee students have been enrolled in public schools; however, numerous challenges have emerged as a result. This study aims to reveal the challenges school principals encounter in schools, their practices, and their recommendations. In this exploratory embedded single-case design study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 25 school principals from 17 schools, which varied by educational stage and school type. As a result, school principals face challenges in creating a positive school climate and experiencing challenges across all its sub-dimensions, including academic, community, safety, and institutional environments. The practices in schools are based on a holistic approach that addresses the social, emotional, learning, and economic needs of refugee students. Furthermore, the recommendations of school principals focus on addressing the social, emotional, and learning needs of students, as well as institutional improvements.

Keywords: *Refugees; Refugee Students; Refugee Education*

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Introduction

According to the 2021 Global Report of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNCHR), there are 94.7 million people worldwide who have been forced to migrate for several reasons. 21.3 million people are refugees, 4.6 million are asylum seekers, 51.3 million are internally displaced persons and others (UNCHR, 2021). As told in the UNCHR (2022) refugee statistics, the number of worldwide forced displacements reached 103 million by mid-2022. The number of refugees reached 32.5 million, internally displaced persons 53.2 million and asylum seekers 4.9 million. Furthermore, based on the end-2021 data, 36.5 million of the 89.3 million displaced people are children under the age of 18 (UNCHR, 2022). Considering these statistical data, it can be seen that the phenomenon of migration around the world is increasing every year.

In the context of Türkiye, millions of Syrian citizens have been forced to migrate from Syria to Türkiye since 2011 due to war, political conflict, and economic and environmental factors. In 2013, Türkiye granted temporary protection to Syrian citizens who came to the country through forced migration and protected their fundamental rights and freedoms with the "Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)" and the "Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR)" issued in 2014. With the article "no one shall be returned to a place where his/her life or liberty would be threatened", a step was taken about the rights and safety of people under temporary protection (UTP) in Türkiye. (Presidency of Migration Management [PMM], 2013; PMM, 2014).

In 2022 data from the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), the official number of Syrian refugees is 3.6 million. The top three provinces with the highest numbers of refugees were Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Sanliurfa. Based on the official data, there are 376 thousand Syrian refugees in Sanliurfa, the province where this research was conducted. The ratio of registered refugees to the Sanliurfa population is 15% (PMM, 2022). Looking at the age distribution of them across Türkiye, population between the ages of 5-17 is 1.3 million. This highlights the fact that the school-age population is almost 30% of the total population of refugees. As of January 2022, the total school enrollment rate of refugee students, including all educational stages, was 65%. Comparison of schooling percentages by education stage: preschool (age 5) 34.34%, primary school 75.13%, secondary school 80%, and high school 42.65% (MoNE, 2022).

Refugee Students and their Education Journey in Türkiye

Since 2011, various policies have been implemented in the formal education of refugee students. Until 2014, students had received education in temporary education centers (TECs) located in or outside the refugee camps. Since 2015, the MoNE has encouraged enrollment in public schools. Thus, the aim was to integrate them into the education system of Türkiye. The pilot study, which first started with preschool and first-grade children, was expanded to all provinces in 2016. Starting from the 2016-2017 academic year, it was mandatory for all refugee students at the K-12 level to attend public schools in Türkiye. In the 2018-2019 academic year, adaptation classes were established to facilitate Turkish language learning and increase adaptation, and the "Circular on Adaptation Classes for Foreign Students" was published (UNICEF, 2019).

After 2016, it became compulsory for refugee students to enroll in public school. With their enrollment, the phenomenon of multiculturalism in schools has come to the fore. In the context of multicultural schools, everyone, including school principals and teachers, should respect each other's cultural differences (Soylu, Kaysılı, & Sever, 2020). Multiculturalism is not the only difference based on ethnicity. Multicultural education includes the idea that students are not judged by their religious views, social class, ethnicity, cultural characteristics, or gender and that all students should have equal access to education (Banks, 2016).

Schools have an important role in the adaptation of refugee students (Bartlett, Mendenhall, & Ghaffar, 2017; Sheikh & Anderson, 2018). When adaptation in schools is not achieved, the problems that will arise between student and teacher, student-student, teacher-parent, and teacher-administrator will affect the management of schools. School adaptation works in two ways: the adaptation of human resources and local students in the school to refugee students and the adaptation of refugee students to the school.

Stumbling Blocks in Education

PIKTES is the most comprehensive project carried out in Türkiye to promote inclusive education in the process of integrating refugee students into the Turkish education system. The "Promoting Inclusive Education for Kids in the Turkish Education System Project (PIKTES)" aims to provide equal access to education for refugee children in Türkiye. Launched in 2016 and ongoing in 26 provinces, one of the expected outcomes of the project is an increase in the social integration of Syrian students and their parents. The project provides books and materials, adaptation classes, improvements in school guidance services, social adaptation activities, courses to support academic development, Arabic and Turkish language courses, scholarship programs, technical and equipment support to schools, professional training, janitors, and security staff to schools (MoNE, 2022; PIKTES, 2022).

Despite these efforts, the problems experienced by refugee students in schools continue to affect the education. Language barrier and cultural adaptation have been the main problems of refugee students in Türkiye. The results of the lack of communication between teacher-student, teacher-parent, student-student due to language and culture emerge in behavioral and cognitive dimensions such as attention deficit, lack of interest in lessons, absenteeism, academic failure, discrimination and exclusion at school and peer bullying (Akalin, 2016; Altunay & Dede, 2019; Atalay et al., 2022; Aydın & Kaya, 2017, 2017; Cirit Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Erdem, 2017). In fact, it is stated that students perform better in schools when educators consider the traumas that students experience after migration. Educators with this understanding are aware that the behavioral and cognitive difficulties students experience at school are not caused by learning disabilities or mental health problems but are the result of the trauma they have experienced (O'shea, Hodes, Down, & Bramley, 2000; Sirin & Sirin, 2015).

Another common problem is the difficulties experienced in the parental involvement or their non-participation at all. The problems in the school-family partnership are language problems, participation in school activities and providing materials (Atalay et al., 2022; Songür & Olgun, 2020). Lack of family interest, number of children, financial status, educational status, and constant change of address also negatively affect their participation in education (Akyavuz et al., 2020; Altunay & Dede, 2019). However, students who are interested in their school life can adapt to school more easily and achieve academic success. This is also mediated by the socio-economic and educational status of the parents (Aydın & Kaya, 2019). In addition, in the context of human resources management, it has been reported that there are problems in the

attitudes and behaviors of teachers towards refugee students and inadequate professional trainings for teachers and principals regarding the educational processes of refugee students (Celik, Kardaş, & Saka, 2021; Cerna, 2019; Khansa & Bahous, 2021; Kotluk & Aydin, 2021; Örucü, 2019; Örucü, Arar, & Mahfouz, 2020).

Studies have examined the educational processes and problems experienced in schools with refugees. While some of the problems and difficulties in the literature have become common findings, there are also differentiated findings. Language and communication problems, inadequate school counselors, and lack of planning (Silgan, 2022); schools with a high number of refugee students are seen as refugee school or problematic and unsuccessful schools (Bucak, 2021); disciplinary problems, especially physical violence (Altunay & Dede, 2019; Demir et al., 2020); economic difficulties in providing teaching materials (Eren, 2019) are just some of the problems faced by school principals. In the literature, there are also studies that reveal the problems of students from the perspective of teachers, parents, or students (Atalay, Kılıç, Anılan, Anılan, & Anagün, 2022; Aydin & Kaya, 2017, 2019; Cirit Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Songür & Olgun, 2020).

Studies discussing these problems from the perspective of school principals (Akyavuz et al., 2020; Altunay and Dede, 2019; Levent and Çayak, 2017) are insufficient and do not focus on school management. In addition, it is thought by the researchers of this study that the problems discussed in the literature affect the management of schools and these problems will be solved with the leadership of school principals. In this study, the problems experienced by school principals, their practices and recommendations will be explored and identified. In this way, it aims to contribute to the literature on refugee education from the perspective of educational administration. To sum up, this study aims to explore and identify the challenges principals experience, their practices, and recommendations in the schools with refugee students.

1. What kinds of problems are experienced in schools with refugee students?
- 2- What kinds of practices are carried out in schools for experienced problems?
- 3- What kind of recommendations do school principals offer regarding the problems experienced in schools?

Method

Research Design

This research was conducted with the exploratory embedded single-case design of the case study, which is a qualitative research method. A case study is an in-depth examination of a contemporary phenomenon in its real and current context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2018). Case studies are divided into three categories as explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory according to their purposes. In exploratory case studies, research questions can be written in the style of "like what?", "what kind of?", "what?", formed with the interrogative pronoun "what" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). With these questions, a phenomenon is discovered, and hypotheses and propositions can be developed for further questioning. When propositions are not specified in the exploratory study, its exploratory aims should be written (Yin, 2018). The single embedded case of this study concerns the problems experienced by principals in schools where refugee students study, the practices carried out in those schools, and the recommendations of school principals. If a single case is a phenomenon involving more than one organization, these organizations can be studied as embedded cases (Ozcan et al., 2017).

Participants

The sampling method of the study is criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p.120). The criterion was that the participants had worked at their schools for at least one year. The criterion for the selection of schools was determined as having at least 10% refugee students in school enrollment. Some information about the schools and participants is given in Table 1 below. Information about total school enrollment and the number of refugee students was provided by the school principals during the interviews. At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were asked whether they had received inclusive education training, and if so, where, and how.

In each selected school, at least a principal (P) or a vice principal (VP) who has responsibilities related to the refugee students were tried to be interviewed. The school stages and school types included in the study with their codes are Kindergarten (K), Primary School (PS), Secondary School (SEC), Imam Hatip Secondary School (IHSS), Anatolian High School (AHS), Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School (VTAH). For example, "K1" is the kindergarten coded with the number 1 in the study. In total, 25 school principals from 17 different schools participated in the study. Twelve of them were principals and thirteen were vice principals. Participants were asked whether they wanted to participate in the interview, voluntary participation was emphasized, and willing participants were included in the interview.

Table 1. *Information about Schools and Participants*

Schools	Total Number of Students	Number of Refugee Students	Participants	Seniority in Years	Years of Experience as a Principal	Years of Principal Experience in Current School	Inclusive Education Training
K1	236	40	K1_P	25	12	8	No
K2	198	43	K2_VP	4	1	1	No
K3	83	14	K3_P	14	11	7	Yes
			K3_VP	10	6	1	Yes
K4	181	32	K4_VP	10	7	7	Yes
PS1	1500	398	PS1_P	13	9	4	Yes
			PS1_VP	9	4	4	Yes
PS2	3000	1000	PS2_P	14	7	7	No
			PS2_VP	14	7	7	No
PS3	3100	496	PS3_P	18	6	4	Yes
			PS3_VP	6	3	3	Yes
IHSS1	689	168	IHSS1_P	8	6	2	No
			IHSS1_VP	8	2	2	No
IHSS2	530	185	IHSS2_VP	12	6	6	Yes
SEC1	2200	300	SEC1_P	12	8	1	Yes
SEC2	1000	550	SEC2_P	26	22	1	Yes
SEC3	2292	400	SEC3_P	9	7	3	Yes
SEC4	900	120	SEC4_P	19	8	5	Yes

			SEC4_VP	10	4	4	Yes
AHS1	970	115	AHS1_P	23	20	5	Yes
			AHS1_VP	5	1	1	No
AHS2	940	200	AHS2_P	21	12	4	Yes
			AHS2_VP	8	3	3	Yes
VTAH1	650	135	VTAH1_P	17	14	7	Yes
VTAH2	591	154	VTAH2_VP	10	2	2	Yes

Data Collection Tools

After the literature review, a semi-structured interview form was prepared within the framework of the subproblems. After the interview questions prepared in the first phase were presented to two experts, lecturers in the field of educational administration were given feedback on recurring questions in the same themes. After the necessary corrections were made, expert opinions were obtained again, and pilot interviews were conducted with two school principals in the same school. After the pilot interviews, the questions that were misunderstood were corrected and questions about the projects carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education to support the education and training processes of refugee students were added. After this stage, another pilot study was conducted with two school principals from a different school and there was no need to change the interview questions.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was carried out by conducting thematic analysis while following the spiral data analysis technique. According to the data analysis spiral technique, data are first collected and organized, readings are made and noted, then they are identified, categorized, interpreted, and presented (Creswell, 2013). Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze, and interpret meaning patterns in qualitative data (Clarke et al., 2015).

The audio recordings, lasted an average of 35 minutes, were converted into Word files using the transcription feature in the Office 365 Word document. The transcripts were then transferred to the MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 (20.4.0) program and the analysis phase began. All data were read individually, and short notes were taken about the opinions of all participants to obtain a general idea about the context and case.

In the coding phase, firstly, the code book containing the definitions of the codes created from the codes noted during the literature review was entered into the system and the matching of the data with these codes was checked. Two researchers performed this process separately. While some codes matched with the data, some new codes emerged. Subsequently, the researchers came together to discuss the first-draft theme, sub-themes, and codes, and the agreement between the coders was checked. It was decided that the level of agreement was 82%, but the themes were too shallow, and the data could be interpreted from a broader perspective by associating them with theories. It was seen that the data were indirectly related to the theories of school climate and holistic approach in education. The themes and codes were reorganized by reviewing the literature on these constructs and focusing on their sub-dimensions. Finally, the data were presented in tables (Creswell, 2013, pp.183-189).

Credibility and Ethics

Creswell (2013, pp. 250-255) suggested several strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative research. There are eight strategies to increase the validity of qualitative research: peer review, explanation of researcher bias, participant checking, expert opinion, rich and simple narratives, negative situational analysis, triangulation and prolonged participation, and continuous observation. While at least two strategies are recommended for application in each study, triangulation, rich narrative, and participant checking are generally preferred because they are easier and more economical.

Explanation of researcher bias, participant checking, rich and simple narration, and peer review were used to ensure the validity of this study. The second researcher worked as a teacher for two years at an İmam Hatip secondary school in a low socioeconomic neighborhood in the central district of Haliliye, Şanlıurfa, where refugee students were also enrolled. Since the researcher also experienced the problems himself, he contributed to the collection of more valid and credible data. To reduce the bias effect, validity and reliability steps were followed.

After the audio recordings were transcribed, they were shown to the participants and verified. While the data were being analyzed and then reported, a peer who is in her thesis period in the master's program in educational administration and a teacher was in constant contact and feedback was received. Rich and simple narrative was also used while reporting the data in the findings section. Participant views on the codes in the relevant themes were frequently included and explanations were made beforehand to enable the reader to comprehend the code. The importance of the codes and their relationships with other codes were also given in these explanations.

To ensure the reliability of this study, audio recordings were clearly taken during each interview. In addition, participants' pauses and repetitions were not interfered with as much as possible during the transcription process. Expressions that could disrupt the fluency or distract the reader's attention were removed for a simple narrative. The first analysis process was carried out separately by the researchers according to the determined codebook. The researchers compared the draft themes, sub-themes and codes and used "yes" and "no" to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with each other's codes. As a result of this evaluation, it was seen that 82% agreement was achieved. Then, the researchers decided on the themes, sub-themes, and codes together (Creswell, 2013, pp. 253-254; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As in every research, this study also has limitations. In particular, since observation and document analysis techniques could not be used while collecting data, triangulation could not be implemented, but it was tried to ensure the satiation of the data by expanding the sample. The research assumes that what the participants stated during the interviews were their own experiences and observations. This assumption was also kept under control. Since the second researcher worked as a teacher under similar conditions with the participants, the reliability of the data collected during the interviews was ensured.

Participants read and signed the Voluntary Participation Form prepared by the researchers. The necessary permission for audio recordings was also obtained through this form. In addition, the ethics committee approval for this study was obtained from the Harran University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee, which convened on 18.11.2022 at 09.30 at the meeting numbered 2022/203.

Findings

Researchers realized that principals have problems in creating a positive school climate in schools where refugee students study. Therefore, themes and sub-themes are identified by addressing the problems while managing schools in the context of school climate. School climate is a multidimensional construct and empirical studies in the field have not yet agreed on the common dimensions and sub-dimensions or even on the measurement tool. Different studies focus on the variables that affect different dimensions of school climate, but sometimes they reach common dimensions even though they have different names (Grazia & Molinari, 2021). Wang and Degol (2016) divided school climate into four dimensions: academic, community, safety and institutional environment and defined these dimensions in general terms. The codes determined in this study are categorized under these four dimensions.

In the academic sub-theme, school principals point out problems related to students' absenteeism, problems in academic success, in teacher motivation and professional development. Principals highlights that students are alienated from school due to reasons such as language, adaptation, family, economic inadequacies leading to child labor, and there are problems in tracking absenteeism due to the lack of an address-based enrollment system.

Table 2. *Problems Faced by School Principals in Creating a Positive School Climate*

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Sub-codes
Problems in School Climate	Academic	Absenteeism	-Students' alienation to school -Parentally condoned absence -Child labor -Problems in tracking absenteeism
		Academic Success	-Problems in learning Turkish -Equivalence certificates -Schools' decreased academic success
		Motivation	- Balancing the tension between environment and school is exhausting for principals -Communication problems affect job performance
	Community	Professional Training	-Lack of qualified in-service training
		Parental Involvement	-Problems in sustaining school-parent partnership
		Communication	-Communication problems with parents -Communication problems with students
	Safety	Discipline	-Problems in classroom management -Conflicts between local and UTP students
		Emotional Safety	-Discrimination by school staff, enviroment and students -Lack of school guidance counseling services

Institutional Problems in -Problems in enrollment
Environment Enrollment and -Not having an address-based
bureaucracy enrollment policy

Most of the participants work in schools in low socio-economic regions. Seasonal labor, literacy rates, the number of family members, and the jobs that parents commonly do were discussed at the beginning of the interviews. The high number of refugee students in these areas, described as slums, also shows that the economic conditions of the families are mostly not enough. During the interviews, principals stated that parents' economic struggles, living conditions, communication problems and cultural differences lead to intentional or involuntary parentally condoned absenteeism. They also stated that in some cases, child labor is also experienced and causes students to be absent. It was stated that students' occasional, frequent or continuous absenteeism for the aforementioned reasons affects students' adaptation, academic success and makes classroom management difficult.

When students' Turkish language proficiency is not at an adequate level, it has effects on their adaptation. Having difficulties in adaptation emerges as problems in classroom management leading getting negative reactions from students and teachers and causing students' alienation to school. Also, peer bullying and relative age are the leading factors of school alienation. Furthermore, principals state that reaching out to absent refugee students is a challenging process and requires a great deal of their time in the management. The reasons that make tracking student absenteeism challenging are the communication problems with refugee parents, not having an address-based enrollment policy and obligation to prove their address, lack of parent contact information in e-school which is an official learning management system used in Türkiye.

PI_VP: "...some of the parents enroll their children in order to get help from the Red Crescent and so on... Students come for three days and don't come for two days. Some of them are in very serious economic struggle. We learned that some of them make their children work as child laborers. Some seasonal laborer students go to different cities for a semester. Or there are students who are absent very often due to the family's lack of interest. In other words, the child comes one day, doesn't come for 2 days, the family doesn't track them, or the family doesn't care whether they come or not..."

While talking about the course and standardized exam achievements of students, participants emphasized that the equivalency certificates received by refugee students do not reflect their actual education level, and that students who cannot even read and write are given equivalency to the secondary school level based only on their age. Principals also associate the lack of academic success with the problems students face while learning Turkish. In the current system, a student who does not receive any Turkish education before starting school must both acquire a new language and succeed in the courses taught in the target language during the education process. Especially in the standardized exams taken in the last year of secondary and high school, students must compete with native Turkish speakers. Since all students take the same exam in school classes, errors in measurement and evaluation are inevitable and refugee students are disadvantaged. It was also stated that when their Turkish proficiency is not sufficient in their classes, the success level of the class decreases. In standardized exams, the academic success of the schools also declines because most of refugee students score low because of language barriers or reasons above. At the end, the community and higher authorities negatively reflect this decline on principals. Principals express this situation as follows;

VTAH2_VP: *"...Since they are not being educated in their mother tongue, they may not understand some subjects. Even our students cannot pass some courses, you put a student who does not speak Turkish into academic exams, not only language exams but also academic exams. The student learns a new language, Turkish, but he also translates the language into biology and solves questions. Inevitably, this causes them to regress a little."*

Qualified professional training programs to meet the learning or social needs of refugee students are inadequate. Even in the interviewed schools with a large number of refugee students, there is no continuous and regular in-service training. Also, some in-service trainings received are not related to the needs in the field and did not go beyond the monologue speeches of the trainer. Principals' views are;

K4_VP: *"None of our teachers have received training on refugees for about two years... I mean, considering that they are included in our system, there should be efforts to include them in the system, at least there should be rational efforts. It is not that there are projects, but I think they are purely for profit."*

SECI_P: *"No, no. For once, one or two Turkish teachers took a training with PIKTES program. Like we were sending them on a kind of vacation then they came, but how useful it was..."*

There are also challenges in parental involvement and communication. It was stated that parents do not monitor their students' education and do not cooperate with the school. Some participants stated that parents' participation in education may be low because they do not speak Turkish or do not have the necessary time due to economic conditions. Participants state that while students somehow learn the language over time, parents have been here for a long time but still cannot or do not learn Turkish.

P1_VP: *"As I said, their financial situation and working conditions are very determinative. Parents who are in a better financial situation and have a certain job cooperate with the school much better. In fact, as I said, if you ask me, I feel that they give more importance to education than other Turkish citizen students. However, if parents have economic struggles, you can't get in touch with them. You call them to school to have a chat on their students but no they don't come."*

School principals also mentioned that there are problems with discipline and emotional safety in the schools. These two codes are discussed in the safety dimension of school climate. In particular, it was stated that students who do not speak Turkish sufficiently may engage in behaviors that may affect classroom management after a while because they cannot understand what the teacher lectures during the lesson. Participants also stated that verbal or physical conflicts between students make it difficult to maintain discipline in the school, but they also emphasized that these conflicts have gradually decreased compared to previous years.

Conflicts are often based on misunderstandings or discrimination due to the influence of the environment. Discrimination or exclusion affect the emotional safety of refugee students. Discrimination is also practiced by school staff and the environment. Students may use exclusionary language such as Turk, Syrian or "Suri" among themselves. For example, while distributing the aid like material support provided by PIKTES, the school principals get reactions consisting of discrimination and exclusion from parents who are Turkish citizens. In most cases, counseling, and guidance services, which are in responsible of ensuring the emotional safety of refugee students in schools, are inadequate. The inability of guidance

counselors to communicate with students and the high number of refugee students cause disruptions in counseling services.

Principals also frequently mentioned problems with enrollment and paperwork at schools. Principals, especially at the secondary school level, stated that they are unable to enter refugee students' parents' information into the e-school system, and that the system does not allow them to do so, which is why they constantly have problems in reaching the parents. In addition, since refugee students do not have to enroll based on address, they can enroll in any school they want, regardless of neighborhood or distance. Some participants mentioned that this leads to absenteeism or problems in getting in touch with parents. It was also mentioned during the interviews that unofficial temporary practices such as not enrolling refugee students by checking their residential addresses or directing them to different schools or asking for proof of residence to keep the number of refugee students in the school in balance.

SEC4_VP: *"The problem is we cannot access the information of the parents, for example, we are trying to enter the contact number of the parent to e-school system, but it does not allow us. Without a phone number, we cannot reach the parents. The child calls the parent to school and that's how we communicate. So, there is a serious problem in e-school. There is no address information or anything like that."*

Participants were asked about the practices carried out in their schools for refugee students or in which they were involved. As it can be seen in Table 3., we realized that schools are not only addressing students' learning needs, such as literacy or language learning, but are also considering students as a whole person. The practices in schools for or involving refugee students are seen to address their social, emotional, learning, and economic needs. Some participants also emphasized that they try to create an inclusive educational environment in their schools. The participants stated that they try to include refugee students in various activities by making affirmative action, when necessary, without excluding them. Also, the participants stated that they indirectly express the need for inclusive education in meetings or in various environments in the school.

Table 3. *The Conducted Practices in Schools*

Theme	Sub-themes	Code
	Students' Social Needs	-Activities to increase social adaptation
	Students' Emotional Needs	-Trying to improve parental involvement -Supporting orphan students
Holistic Approach in Education	Students' Learning Needs	-Opening literacy courses -Adaptation classes -Turkish language course - Supplementary education -Early childhood education

Students' Economic Needs -Donations
- Stationery support for refugee students

PI_P: *"It is all about principals and vice principals. If they think "why did these refugees come or they are all bad people", teachers start to think in that way, too. But if they try to empathize, love the children, not exclude them, adapt to them as well, all school principals won't experience any problems. Then, refugee students can integrate themselves easily into the system."*

Participants stated that they organize various activities to increase the social adaptation of all students in the school. These activities are not only for refugee students, but in some cases affirmative action is taken for the participation of refugee students. With the cultural and art activities such as sports competitions, trips, cinema, theater, etc., they aim to promote acculturation among students. Some participants observed that such activities that enable students to socialize increase adaption among students and emphasized the importance of this with excitement. They highlighted the importance of the social adaptation activities in reducing the problems experienced in their schools.

VTAH2_VP: *"While the children could not get along with each other even though they are in the same class, after they started to sweat with the same jersey in the school team, after they started training, this time they started to chat with each other by putting their hands on each other's shoulders, they started to spend time with each other after school. They started to get along with each other. They moved from conflict to a friendship."*

IHSS2_VP: *"For example, they have a local dish called "kepse". Refugee students and some of our students brought their local food and tasted different tastes of cultures. Also, we ordered that food in teacher's day and ate all together as school staff to see different cultures... We assigned two Turkish students and two refugee students to a teacher and said, "You will do activities with them." We tried to break down the prejudice."*

There are also practices addressing the emotional needs of refugee students. School principals stated that they aim to increase the involvement of refugee parents in the school by organizing family visits with teachers and meeting with parents individually, either remotely or face-to-face. Especially through family visits, principals and teachers experience the lives and cultures of the students. The principals expressed how entering into their lives and sharing their feelings under the same roof led to positive changes in students' behaviors in the following comments. Also, participants highlight that many students are orphans. Orphan students have a more difficult time adapting to school, but again, economic support such as home visits or donations are used to help the students to be included in the school and to facilitate the adaptation process. Nevertheless, some principals say that they cannot do enough, and that the ministry should work for these students.

VTAH2_VP: *"We see their conditions. We get closer and closer to them, so the closed doors are slowly starting to be open to us. In other words, both parents and students start to have a slightly warmer attitude towards the teacher or the school administration in the following time. This inevitably affects the success of the student in a positive way."*

The courses organized by the PİKTES project in schools are also among the activities that address the learning needs of refugee students. Literacy courses, adaptation classes in primary schools, Turkish language courses, early childhood education in the summer and supplementary

education are offered to students. Some participants stated that they try to meet the needs of students by opening voluntary courses outside school hours with their own resources.

PI_VP: *"Within the program of PİKTES, we have adaptation and supplementary education. Students who spend the third grade in the adaptation class cannot achieve the normal learning outcomes of the third grade, so when they move to the fourth grade, they are given the lessons of the third grade under the name of supplementary education."*

As for the economic needs of students, schools do not have the opportunity to provide large amounts of aid to families, but some participants stated that donations collected within the school are used to help families. The material needs of the students are tried to be met by distributing stationery aid from the PİKTES project to refugee students.

IHSS2_VP: *"When stationery aid comes to them, we already give them all of it. When we have extra materials left over, we can distribute them to other Turkish citizen students who are in need sometimes."*

During the interviews, we asked the question "If you were in a position with more authority in your hands, what kind of practices would you carry out for the refugee students in education?" to school principals and tried to find out their recommendations. When the collected data are analyzed, it is realized that the recommendations are focused on students' learning, emotional and social needs as well as institutional concerns. The findings are presented in Table 4. below.

In the institutional recommendations sub-theme, the participants recommended more interpreter support to schools, the enrollment of refugee students should be based on residency address and equal ratios in schools, and lastly, qualified in-service professional trainings for school staff.

Table 4. *School Principals' Recommendations for the Problems They Experience in Schools*

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Recommendations	Institutional	-More interpreter support to schools -The enrollment of students should be based on their residency address -Equal refugee student ratios among schools -Qualified in-service professional trainings for school staff
	Learning	-Differentiated assessment and evaluation -Policies and practices to increase Turkish language learning
	Emotional	-Practices to meet needs of parents and family education -Practices to promote well-beings of orphan students
	Social	-Policies and practices to support acculturation among students and parents

P2_P: "Interpreters need to be provided. I also really wanted Arabic-speaking, educational interpreters to be provided. This is also insufficient. When 1,500 students were given 1-2 master trainers, also, there were no criteria for the selection of master trainers. They did not know the Arabic language either."

Family education and identifying and addressing the needs of orphan students are recommendations for students' emotional needs. For students' social needs, practices that increase acculturation and social adaptation should be supported. Refugee parents should support the education and help them during students' adaptation period. However, despite this, the low number of Turkish-speaking refugee parents poses a problem. Therefore, education programs for parents are recommended to improve students' well-being. Also, orphan students should be identified, and their psychological well-being should be closely monitored.

P1_P: "The most difficult thing for me is orphan refugee students. Now they tell us, but they don't have a proper document. There is really nothing clear about whether the father is dead or not. I mean, I said there are 40 of them, but there is no father because the teacher says I don't see him. But we don't know if he is dead, missing, or somewhere else, or if there is something else, or if they are hiding it. There is a lack of clarity and tracking."

In the last sub-theme, recommendations for social needs, some participants stated that there should be more activities in schools to increase acculturation and social adaptation. It was expressed that the necessary environment should be provided for students to create awareness about each other's cultures. There should be bilateral cultural awareness rather than just refugee students learning Turkish culture. In addition, more social activities should be organized in schools and students should be allowed to socialize. In this way, the participants stated that the social adaptation of all students could increase. Opinions on this issue are as follows;

SEC1_P: Activities can be organized for cultures to get to know each other better. Food culture, a culture of life, for example, we don't know these. Maybe because we are a little bit alienated and a little bit distant. We need to try to understand them a little bit rather than telling them about ourselves and telling them to follow us. We have always waited for them to understand us..."

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

When other studies examining the problems experienced by school administrators working in schools where refugee students study are examined, it is seen that there are similar findings in the literature. Problems related to communication, discipline, school attendance, school-family partnership, academic success, child labor and meeting the needs of orphan students, student motivation, motivation and job satisfaction of teachers, school perception of the environment, exclusion, enrollment problems, adaptation classes and guidance services have become common findings of many studies (Ağdalyan, 2021; Akyavuz et al, 2020; Alkalay, 2020; Altunay & Dede, 2019; Bucak, 2021; Demir et al., 2020; Eren, 2019; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021; Levent & Çayak, 2017; Silgan, 2022; Songür & Olgun, 2020).

In the 12 years between 2011, when migration to Türkiye first started, and 2023, when this study was conducted, communication problems are still being experienced in the 17 schools in Şanlıurfa, and this is the most frequent finding in other studies. The added value of the project,

formerly known as the Project for the Integration of Syrian Students into the Turkish Education System and now known as the Project for the Promotion of Inclusive Education for Children in the Turkish Education System (PIKTES), should be reconsidered in schools. As stated by some participants in this study, there is a need to conduct inspections on the efficiency of the adaptation classes, Turkish courses, and supplementary education and how they are implemented or not implemented in the schools. In terms of the communication problem, some participants emphasized that communication problems with students have decreased since the students were born and raised in Türkiye and started primary school, but there are still problems in communicating with parents, which highlights the issues that need to be addressed.

Another common problem, which is also a finding of this study, is the frequent or continuous absenteeism of refugee students, which affects their adaptation process, language learning and academic success. In other studies (Ağdalyan, 2021; Alkalay, 2020; Altunay & Dede, 2019; Songür & Olgun, 2020), both school principals and researchers have reported that absenteeism and school dropout is a common phenomenon among refugee students. The underlying reason may be that economic difficulties and communication problems make it difficult for families to collaborate with the school. In addition, the fact that children support the livelihood of families by working as child laborers (Harunoğulları, 2016; Sallan Gül et al., 2019) may be another reason for absenteeism. Again, discipline and emotional safety problems may also cause students to alienate from school and cause absenteeism.

According to the participants, the phenomenon of absenteeism in refugee students can also turn into school dropout. According to Rumberger (2011), school dropout has two factors: individual and contextual. Rumberger (2011) states that absenteeism, discipline problems, low academic success, change of residency address, and change of school are strong predictors of school dropout in individual factors, while family education level, economic income, school resources and characteristics are strong predictors of school dropout in contextual factors. Van Eck et al. (2017) also found that students with average and negative school climate perceptions had higher chronic absenteeism compared to students with positive perceptions.

Low academic achievement, disciplinary problems, frequent change of residency address, low educational level and economic income of the family may lead to school dropout, as stated by the participants. While the enrolment rate of pre-school (5 years old) is 34.34%, primary school is 75.13%, secondary school is 80% and finally high school is 42.65% (MoNE, 2022) is already quite low, absenteeism or dropout of schooled students may affect language learning and social adaptation of children.

Both in the findings of this study and in other studies, it was stated that refugee families have problems in participating in school and monitoring their students. Low Turkish proficiency and low socio-economic level have been stated as reasons that make family participation difficult (Celik et al., 2021; Eren, 2019; Karaagac et al., 2022; Khansa & Bahous, 2021; Kotluk & Aydin, 2021; Silgan, 2022; Songür & Olgun, 2020). Similarly, in their study with immigrant Chinese families, Ji and Koblinsky (2009) reported that families have high academic expectations, but only half of the families have information about the student's school performance. It was also reported that they do not participate in decision-making processes or collaborations in schools. Language barriers, workload and economic concerns were mentioned as barriers to parental involvement.

The community formed through relationships and partnerships among school stakeholders is an important determinant in creating a positive school climate. The establishment of positive

interpersonal relationships depends on mutual support, trust, respect and caring (Wang & Degol, 2016). The difficulty of refugee families to communicate with teachers, school administrators and other stakeholders, or the impossibility of establishing communication when they do, causes the family to be isolated from education. As the participants noted, this can lead to alienation of the family and students who are in the process of adapting to a different culture. However, family involvement improves the school climate and increases students' academic achievement and attendance (Haynes et al., 1989). It is thought that language trainings, family education, inclusive activities that will increase school participation, and eliminating economic concerns will have a positive effect on the attendance problems and academic achievement of refugee students.

Participants are conducting practices in their schools that address the social, emotional, learning, and economic needs of refugee students. There are studies in the literature that support this holistic approach to meet all the needs of refugee students. In the educational integration process of refugee students in schools, not only their learning needs but also their social and emotional needs need to be met by the school (Cerna, 2019). In schools where refugee students study, normal systems cannot respond to the complex and special needs of refugee students, so all the needs of students should be taken into consideration by centering the holistic approach model in schools (Arnot & Pinson, 2005). As school principals have repeatedly stated, the presence of orphans, child labor, and the process of family and student adaptation to a new culture and language show that educational issues are not the only needs of students.

In their study, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) state that comprehensive support systems are established in schools that carry out the educational processes of refugee students with a holistic approach. Within the scope of the support system, studies are carried out to address the learning, social and emotional needs of students and their families. In addition, funds established within the school and district try to meet the material and other basic needs of students. Furthermore, like the findings in our study, teachers stay in support centers after school to provide supplementary education, school principals and teachers interact with the refugee community and organize social activities in collaboration.

Also, in the School Support Program and its practices in the schools, focusing on the learning, social and emotional needs of students with a holistic approach and provides collaboration with schools and institutions in the region (Block et al., 2014), the provision of psycho-social support and understanding cultural differences, interpreter support, increasing parental involvement, compensating for learning gaps, and meeting the needs of students and families by collaborating with schools and institutions are similar findings to our study.

Refugee students' learning needs should not be the only focus in schools. In disadvantaged areas where this study was conducted, language learning is not the only need of refugee students. They need continuous, supervised, inclusive and non-alienating psycho-social support. In places with low socio-economic status, meeting the social needs of students is already limited and refugee students are even more disadvantaged. For this reason, schools should be turned into a social center with the cooperation of parents and activities that will increase social adaptation in the neighborhood should be organized. The activities that address the social, emotional and economic needs of students should focus on the concepts of inclusion, acculturation and cultural awareness.

Participants provide recommendations for students' learning, social, emotional needs, and institutional recommendations. The recommendations are mostly similar to the findings of

studies in the literature. In the literature, it is often suggested by stakeholders to conduct practices to solve the problem of communication with parents and students. In addition, the need to empower teachers through in-service trainings and to provide psycho-social support to students through cultural activities were repeatedly mentioned. Recommendations for institutional or structural problems such as enrollment and equivalency certificates of refugee students also come to the fore (Akyavuz et al., 2020; Alkalay, 2020; Celik et al., 2021; Eren, 2019; Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021; Levent & Çayak, 2017; Silgan, 2022).

While some school principals and teachers advocate for refugee students to be educated in separate schools (Alkalay, 2020; Levent & Çayak, 2017), there are also those who argue that education programs should be more inclusive for various student profiles and students should develop intercultural skills by providing necessary material support (Celik et al., 2021). It has also been suggested that curricula should be organized according to multicultural education and a system should be designed so that students do not be assimilated (Hallaçlı & Gül, 2021).

One of the underlying causes of all the problems is communication, and this is due to the lack of long-term planning and monitoring of policies for refugee students. The PİKTES project tries to provide refugee students with opportunities for learning and some fundamental material needs in schools. The added value of PİKTES supplementary and Turkish language courses in schools cannot be determined due to the lack of measurement tools. Turkish proficiency exams at school level should be administered consistently and regularly to all refugee students across provinces. Communication problems with both parents and students should be minimized.

As a result, school principals state that the problems have decreased compared to the first years of migration and that the adaptation of students is increasing day by day. As most of the students were born in Turkey and started their preschool and primary education in Turkey, it is stated that the communication problems with the students have started to be overcome. However, this is not the case for parents. It is repeatedly stated both in this study and in the literature that there are still communication problems with the parents of refugee students, that there is a resistance or barrier to Turkish language learning and that there is no solution to this problem at the school level.

The problems in all four dimensions of school climate are: academic, community, safety, and institutional environment. Especially the problems experienced in the absenteeism code of the academic dimension are quite critical. In schools in disadvantaged regions, child labor and alienation of students from school are reported. It has been revealed that absenteeism cannot be monitored by school principals and teachers, and some parents do not collaborate with the school by turning a blind eye to this situation either intentionally or out of choice. In addition, it is also stated that the practices carried out in schools to address the needs of refugee students are left to the decision of the school administration and teachers. In some schools, inclusive activities and activities that increase acculturation and social adaptation are carried out, while some schools are far from organizing social activities due to lack of resources or high number of students. The views of the participants revealed that education is not the only need of students, and that a holistic approach is needed to address the social, emotional, learning, and economic needs of students.

Both from literature and our study, we can provide some suggestions for practitioners as well as researchers. Schools may:

- identify the Turkish proficiency level of all refugee students in the school by conducting valid tests.
- determine the level of absenteeism among refugee students and underlying reasons behind it. The absenteeism leads to learning losses and students can't keep up with the school and leading school dropout eventually.
- not focus on only academic needs. Students' emotional and social needs also should be considered. The number of orphan students and their emotional needs should be tracked by school counselors.
- constantly analyze the school climate, students' belonging to school and their well-beings.

The researchers may:

- focus on holistic approach to respond refugee students' needs in Türkiye.
- analyze the factors effecting the school climate in schools with refugee students with large samples.
- delve into the lives of students and parents in their communities and try to extract culturally responsive teaching ideas to implement in schools.
- investigate the parents' needs and expectations from both students and schools.

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