What Do School Principals Think about Refugee Students? Experienced Problems and Possible Solutions

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ABSTRACT

This research is a qualitative case study that examines the problems experienced by school principals in the Reyhanli district of Hatay Province in the education of Syrian students and their possible solutions. The sample of the research consists of the principals of 12 schools with the highest number of Syrian students in the Reyhanli district of Hatay Province, using the criterion sampling technique. The data related to the research were obtained from the answers given to the questions prepared by the researcher. The data were subjected to content analysis and results were obtained under two main headings *(Problems Experienced with Syrian Students in Secondary Schools and Solution Suggestions for Syrian Students' Problems)* and 4 themes *(communicative, disciplinary, psychological and sociological)*. According to the results obtained, school principals stated that they had problems in communication (specifically, *the language problem*) and discipline, student and parents' adaptation to school, and identity information confusion in the e-school in the schools where they work. School principals stated that these problems stemmed from the deteriorated population structure in Reyhanli, and for this reason, reducing the Syrian population in Reyhanli by evenly distributing it to other provinces and districts may be the solution. They suggested that it would be beneficial to increase the number of Turkish courses, the number of Turkish lessons and at the same time cultural adaptation activities to solve the language problem. In the sociological dimension, a proposal was made for the integration of e-school with the population directorate.

Key words: Refugee Student, Syrian Student, School Principal, Refugee Education

INTRODUCTION

The "Arab Spring", a regional, social and political movement that emerged from the Arab peoples' demands for democracy, freedom and human rights in 2010, caused a civil war to start in Syria on January 26, 2011 (Aksoy, 2012; Hadzieva, 2022; Yagmur, 2013). Due to this civil war that started in Syria, Syrian citizens, who did not have a safety of life, decided to take refuge in the Republic of Turkey, the closest country to them (Gullupinar, 2012). Even though some of the people chose to stay and fight against the current regime in the civil war in Syria, women and children suffered the most in this war. Societies that have been subjected to forced migration as a result of events such as war, genocide, etc., have started to hold on to life by meeting their mandatory needs in the settlements they have gone to (Demir, 2021; Deniz, 2014).

The harmony and integration of societies with different cultures, customs and languages is a very important issue (Akinci et al., 2015). Education plays a major role in ensuring this integration (Colak & Iseri, 2022; Yigit et al., 2021). This research aims to put forward the adaptation of Syrian students to the Turkish education system and the problems and solution suggestions in our schools in this process from the point of view of school principals.

Since the beginning of the civil war in March 2011, increasing number of Syrian citizens have come to Turkey to seek international protection (Icduygu & Aksel, 2012). Our country provides temporary protection status for these people (Erol & Ersever, 2014; Kartal & Basci, 2014; Topaloglu, 2022).

The rapid increase in human rights violations in Syria since 2012 has brought about dramatic increases in humanitarian aid needs (Kartal & Akbay, 2022). The Republic of Turkey, which has strong historical, cultural and neighborhood ties with Syria has followed an "Open Door policy" for Syrian citizens affected by this situation since the beginning of the internal turmoil (Boyraz, 2015; Cicekli, 2014; Gunay et al., 2017). Turkey has hosted 256,971 foreigners in 26 accommodation centers established in 10 cities due to the migration waves that occurred because of this humanitarian crisis (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2020).

The number of Syrians under temporary protection status registered in Turkey is 3,754,591 as of 24.03.2022

(Ministry of Interior, Presidency of Migration Management, [GIGM], 2022). 1,785,690 of these people are children between the ages of 0-18. 2,661,090 is the total of children and women aged 0-18 (The UN Refugee Agency, 2022). As of 24.03.2022, the number of Syrians living in camps (temporary shelter) is 50,873. The number of Syrians living in cities was announced as 3,703,718. 98.7% of Syrians live in cities (GIGM, 2022).

The number of Syrians living in Hatay is in the top three among 36 provinces with a total of 432,987 people (Harunogullari & Cengiz, 2015). The fact that the civil war in Syria has not ended in the 10-year period has strengthened the possibility that there will be no return, and the integration of the two communities has become vital (Bolukbas & Keskin, 2010; Gurel, 2001). Education is the most important factor in this integration (Halef & Gocen, 2022; Ozdogru et al., 2021).

In the first years, Syrian children received education in the temporary education centers (TEC) established within the camps, and as of 2016-2017, because of the gradual closure of the temporary education centers, students were started to be registered in public schools starting from the first, fifth and ninth grades (Bozan et al., 2022).

Purpose of the Research

The aim of this research is to describe the problems faced by the school principals in the "schools with the highest number of Syrian students" in the Reyhanli district of Hatay and the solution suggestions for these problems.

Research Questions

For a better articulation and organization of the research study, the following questions are used:
1. What are the problems faced by the principals in secondary schools where Syrian students are densely populated?
2. What are the solution suggestions developed by the principals for the problems they experience in secondary schools where Syrian students are densely populated?

METHOD

Research Pattern

This research, which aims to determine the problems faced by the secondary school principals where Syrian students receive education and the solutions to these problems, was carried out using the case study pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. A case study examines and describes a limited situation in depth. In addition, case studies help us to see the same event in detail, enabling us to develop explanations and evaluate events (Merriam, 2013). In this study, a case study design was used in order to "describe" the problems that secondary school principals face with Syrian students. "Case study research begins with identifying a particular case" (Creswell, 2013, p.98). Creswell stated that the key point here is that the situation can be limited and defined

in the form of a particular time and place. In this research, "problems in schools with the highest number of Syrian students and solution suggestions for this situation" were handled and examined as a special case.

Participants

The school principals participating in the study group were selected with the criterion sampling technique, which is one of the purposeful sampling techniques. Criterion sample meets predetermined criteria. The researcher can create the criterion concept or criteria here, or it can be in the form of a ready-made list of criteria (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). In this research, the schools with the highest number of Syrian students in the schools in Reyhanli district of Hatay Province were determined as the criteria for the selection of the interviewed school principals. These schools were ranked according to the current population of Syrian students, and as the interviews continued, the data began to repeat one another (saturation point) until the 12th school principal. All of these schools are secondary schools.

In the research, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 12 school principals in the Reyhanli district of Hatay Province, Turkey, in line with the determined criteria, by stating the importance of working with the school principals and taking into account the volunteerism. Participants were coded as SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4, SP5, SP6, SP7, SP8, SP9, SP10, SP11, SP12. "SP" refers to the word School Principal, and "1" refers to the order.

Table 1 shows that all of the school principals are male, with professional seniority between 8-30 years and seniority at school between 2-14 years. When the percentages regarding the number of Syrian students in schools are examined, it can be seen that the entire population of a school consists of Syrian students. In line with the data obtained from the school principals, it was determined that the number of Syrian students in the four schools was 71%, 67%, 55% and 51% respectively, which is more than half of the total school size. There are six schools where the number of Syrian students is less than half of the total number of the school.

Data Collection Tool

The research was carried out using semi-structured interview technique, one of the qualitative data collection methods. In this technique, the interviewer has the right to ask questions that he has prepared beforehand, without going out of the subject and field, and he also has the right to ask additional questions in order to get more information (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008).

While creating the interview form in the research, a preliminary interview was conducted with 2 school principals who have Syrian students in their schools, and the problem titles were determined and these data were turned into questions by taking the opinions of expert researchers. The interview form created by the researcher took its final form at the end of these processes. Finally, a three-part interview form consisting of informed consent, participant information

Table 1. Descriptive Information for School Principals

Participant Number	Gender	Professional seniority	Seniority at the School	The Percentage of Syrian Students
SP2	Male	12	2	100
SP4	Male	30	8	71
SP9	Male	24	14	67
SP3	Male	9	7	55
SP1	Male	18	7	55
SP7	Male	8	4	51
SP8	Male	24	8	48
SP6	Male	14	6	46
SP5	Male	15	2	42
SP10	Male	20	2	30
SP11	Male	15	6	30
SP12	Male	17	7	28

(gender, educational background and seniority information) and interview questions (2 basic questions) was created.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected in the period of March 2022. A draft interview form was prepared before collecting the data. The prepared draft interview form questions were examined in detail by two faculty members who are experts in qualitative research methods. In line with the expert opinion, the interview questions were reshaped. In order to obtain information about the quality and efficiency of the questions in the interview form, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher with the teachers who were not among the participants. The data obtained during the pilot application process was only used in the shaping of the interview form. As a result of the pilot application, the questions in the interview form were rearranged by considering language and expression, fluency, meaning and context. *A semi-structured interview form* used in case studies was used in the research. The semi-structured interview form was preferred in order to examine in depth the reasons underlying the answers given by the participants during the interview and to ask new questions to the participants depending on the process.

In the research, 2 questions in the interview form were asked to the participants. During the interviews, additional explanatory questions such as "what do you mean, can you give an example, did you mean that" were asked to the participants in order to examine the superficial parts in depth and to understand them better. The interviews were conducted with each participant separately and face to face. Semi-structured interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. A total of 360 minutes of interviews were conducted.

Data Analysis

In this section, information on how the data was analyzed, how the coding, categorization and thematization were made, how the themes were named, and validity-reliability are included. In this section, the validity and reliability of the

research is indicated by the systematic analysis of the data. It is not given under a separate heading.

The data obtained as a result of face-to-face interviews in the research were analyzed using the content analysis method. Both inductive and deductive methods were used and applied in data analysis. First, the written data was deciphered and then thematic analysis was started. The thematic analysis stages can be summarized as follows: First, before the raw data were coded, the interview forms were read over and over by two different researchers in the field of education, who knew the qualitative analysis process, without skipping any details. In addition, the dimensions that are important within the scope of the purpose of the research were determined and the meaning of each dimension was found. In the coding, the words and concepts expressed by the participants were tried to be used as codes as much as possible. However, when the words and concepts used by the participants were insufficient in the coding process, other concepts that could best express the situation/thought were used as codes by the researcher.

Line by line analysis approach expressed by Patton (2014) was used in coding the data. Sometimes a word, phrase or sometimes a sentence constituted a unit for data analysis. Direct quotations are included in order to clearly reflect the views of the participants. The codings made separately by two different researchers were then combined and compared, and it was seen that approximately 93% of the consistence was achieved. The consensus among these coders was considered as the internal consistency rate of the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The coding took its final form when the data started to repeat and the saturation point was reached (Charmaz, 2006). All codes were first expressed under subcategories, then categories, and themes were created. The data were classified in such a way that they were compatible with each other, and subcategories were determined in this way.

The deductive method was used in the main title/dimensions section where the results were presented. In line with the purpose of the research, the Problems Experienced for Syrian Students in Secondary Schools and Solution Suggestions for the Problems of Syrian Students were determined as the main

headings that the themes would be associated with while the data were being analyzed. These main titles were determined as the main framework in which the themes were included at the beginning of the data analysis.

The inductive method, on the other hand, was applied during the determination of the themes. Accordingly, 4 themes (communicative, disciplinary, psychological and sociological) were formed under the main headings. These themes were named entirely based on the data obtained from the opinions of the participants. These 4 themes emerged primarily from the problems experienced in schools, and then they were also used under the heading of solution suggestions stated by the participants for the problems. Thus, the 4 themes that emerged in the research were used in parallel with each other in terms of both problems experienced at school and solution suggestions. For example, the solution suggestion stated in the communicative theme is given as a solution suggestion for the problem experienced in the communicative theme *(Experienced Problems/ Theme 1: Communicative; Solution suggestion/Theme 1: Communicative)*.

After the first draft was finished, the analysis was re-examined, and the repetitive or incompatible themes and categories were reclassified. Hence, a structure consisting of two main themes and four categories emerged in the research. Direct quotations are included in order to prove how the obtained codes, categories and themes are named. At the end of the data analysis processes, each theme was prepared as a table *(direct quotation-code-subcategory-category-theme)* and presented as an appendix.

Participant Validation

After the face-to-face interviews of the 12 school principals who participated in the research were transcribed, they were read to them and their confirmation was received. Some of the participants made some corrections in their statements. Mostly the statements are affirmed. All of the participants were reached during the coding process, and which expressions were coded and how they were coded were sent to them in writing via e-mail and WhatsApp. Participants reviewed the code lists and gave a short (that's right/I didn't mean it) feedback. In this way, external reliability was ensured.

Position of the Researcher

The researcher has worked as a school principal and teacher in primary schools in different geographical regions in Turkey that have different cultures. The researcher has 5 years of school experience. Therefore, he has knowledge about the teacher and student environment. At the same time, he has been giving graduate-level courses to school principals and teachers in the field of educational administration for about 12 years and has been constantly working with school principals. The researcher also had the opportunity to communicate with the school principals continuously while the data were being collected. He is currently teaching in the classrooms with Syrian students at the university.

RESULTS

In this part of the research, the results about the problems that the school principals experienced with Syrian students and the solution suggestions for these problems are included. The results are presented and explained under two main headings *(Problems Experienced with Syrian Students in Secondary Schools and Solution Suggestions for Syrian Students' Problems)* under these main headings as themes.

Problems Experienced with Syrian Students in Schools

Under this heading, the problems that school principals experience in their schools related to Syrian students are presented and explained as sub-headings under the themes. The problems encountered by school principals were analyzed as a total of 4 themes *(communicative, disciplinary, psychological and sociological)*. Each theme was handled as a dimension of the problems experienced with Syrian students.

Experienced problems/theme 1: Communicative

It has been determined that there are three different categories in the communicative theme: *language problem, culture and expectation* and there are sub-categories such as *not knowing Turkish, not being able to communicate, harmony and difference* and 11 codes (Appendix 1). *The language problem* category was classified into two different sub-categories as "not knowing Turkish" and "not being able to communicate". Considering the results regarding the problems experienced in *the language problem* category, it was seen that all of the school principals expressed a common opinion that the students did not know Turkish and that this situation led to communicative problems and cultural conflicts largely. It has been determined that some students do not realize that they should learn the Turkish language, but they expect the school staff to learn the Arabic language. Some principals stated that the translators sent to the schools prevented them from learning Turkish. However, it is seen that the SP6 coded school principal expressed the opposite opinion. *Culture* category has been classified into two subcategories as "harmony" and "difference". In this category, the adaptation problem and cultural differences of Syrian students at schools were emphasized the most. In the *expectation* category, it is noteworthy that Syrian students expect those at school to learn Arabic. The school principal with the code SP9 expressed this expectation.

Experienced problems/theme 2: Disciplinary

In the disciplinary theme, there are 4 categories: *indiscipline, classroom management, school rules and academic success* and 13 codes (Appendix 2). In the category of *indiscipline*, the code of undisciplined behavior draws attention the most. It is seen that Syrian students have problems and cause problems in being disciplined in schools. This situation brought along behavioral disorders and it was stated that they "grouped among themselves" in a school (SP1, SP11).

The main source of disciplinary problems was considered as "cultural difference".

In the *classroom management* category, the code of making classroom management difficult was frequently mentioned. This situation has brought the problem of non-compliance with the classroom order to the agenda. Syrian students make this cultural difference feel in the classroom. A school principal (SP4) also mentioned that the motivation of the teachers who had difficulties in classroom management decreased.

In the category of *school rules*, it has been determined that Syrian students do not obey the school rules. All of the school principals expressed this situation. All of the school principals stated that the non-compliance of the Syrian students with the school rules and the disciplinary problems they experienced stemmed from not understanding the Turkish language. The school principals with the code SP2, SP3, SP4, SP6, SP8, SP10, SP12 stated that these problems were caused by cultural conflict.

According to school principals, Syrian students have the most difficulty in "understanding the lessons" in the *academic success* category. This situation stands out as the most frequently mentioned academic problem in the classroom. After that, it was stated that the academic incompetence of the students and the language problem negatively affected their academic success.

Experienced problems/theme 3: Psychological

School principals also emphasized that there is a "psychological dimension" in their school regarding Syrian students. Principals stated that Syrian students psychologically exhibit behaviors in three sub-categories as *aggression*, *violence* and *exclusion* at school and in the *negative* category as 5 codes (Appendix 3). They expressed the behavior of aggression as "insistence on not obeying the rules". They explained violent behavior as "proneness to violence" and "desire to solve their problems through violence". Three school principals considered aggression separately from violent behavior. They observed the behavior of exclusion as "feeling of alienation" and "feeling of being left out". These results indicate that Syrian students are psychologically prone to negative behaviors. Their refusal to obey the rules (f=6) was determined to be predominantly observed code. School principals mostly stated the codes of tendency to violence (f=5) and feeling of exclusion (f=3) in this theme, respectively.

Experienced problems/theme 4: Sociological

In the theme called sociological, only the *personal data* category was determined. This category has been classified into three sub-categories: *identity document, parent and MEB- general directorate of population* integration (Appendix 4). In the *identity document* sub-category, the Turkish identity numbers and name-surname problems of Syrian students were expressed as the most emphasized and repeated code. It was mentioned that the students had more than one TR identity number. In addition, it was determined that school principals had problems due to the confusion experienced during the acquisition process of Syrian students to Turkish citizenship. In the parent sub-category, it was stated that there were problems in accessing the information about the parents. This problem is due to the fact that parents' information can't be found in the e-school system. It has been mentioned that the information of Syrian students in the e-school and population directorate does not match and that there are problems in the integration sub-category of the *Ministry of National Education-General Directorate of Population*. This sub-category stands out as the most emphasized problem. Apart from this, a school principal (SP8) stated that Syrian students had problems with the grades and equivalence they received in their own country. The school principal stated that this problem was due to integration and associated it with the personal data problem.

Possible Solutions for the Problems of Syrian Students

Under this heading, possible solutions for the problems faced by school principals in their schools regarding Syrian students are presented and explained under 4 themes, 10 categories and 25 codes (Appendix 5). The possible solutions for the problems experienced by the school principals were examined in terms of *communicative, disciplinary, psychological and sociological* dimensions, respectively. Each theme was handled as a dimension of the school principals' possible solutions for the problems they experienced with Syrian students.

Possible solution/theme 1: Communicative

It has been determined that there are two different categories such as *language teaching and culture* and 9 codes in the communicative theme. In the *language teaching* category, "teaching Turkish" to Syrian students has come to the fore. It has been stated that the number of "Turkish courses" should be increased and these courses should be carried out by translators assigned by the Ministry. Some school principals stated that Syrian students should not be admitted to schools without passing the Turkish language proficiency exam. They expressed this suggestion as "language proficiency requirement".

In the *culture* category, it was emphasized that they should adopt the Turkish language and culture. It has been stated that this adoption can be achieved through "introducing Turkish customs and traditions". Some school principals stated that the "international harmonization program" should be implemented as a suggestion.

Possible solution/theme 2: Disciplinary

In the disciplinary theme, four different categories and 8 codes were determined as *student, parent, school and class*. In the category of *student and parent*, the most emphasized code was "adaptation program". One school principal (SP5) mentioned the need to impose "sanctions on Syrian students who are absent".

Almost all of the school principals stated that the rules determined in schools should be clearer and stricter in order

to solve the problems experienced in the *school* category. While the SP1 coded school principal stated that the determined school rules should be given both verbally and in writing in both languages, the SP6 coded school principal expressed the importance of giving seminars on the Turkish language.

The most emphasized code in the *class* category is the creation of "orientation classes". SP3 and SP8 coded school principals stated the necessity of adaptation process and integration classes regarding classroom rules and disciplinary problems. It has been stated that the orientation classes to be created in this direction will enable students to adapt to the culture and the system. The need for frequent repetition of the rules in the classroom is a solution suggested by the school principals.

Possible solution/theme 3: Psychological

In the theme called psychological, two different categories as *student* and *parent* and 4 codes were determined. In the *student* category, it was stated that "professional psychological support" should be given to Syrian students the most. A school principal (SP3) also mentioned that Syrian students should be encouraged to engage in sports activities at school.

In the category of *parent*, school principals emphasized that Syrian students' parents should be provided with psychological support. Some school principals mentioned that education should be provided in public education centers. In this theme, the proposal to provide psychological support to Syrian students and their parents for their feelings of exclusion and their tendency to violence came to the fore.

Possible solution/theme 4: Sociological

In the theme called sociological, two different categories and 4 codes were determined as *off-system* and *settlement*. In the category called "off-system", three school principals (SP4, SP8, SP9) stated that "they should return to their homes in a controlled manner" and one school principal (SP8) stated that "they should be excluded from the Turkish education system" in order to solve the problems they experience in schools. A school principal (SP6) also stated that "Temporary Education Centers (TEC) should be reopened". In the category called *settlement*, all school principals presented the need for "Population Directorate and National Education Directorates to work more collaborated" as a solution. A need for integration has emerged. In the sociological dimension, school principals expressed the suggestion that "Syrian students should either return to their countries or government should make a serious settlement integration" for Syrian students.

DISCUSSION

The first noteworthy result in this research is the presence of a significant proportion of Syrian students in secondary schools. The fact that the hinterland was not taken into account during the registration of Syrian students caused a density in some schools (Bal et al., 2021). As a result of

the observations of the researcher, it was determined that some school principals did not enroll Syrian students in their schools, using the quota as an excuse. It is clearly seen that the school principals who made this practice took the initiative and acted contrary to the orders of the authorities. Because while isolating their own schools from Syrian students, this behavior has turned other schools into a center of problem As a result of this attitude, the density of Syrian students increased in some schools and even reached 100% in one of the schools in the study group of this research. School principals have a leading role in the education of refugees. Okilwa et al. (2022) found that school principals have roles in instructional leadership and creating a positive climate in refugee education.

The results of a study conducted in Lebanon on the opinions of school principals about Syrian refugee students confirm and support the results of this research. According to this study, school principals in Lebanon deal with four general challenges (spatial, socio-emotional, cultural and academic) related to Syrian refugees at school (Mahfouz et al., 2020).

According to the results of the research, the biggest problem experienced with Syrian students in the schools examined is the language problem. This language problem emerged as "not knowing Turkish". Celik et al. (2021) also revealed this language problem in their research. When the number of Syrian refugees is compared to the general population, it is seen that there is a significant population and the probability of these people's return to temporary protection status is decreasing day by day, and therefore the social integration process of these refugees is gaining more importance day by day. Therefore, the integration of Syrian students into the Turkish Education System is an important part of this process (Tunga et al., 2020). In order to ensure this integration, it is an important factor to teach refugees the mother tongue of the country they are in. However, Gursoy and Ertasoglu (2019) brought a different perspective to this problem by emphasizing that the perceptions and attitudes of Syrian refugees are also important in the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society. As a matter of fact, Orakci and Aktan (2021), who conducted research on the future expectations of Syrian students in this regard, concluded that Syrian students are willing to learn Turkish and want to be successful in academic terms. Sever (2020) also drew attention to this integration situation by stating that it is impossible to solve the language problem only by the determination of teachers and administrators in schools. In this study, school principals expressed only the dimension of this integration at school.

One of the results obtained from this research is the opinion that the source of the language problem experienced by Syrian students in schools is due to cultural differences and that the number of Syrian students in the classrooms is too high, and the grouping of students among themselves reduces the need for Turkish language. According to Aytac (2021), the main source of this language problem is the delayed integration of Syrian students. When other studies in this field are examined, it has been emphasized that the language problem is a reality that slows down integration even if the

number of refugee students is small in classrooms compared to the general population (Alkalay et al., 2021; Saklan & Karakutuk, 2022). In this research, it is noticeable that the number of Syrian students in secondary schools is high. This shows that, as stated by the participants, the students group among themselves and communicate in their own language, so they are not exposed to the language they will learn much and their level of need for Turkish decreases even more. The majority of Turkish students in Reyhanli speaks Arabic. Syrian children at school do not need Turkish as they both group among themselves and speak Arabic with Turkish students who speak Arabic. They do not face any challenging situation. Since Syrian refugee children speak Arabic both at home and at school, they get behind in learning Turkish. This poses a major problem for schools. It is thought that speaking different languages at home and at schools is both challenging and tiring for them. Therefore, their integration into school may also be delayed. In a study examining a primary school teacher who solved a language problem in the classroom environment, the teacher mentioned that s/he made serious sacrifices and learned Arabic at a basic level, but there was still a language problem in her/his classroom (Erdem, 2017).

In this research, it was determined that in addition to the parents' adaptation problems related to the school culture, the students also created problems in terms of adaptation to the school culture, behavior and discipline at school. Aricioglu and Avci (2022), found out as a result of their research that Syrian students had the discipline and behavior problems. It was determined that the root of these problems was the effect of the trauma experienced by Syrian students due to their coming from the war environment, the exposure to domestic violence and the indifference experienced due to high number of family members. In this research, it was revealed that there were problems with discipline, especially at school and in the classroom. According to the results of some similar studies, it has been determined that there has been a significant increase in pre-existing incidents such as violence, fighting, hygiene problems and damage to school furniture in schools with the enrollment of Syrian students (Levent & Cayak, 2017; Sozer & Isiker, 2021). In these studies, school principals attribute the sources of violence and aggression to the traumas caused by the war environment, the negative effects of some students' loss of their parents in this war, and poor living standards.

Syrian students have started their normal education with the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education along with their enrollment in public schools (Aksoy, 2020). The majority of these students are students who have transferred from TECs, and it is seen that there are students who have not overcome the language and consequently the comprehension problem. In this research, another problem that school principals have observed since the enrollment of Syrian students in their schools is the underachievement of students in terms of academic success. At the same time, there is an academic decline. This decline is observed in both Syrian and Turkish students. Since the 2016-2017 academic year, Syrian students have been enrolled in Turkish schools at the 1st, 5th and 9th grade levels. In addition to language education, these students are given academic courses in Turkish (Mathematics, Social Studies, etc.). According to Simsir and Dilmac (2018), teachers often complain to school principals that children who have not completely solved their language problem cannot understand these lessons. Although these students have comprehension problems in the lessons, evaluating them as Turkish students are evaluated will not make them more successful. Ozer et al. (2016) stated that the teacher had to wait for them because Syrian children were slow to write down and understand what the teacher wrote on the board, and this time, Turkish students were bored in the classroom and they could cause uneasiness. When Turkish students show academic regression due to this slowdown and the frequent deterioration of course discipline, their parents are also worried and want to transfer their student to another class or even to another school. The language problem lies at the root of all these problems. It does not make sense for Syrian students to take academic courses in Turkish without solving their language problem. Therefore, it will make sense for Syrian students to take academic courses after solving the language problem after receiving language education for integration (Saritas et al., 2016).

In this research, it has been determined that Syrian students have both psychological and sociological problems at schools. The psychological problems experienced are problems such as tendency to violence, aggression and feeling excluded. Celik et al. (2021) also mentioned that there are psychological barriers in the education process of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The result of tendency to violence emerged as a result of the research conducted by Celebi Oncu and Yilmaz (2022) on Syrian students. The Turkish language problem experienced by Syrian children in Turkey, the negative attitudes of the people and their Turkish friends in their classrooms, as well as what they witnessed in their own countries and during their migration, caused severe wounds in their souls (Sahin, 2001; Uzun & Tum, 2016). Therefore, it may take a long time for them to adapt to a new language and country. In line with this view, it is important to implement guidance and counseling activities quickly, based on the assumption that the basic needs of Syrian asylum seekers are met (Mahfouz et al., 2020). In this context, Zaidi et al. (2022) found that the concept of "pedagogical love" in refugee education has a supportive role in the social integration of refugee families. Sociologically, the complexity experienced in accessing the personal data of Syrian students is another result of the research. Kondakci et al. (2022) mentioned that this problem of Syrian students continues at the higher education level as well.

In this research, in *offering solutions dimension* to the problems they experienced with Syrian students, school principals stated that the Turkish language courses should be more professional and the number of them should be increased, and the integration of Syrian students into Turkey in every sense was necessary. Although it has been 11 years since the beginning of the migration of Syrian students from Syria, it that a useful policy is not followed in the education of these children. Although Turkey has carried out various

studies for the education of Syrian children under temporary protection, it was late in developing its education policies (Seydi, 2014). The main reason here is that it is based on the assumption that the security situation in Syria will become normal and the refugees will return (Oner, 2014). The continuation of the events in Syria during the 11-year period has been the reason in the formation of the idea that the Syrians will be permanent settler and therefore the development of education/integration policies has begun, albeit late. However, a centralized education policy puts school principals and teachers in a difficult situation in terms of refugee student education in our increasingly culturally and ethnically diverse schools (McCarthy, 2018). For this reason, there is a need for more flexible education policies that take into account the special conditions of regions and schools regarding refugee education in our country.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the problems faced by school principals working in secondary schools with the highest number of Syrian students, and suggestions for solutions. Interviews were conducted with the principals of 12 secondary schools with the highest density of Syrian students in Reyhanli District of Hatay Province. Considering that the mass migration that Turkey has received in recent years has taken place through Syria the most and the possibility of their return is decreasing day by day, the integration of both societies into each other, especially in sociological terms, gains importance. With the fact that integration studies in education have increased not only in Hatay, but throughout the country, the idea that this research will contribute to this integration process from the point of view of school principals can be stated as an element that is worthy of study.

Based on the two basic questions in this research, the result of the research can be stated in two dimensions:

The first dimension is the dimension of the problems that the school principals experience with Syrian students. Secondary school principals have problems in four themes *(communicative, disciplinary, psychological and sociological)* related to Syrian students in their schools. School principals stated the problems in these four themes as interconnected links of a chain. Language-related problems are mostly experienced in the *communicative theme*. Culture-related problems (cultural harmony and culture conflict) have also emerged as the main cause of the language problem. School principals experience a great deal of *disciplinary problems* with Syrian students in the school and classroom environment. These disciplinary problems negatively affect the academic success of Syrian students. These problems have *psychological reflections* in both school and classroom environments. Syrian students may exhibit the behaviors of refusing to obey the rules and tendency to violence. *Sociological problems* have arisen with it. In particular, the confusion of the personal and identity information of Syrian students has caused a disorder in the "e-school system" in schools. A serious integration problem has emerged.

The second dimension is the dimension of solution suggestions developed by school principals for the problems they experience with Syrian students. In this dimension, school principals offered solutions for four themes *(communicative, disciplinary, psychological and sociological)*. In the *communicative* theme, although there was a suggestion to increase the number of Turkish courses, the "Turkish language proficiency requirement" as a condition for Syrian students to be admitted to schools has come up as a more radical solution. Promotion and adaptation programs that facilitate cultural harmony have been mentioned. It has determined that there should be more strict and clear rules in the *discipline* theme in schools. There are also opinions about providing professional *psychological* support to Syrian students and their parents and providing *sociological* integration. Considering the school principals who believe that this integration cannot be achieved, the need for Syrian refugees to return to their countries has also been a remarkable result.

Various recommendations have been developed for both practitioners and researchers regarding the results of the research. The number and type of cultural, social, sportive and artistic activities that will enable the integration of both communities (Turkey-Syria) can be increased in schools with Syrian students. Translators assigned to teach Turkish to Syrian students in schools should receive pedagogical formation education. In addition, it is important to evaluate whether these people have the qualifications related to the work they do before they are assigned. Policies should be developed for the integration of Syrian students into the Turkish education system. In cities where the Syrian population is so dense that it disrupts the demographic structure (for example, Hatay/Reyhanli), policies to balance the population can be implemented. In schools with Syrian students, their own views on the problems experienced by Syrian students can be taken into consideration. Furthermore, qualitative research can be conducted on the views of teachers, classmates and parents. Thus, refugee student problems identified from the perspective of school principals will also be identified from the perspective of "refugee student herself/himself, her/his teachers, other students and parents".

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Problems encountered in the COMMUNICATION dimension at school

Theme	Category	Sub-Categories	Codes	Quotes
Communicative	*Language problem*	*Not knowing Turkish* *Not being able to communicate*	Parents' not knowing Turkish (f=5) Unable to communicate (f=6) Inability to understand each other (f=12) Being unable to speak Turkish (f=15)	Our biggest problem is the language problem. (SP2) Since they do not speak Turkish, we have problems in understanding each other. (SP8)
	Culture	*Harmony Difference*	Disharmony (f=12) The problem of Adaptation (f=13) Having different cultures (f=11) Cultural difference (f=10) Social difference (f=4) Culture conflict (f=5)	Due to cultural and social differences, we find it difficult to educate students. (SP9) We have cultural differences. (SP4)
	Expectation and Anticipation		Expecting those at school to learn Arabic (f=1)	Many of them do not speak Turkish. He expects us to learn Arabic. (SP9)

Appendix 2. Problems encountered in the dimension of DISCIPLINE at school

Theme	Category	Codes	Quotes
Disciplinary	*Indiscipline*	Undisciplined behaviors (f=12) Disciplinary problems (f=13) Lack of discipline (f=12) Behavioral disorders (f=8) Absenteeism (f=3) Grouping among themselves (f=2)	Because of the cultural difference, we experience a lot of discipline problems. The language problem also exacerbates this problem. (SP2) Children group among themselves. (SP1)
	Classroom Management	Difficulty of classroom management (f=9) Non-compliance with classroom order (f=7) Teacher motivation (f=1)	Since they cannot understand the lesson, it becomes difficult to manage the classroom. (SP1) They have trouble understanding the lectures. In this case, the motivation of teachers also decreases. (SP4)
	School rules	Problem of compliance with school rules (f=12)	Syrian students insist on not following the rules. This affects other students as well. (SP9) They are having trouble complying with school rules. (SP4)
	Academic success	Not understanding the lessons (f=7) Negative impact on academic success (f=5) Academic incompetence (f=4)	…when their academic incompetences are added to this, the problem grows even more. (SP2)

Appendix 3. Problems encountered in the PSYCHOLOGICAL dimension at school

Theme	Category	Sub-Categories	Codes	Quotes
Psychological	*Negative*	*Aggression*	Refusal to follow the rules (f=6)	Syrian students insist on not following the rules. (SP5)
		Violence	Tendency to violence (f=5) Wanting to solve their problems through violence (f=5)	It can be seen that Syrian students are generally prone to violence and they want to solve their problems through violence. (SP10)
		Exclusion	Feeling of foreignness (f=3) Exclusion (f=3)	… They feel like foreigners and behave accordingly. (SP7)

Appendix 4. Problems encountered in SOCIOLOGICAL dimension at school

Theme	Category	Sub-Categories	Codes	Quotes
Sociological	*Personal data*	*ID document*	Identity numbers and name problem (f=8) Identity information (name-surname) confusion (f=7)	We are having problems with TR ID numbers and names (SP3) The fact that students have more than one TR ID number in e-school causes us to have problems all the time (SP7) We are having big problems accessing parent information (SP9)
		Parent	Presence of more than one TR ID number in e-school (f=2) Parent information problem (f=4)	
		MEB-Population Directorate Integration	The problem of grade information received at schools in Syria (f=1) E-school and population directorate integration problem (f=12)	There are great problems in matters such as identity information, grades, grade information received at Syrian schools, equivalence certificate, etc.(SP8)

Appendix 5. Suggestions for solutions to the problems of syrian students

Theme	Category	Codes	Quotes
Communicative	*Language Teaching*	Teaching Turkish (f=18) Encouragement to speak Turkish at home and on the street (f=1) Turkish courses (f=15) Translator need (f=5) Obligation to pass the Turkish language exam (f=3)	Students should not be admitted to schools without learning Turkish (SP7) We need translators appointed by the Ministry (SP6) Students with Turkish language proficiency must be admitted to Turkish schools (SP10)
	Culture	Language proficiency requirement (f=3) Adopting language and culture (f=12) International harmonization program (f=8) Introducing Turkish customs and traditions (f=7)	Integration programs should be organized to ensure the cultural harmony of the two countries. (SP1)
Disciplinary	*Student Parent*	Orientation training to the student (f=5) Sanction for absenteeism (f=1) Orientation training to parents (f=5)	Parents and students should be given orientation training. (SP12) Non-attendance students should be sanctioned and frequent family visits should be made. (SP5)
	School	Family visits (f=3) Oral and written presentation of school rules in both Turkish and Arabic (f=1) Creating a school culture (f=4)	As a solution, school rules should be given both verbally and in writing, both in Turkish and Arabic. (SP1) They persistently refuse to abide by the rules. Everyone must follow the rules persistently and consistently. (SP7)
	Class	Clear school rules (f=8) Radical rules and laws should be enacted (f=1) Frequent repetition of the rules (f=2) Orientation classes (f=4)	
Psychological	*Student*	Giving importance to school (f=1) Professional psychological support (f=5)	Students should be given professional psychological support training. (SP2) Support trainings should be given to parents in public education centers. (SP6)
	Parent	Encouragement to sports activities (f=1) Psychological support to parents (f=4)	
Sociological	*Off-system*	Returning to their homes in controlled manner (f=3) Temporary education centers TECs should be reopened (f=1)	The solution is to return them to their homes in a controlled manner (SP9) As a solution, I think they should be excluded from the Turkish education system (SP8) Parent data should be input to the e-school system automatically. (SP4) As a solution, if the data in the population directorate is integrated with the e-school, data such as name, surname, citizenship can be entered from a center and there will be no problem. (SP3)
	Settlement	They should be excluded from the Turkish education system (f=1) More collaborative work by the Population Directorate and the National Education Directorates (f=12)	